



Ted Matthews

## EXPLORING SACRED SERVICE DESIGN

This PhD focuses on the design of experience-centric services through the utilisation of concepts and practices relating to the study of the sacred. Sacred experiences are often activated through ritual, myth and symbols of meaning connected to communities and their values. Such experiences can be life changing events such as weddings, but also found in other experiences like sporting events or calendrical rites such as birthdays. We also witness sacred experiences through consumption of services and brands. To date, in service design research and practice, there has not been an exploration of how such experiences might be designed for, and how service design might be informed by concepts of the sacred.

This PhD takes up this exploration through practice-based design research, supported by methods located within qualitative inquiry. This research was done through a series of design cycles in collaboration with four large service providers to explore theories relating to the sacred for the development of a new approach for service design by drawing from concepts and practice from socio-cultural domains to weave them together with service design practice.

The PhD contributions are in identifying and developing interdisciplinary themes between socio-cultural domains and service design. The resulting Sacred Services Approach offers for practice an approach for the design of experience-centric services that utilises ritual, myth and symbol. The approach enables a discussion of how service design can integrate concepts and practice from socio-cultural domains into the discourse on service design.

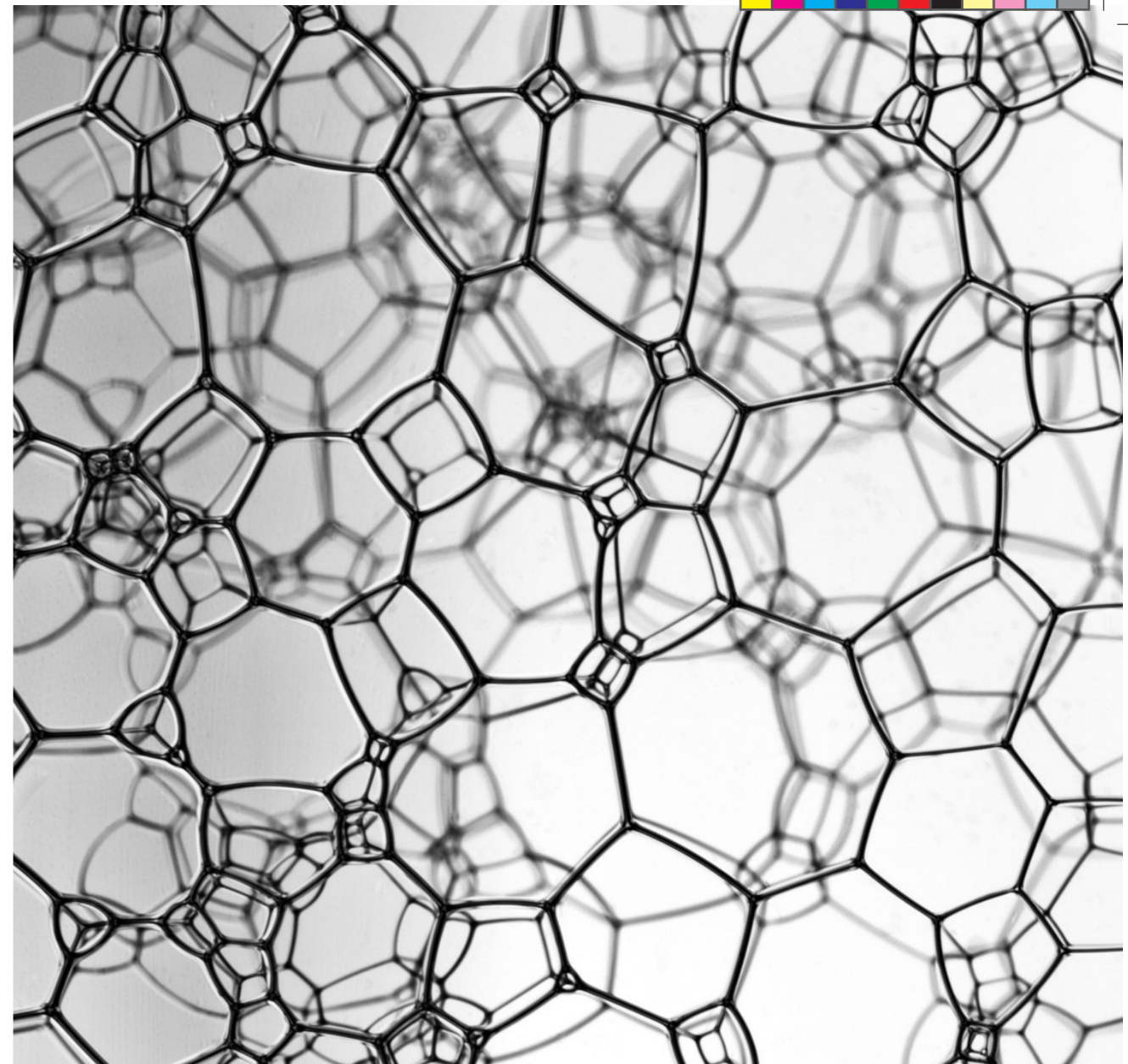
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## Abstract

This study focuses on the development of new service design approaches for the design of experience-centric services through the integration and utilization of concepts and practices relating to the study of the sacred. During the rapid expansion and acceptance of service design as an established approach to service development, much attention has lately been given to the discipline's role as an agent for the improvement of public sector services through user-centered innovation. However, less attention has been given to ways in which service design might contribute to the design of experience-centric services. Experience-centric services refer to services that lift the experiential with a designed intentionality as a crafted, differentiating element of the service offering (Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010). At the same time, it has been shown that consumers are sharing extraordinary experiences through a form of sacralization of products and services (Belk, Wallendorf & Sherry, Jr, 1989). Such a phenomenon would seem to offer potential for new forms of experience-centric services. This PhD therefore has honed in on the study of the sacred as a possible area from which to glean fruitful practices and concepts for the development of new approaches for the design of experience-centric services. In doing so, it has drawn from approaches, concepts and practice from socio-cultural domains to weave this together with service design practice to develop a new service design approach. The main methodological approach of this PhD is research through design (RtD) supported by practice-based design and research methods located within qualitative inquiry. This was done through a series of design cycles in collaboration with four, large Norwegian service providers in real life cases, running for periods of six weeks to eight-month durations. The main contribution of the research can be found in the resulting *Sacred Services Approach*, which is the main finding of the research. This

is supported through the descriptions of the process and outcomes of the real-life case studies. Further reflection and implications are offered as part of the conclusion of the work. Through the development of the *Sacred Services Approach*, the thesis contributes in three main ways: Analytically, it identifies and develops interdisciplinary themes and perspectives between socio-cultural domains and service design. In regard to service design research, it develops an approach that enables a discussion and exemplification of how service design can integrate approaches, concepts and practice from socio-cultural domains into the discourse on service design to broaden its current framing. For service design practice, it develops an approach that is a useful and useable blueprint for the design of experience-centric services, specifically for what I refer to as ‘sacred customer experiences.’







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Ted Matthews

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# Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Service Design and the Experiential

### *1.1.1 Contexts and concerns*

Service design has emerged as a key part of design practice and research over the past fifteen years. Its early focus on planning and designing for customer experience drew heavily on approaches and concepts from service marketing/management and interaction design (Morelli, 2009). The concerns of service design as a field have shifted and expanded to include new areas of focus such as service ecosystems (Vink, Koskela-Huotari, Tronvoll, Edvardsson & Wetter-Edman; 2020), policy design (Mortati, Christiansen & Maffei, 2018), and hybrid competence (Simons, Foerster, Bruck, Motiwalla & Jonker, 2015). Attention to the experiential and the cultural inflection of services and design has begun to emerge (Dennington, 2016).

These developments need to be understood in the context of changing economies and with regard to ways in which design increasingly makes connections between participation, interaction, consumption, support and services. Such connections emerge and are forged as the so-called industrial economies are no longer industrial. We have witnessed a radical shift from manufacturing to services: developed countries see 74% of their GDP from services (Deloitte, 2020), and employment in Norway, where this PhD research has been undertaken, is at 84.1% in the service industry (Deloitte, 2020). Globally, the GDP from industry is only 27.3%, and the service economy delivers 68.9%.

We are not merely witnessing the ‘rise of the service economy’ (Buera & Kaboski, 2012); we are living and working in it. Some have argued however, that we may be witnessing the rise of the experience economy. In 1999, Pine and Gilmore predicted that the service economy would be superseded by what they referred to as the experience economy. This would be an economy in which consumers would spend their money on experiences that delivered no other benefit than the experience itself. Twenty years later however, there has been a marked increase in the consumption of experiences as near stand-alone ‘products’ (Pine & Gilmore, 2020), and it could be argued that instead of experiences superseding services, services have adopted a far greater focus on the customer experience. This experiential shift is seen as an important move toward competitiveness and a way to differentiate service offerings (Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010).

Although experiences are often described as unique and individual, one aspect of the customer experience is the value and importance of shared and heightened experiences. These can be experiences such as life-changing events (weddings, coming of age), sporting events such as being a spectator at a football match, or from tourism (experiencing a sunrise together with others at a temple). Increasingly, shared and heightened experiences are emerging through a form of sacralisation of brands, products and services (Belk et al., 1989). These kinds of experiences have led to the formation of brand communities, to shared myths and stories of meaning, and to ritualised behaviour and interaction with meaningful symbols (Schouten, McAlexander & Koenig, 2007). In turn, it is through these brand communities, consumer myths, symbols and rituals that customers are understood as having what have been labelled ‘sacred experiences’ (Belk et al., 1989).

A good example of this can be seen in consumers’ relationship to Apple. Much has been written of the sacred, heightened and extraordinary experiences had by some customers through their interaction with Apple during consumption of its products and services (see: Belk & Tumbat, 2005; Kahney, 2006; Campbell & La Pastina, 2010; Pogačnik & Črnič, 2014; Liu & Wang; 2020). The design of service encounters in Apple stores actively look to engage customers in heightened experiences of celebration and belonging towards a sense of community around the brand.



Figure 1.1: An example of the euphoria of the shared experience in an Apple store opening in 2011. (Image: Alex Hofford, used with permission).

Firstly, Apple employ staff who already ‘believe’ in the products (Vergara, 2020), where ritualised activity between and for staff, who are bestowed with the symbolic titles of ‘geniuses’, build internal commitment and sense of identity (Bunning, 2018). These rituals are then transferred into the retail space. The opening of new Apple stores (for example Figure 1.1) has the atmosphere of revivalist meetings, where rapturous clapping lead customers to heightened emotional states of what Durkheim might describe as ‘collective effervescence’ (Durkheim 1912/2001). In terms of design, the retail spaces are cleared of clutter with the aim of creating almost temple-like spaces (Collins, 2012). Furthermore, the way the packaging is designed requires a ritualised opening from the customer, with some devotees going as far as arranging unboxing ceremonies, inviting friends and family to share the experience (Kahney, 2006). Finally, through such emotional attachment, customers begin to construct myths around the Apple’s founders (Belk & Tumbat, 2005) and its products (Campbell & La Pastina, 2010) that build identity and a sense of community and connectedness with other Apple consumers.

What the example highlights is that Apple is actively engaged in orchestrating forms of sacralised consumption that, whilst having its critics (Bunning, 2018), creates value through heightened and meaningful encounters for customers (Pogačnik & Črnič, 2014) and staff alike (Vergara, 2020). The example shows that a sacred outcome has in some way been

designed, or designed for. However, whilst the phenomenon of ‘sacred experience’ in consumption is discussed as part of consumer culture theory, it is not discussed in terms of how such experiences could be designed for. In particular, it is not discussed or used within service design. From a service design perspective, has research has not examined to date how such mechanisms might be actively utilised in service design towards designing such experiences. This is an endeavour that this thesis undertakes.

### ***1.1.2 The experiential and service design***

From the start, service design has had a focus upon the development of tools (e.g. the journey coming from services marketing, innovation through touchpoints). Service innovation has been an ongoing concern of service design literature and the development of new tools and approaches has been identified as a driver of service innovation (e.g. Kimbell, 2015; Miettinen & Koivisto, 2009; Stickdorn, Schneider, Andrews & Lawrence, 2011). Despite there being an extensive body of service design research over the last 20 years, little research to date has investigated the design of shared and heightened experiences. Furthermore, the development of tools and approaches within service design seems to have neglected how one might design using concepts from the sacred. The phenomenon of existing sacred-type customer experiences, such as those encompassed in the example of Apple, offers rich potential for the further design of experience-centric services, where its practice shows that such experiences deliver value to customers and service providers alike.

Overall, informed by research in service design and customer experience, as well as emerging phenomena of the experiential in services, such as from Apple, my research works through design exploration of how the notion of sacred related views on experience may be realised in which such cultural aspects are and may be central to customer and participant experiences. To do so, I draw on a body of research in service design, as well as on literature studies from sociology, anthropology and cultural studies to inform the making and articulation of what I elaborate on as a *Sacred Services Approach* (see Chapter 4). This approach is positioned as an analytical perspective on how the experiential in service design may be conceptualised, framed and interpreted. It is supported by a set of analytical concepts and process. These are linked with the demarcation of a model that provides an abstracted device understanding experiential services with regard to the ‘sacred’ and their further design, application and potential review. I position these more broadly

within what I conceptualise as an overall approach to what I call *Experiential Service Design*. In terms of research, this thesis works towards the formation and formulation of a culturally inflected perspective on an experiential focus in service design.

## **1.2 Research Questions, Focus and Approach**

### ***1.2.1 Key questions***

The aim of this exploratory, developmental and practice-based PhD is to investigate the potential of concepts related to the sacred towards innovation in experience-centric services. In doing so, it reaches both from and outside of current service design framings and beyond to draw from and integrate perspectives and approaches from socio-cultural knowledge domains. The research as a whole addresses three inter-related questions. These are:

1. In what ways may service design be informed by and utilise approaches and concepts of the sacred?
2. How may attention to the sacred contribute to developing and integrating culturally oriented perspectives on experience-centred service design?
3. What can an approach to services of a sacred character offer to research, education and practice within service design?

### ***1.2.2 Summary of focus, approach, format and contributions***

In answering the first of the above questions, I have focused and looked into ways in which the sacred may be understood as mode of engagement and as a type of experiential material in service design that is motivated to enrichen customer experience. The sacred is understood as a mode of opposition to the mundane and quotidian or everyday; that is, experience understood as heightened, special and extraordinary, but not necessarily ecstatic or indeed confined to the religious (Durkheim, 1912/2001; Belk et al., 1989).

To address the second question, I bring together several perspectives from service design and concepts, approaches and practice from sociology, anthropology and cultural studies relating to the sacred. In research terms, and informed by service designing, I draw on these to develop and situate a broader cultural take on the experiential in service design. This has been formulated in the development of an overall analytical approach, with concepts, process and a model. I position these for research in service design as a contribution to further understanding the experience-centric. I consider these in a wider view on emerging relations between service design, its designing and analysis that I call *Experiential Service Design*.

In responding to the third question, I discuss some of the implications of the approach, concepts, process and model together with the modes of designing and design collaborations in shaping and informing experience-centric service design research, education and practice. My intention is to expand the potential of the experiential in service design and aspects from cultural perspectives that may enrich understanding of customer experience more widely.

The research problematics in these questions, and the emerging phenomenon of the experiential in service design are taken up in an overall mix of qualitative inquiry approaches and methods. The research is supported and investigated critically by a dynamic and reflexive interplay that utilises a research through design methodology together with practice-based qualitative research methods, and with configurations of design techniques and design tools.

The research is presented in a thesis by compilation format, with an exegesis underpinned by five peer-reviewed publications. These two main elements were developed in my role as an experienced professional designer embedded in a design-oriented team that contributed to the Centre of Service Innovation (CSI) funded by the Research Council of Norway. Within the CSI, two doctoral researchers – Claire Dennington and myself – have explored the possibilities and potential of shaping connections between cultural aspects and service design innovation in commercial settings. My PhD is located specifically within the work package ‘Customer and Brand Experience’ and contributes to this research programme through the development of an approach to the design of experience-centric services toward innovation in private sector services.

In summary, the thesis results in three main contributions. Analytically, through the publications and their critical review in relation to research in service design I propose an overarching *Sacred Services Approach* to how service design may be informed by and utilise approaches and concepts on the sacred. In support and extension of this, I identify and develop interdisciplinary themes and perspectives between socio-cultural domains and service design. The approach I present is one that enables a discussion and exemplification of how service design can integrate approaches, concepts and practice from socio-cultural domains into discourse on service design as a broadening of its current framing. This I articulate as a contribution to what I term *Experiential Service Design*. On service design practice, I elaborate an approach that provides a situated and useable guideline for the design of experience-centric services.

I will now move to highlight how the thesis touches on related research which helps to further frame the work and clarify its intention.

## 1.3 Core analytical framings

### 1.3.1 On experience-centric services

This research is highly relevant where the importance of experience has been emphasised in service design research. Since the advent of service-dominant logic in 2004 (Vargo & Lusch), it has been broadly accepted in service literature that experience is the outcome of any service encounter, and it is through this experience that the value of the service is assessed by the customer. Customer experience has been identified as an important factor in customer satisfaction, service differentiation, perceived value and brand loyalty (Berry & Carbone, 2007). With this in mind, it has been argued that heightened experiences should be crafted and designed for as a more intentional part of service provision in experience-centric services, both in research (Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010) and in practice, with Clatworthy (2019) further arguing that this should be a key area of concern for the field of service design research and practice.

At the same time, consumer culture theorists have observed how customers are having heightened, extraordinary, meaningful or sacred experiences



through their consumption of services and relationships to brands (e.g., Belk et al., 1989; Arnould & Price, 1993). These kinds of experiences have led to the formation of brand communities, to shared myths and stories of meaning, to ritualised behaviour and interaction with meaningful symbols (Schouten et al., 2007). It is in turn through these brand communities, consumer myths, symbols and rituals that customers are having further sacred experiences (Belk et al., 1989). Whilst this research has predominantly focused on customer-instigated behaviour such as ritualised action in service, limited research has begun to look at service provider-instigated action of this kind (Liu & Wei, 2020). Furthermore, to date from a service design perspective, research has not examined to date how such mechanisms might be actively utilised in service design towards replicate such experiences within experience-centric services. This is an endeavour undertaken by this thesis.

### ***1.3.2 Situating and shaping the design research ‘landscape’***

While this study is informed by perspectives on the sacred drawn from socio-cultural domains, service design is predominantly located within service marketing/management and design (Yu, 2020), and has yet to be substantially informed by or integrate broader socio-cultural perspectives or practice. This is important as experience is deeply affected and informed by the socio-cultural context and background of an individual or a group (Bruner, 1984); this is no less the case in service experiences (Liu & Wei, 2020). There is thus room for approaches to design for experience-centric services that may consider and integrate perspectives and approaches from socio-cultural domains. In doing this, service design would open its ‘imaginative space’ (Balsamo, 2011) towards new potentials in service innovation and step further into connecting the design and support of services in relation to contexts of need, use and engagement.

This opening of the ‘imagination space’ through engaging in questions of culture in service provision can be seen in the research of fellow AHO doctoral researcher and colleague Claire Dennington. In her work, which investigates how service designers might translate current cultural trends into new kinds of brand relevant service experiences, Dennington raises the importance of ‘experiential touchpoints’ (Dennington, 2018; p.1057). Within the concept of the experiential touchpoint, she infuses important emerging movements, ideas and their expression in popular culture as a way to add value to existing services through the experiential. Dennington’s work points



to is the value of a broader understanding and interpretation of culture in the design of experience-centric services. This can be seen in Figure 1.2, where current trends in regards to food, pop-up events and social consciousness are reworked through a process of triple semantic transformation that Dennington adapts from Karjalainen (2002). This serves to translate trends into meaning, meaning into concept and finally, concept into detailed experiential touchpoints.



Figure 1.2: Concept design that takes current trends in food culture to broaden a fashion brands experiential offering through the development of a food design summer camp. Experiential touchpoint flyer, 2011. (Image: Miryam Pippich, used with permission. Dennington, 2018).

As has been pointed out, experience-centricity in service provision has been raised as an important factor for value creation for both customers and service providers alike; however, there has been limited research in service design on how such experiences might be designed for. At the same time, service-dominant logic (SDL) positions the outcome of any service exchange as being experience, and that the value of the service as therefore a personal, subjective, phenomenological appraisal of this value. However, literature from outside of service design accentuates value creation for customers in extraordinary, shared, intersubjective, sacred experiences.

Consumer culture theory literature shows that consumers undergo sacred customer experiences through the services and products they consume and through interaction with brand communities. These kinds of experiences are heightened, extraordinary and special, creating value for customers. However, there is a gap in research that considers the potential for such experiences in experience-centric services and there is yet to be an investigation on approaches to actively design for these kinds of experiences in service provision.

An investigation of this kind would therefore require an exploration of literature from socio- cultural domains that understands the nature of the sacred experience and the conditions from which such experiences might be generated. This would then need to be followed by research that might transpose such relevant literature into new service design approaches to be designed with, to be analysed and further developed. The research presented here undertakes this investigation to develop an approach for the design for sacred customer experiences as part of a larger contribution to what I refer to as *Experiential Service Design*.

To locate my study and to draw from concepts related to the study of the sacred means drawing from approaches, concepts and practice from domains outside of current service design practice and research. In a review of literature that describes current service design approaches, concepts and practice, we see a field that has only limited influence from socio-cultural domains. Service design research is largely framed by service design practice, service marketing and management views and multidisciplinary spaces in between. Where the related field of interaction design has drawn from socio-cultural domains to re-frame itself as a cultural agent in everyday cultural reproduction, service design has yet to engage more fully in this discourse. Reaching beyond its current framing would open service design's 'imaginative space' (Balsamo, 2011), and open the potential for what might be referred to as service cultural innovation. Indeed, it has been shown that experiences are culturally informed, and that appraisal of value and perceptions of technical innovation are influenced by cultural perspective (Holt & Cameron; 2010). This PhD therefore also engages in wider questions of a cultural take on service innovation as a way to design for experience-centric services.

## **1.4 Methodology, Methods and Designing**

### ***1.4.1 Research through design***

This PhD takes Research through Design (RtD) (Stappers & Giaccardi, 2017; Sevaldson, 2010) as its main methodological approach supported by practice based qualitative design and research methods located within qualitative inquiry. With RtD I refer to the transdisciplinary and trans-methodological aspects of design based knowing through acts of creative, critical making.

The approach ‘emphasises insider perspectives, a generative approach, operates in rich and multiple layers and relates to real life contexts. The output is new communicable knowledge that is only found within design practice’ (Sevaldson, 2010, p. 8).

As elaborated in Chapter 3, my research is both exploratory and constructionist in character. It includes research methods that are concerned with developing knowledge through design-based inquiry within transdisciplinary collaboration, that is connected to contexts and creative design practices. The knowledge materialises through the design activity itself, through a conceptualisation and enactment of design research as a ‘making-analytical practice’ (Morrison, Mainsah & Rygh, 2018: p. 2271).

As part of this analytical process, I use a four-way, dynamic matrix (Morrison et. al., 2018) that offers focus on research methodologies and research methods, design techniques and design tools, as areas of reflection and analysis for the design researcher. In practice I utilise a mix of qualitative methods to support this analysis and reflection, supporting knowledge creation through the act of designing and through the designed outcome as a catalyst for this knowledge embedded in the final work. Design bricolage (Louridas, 1999) is also used within this broader framing of RtD in regard to a designerly approach to the selection, trailing, testing and making with concepts relating to the study of the sacred as material for service design. It also refers to a broader theoretical and methodological bricolage that supports the knowledge building process that is informed by related approaches drawn from the social sciences and humanities, including sociology, anthropology and cultural studies.

### ***1.4.2 Designerly expertise and research practice***

The designerly approach, as a reflective, practice-based mode of enquiry has been key to knowledge creation in this PhD. ‘Designerly ways of knowing’ can be understood as an abductive approach applied to problem solving in a distinctive, solution-focused, constructivist way (Cross, 1982). Through a designerly approach, wicked (Buchanan, 1992) and often ill-defined challenges are made sense of through concrete objects (Cross, 1982) and projected improved futures (Simon, 1969).

My PhD project is an outcome of my own professional design practice drawing on expertise and experiences as both an industrial and service

designer. I trained as an industrial designer in the mid-1990s within the culturally orientated Master's of Arts programme at Central St. Martin's School of Art and Design, UK. Here, I focused on the design of liturgical ware for church services, drawing greatly from the work of Belk et al. (1989) on the sacred to inform the design process and outcomes. It was here that I took my first tentative steps into operationalising theory related to the sacred into design solutions. However, since 2007, I have worked as a service designer, predominantly focusing on the development of design tools and approaches for others to design with, including approaches for the engagement of citizens in the development of city services and methods for innovation in tourist services. How to design tools and approaches for others is tacit knowledge, embedded in my existing design repertoire. This experience and continued practice have informed and been brought to bear on the development of this PhD.

In terms of a developmental design research practice, the *Sacred Services Approach* which I eventually arrived at emerged through cycles of development and application, through and during a series of collaborations with four Norwegian service providers working on real life cases over a period of five years. This allowed for a series of design experiments as a way to generate, embed and operationalise approaches, concepts and methods drawn from theories relating to the sacred into a new service design approach. This functioned in cycles of design interventions where new constructions and arrangements of this material could be tested in these real-life cases. Reflection on the process and the outcomes were ongoing throughout and following each design cycle.

Here, mixed, qualitative methods were used to facilitate and underpin the reflexive process, to offer multiple approaches for reflection. These included semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, observation, design conversations, reflection through dissemination, visualisation and writing. These methods were supported further with design tools and techniques that included the rich design space, co-design, prototyping and evidencing. With each cycle of design, peer reviewed publications were developed to disseminate the knowledge produced, leading to further discussion and reflection, before the next design cycle progressed.

The design cycles were run in collaboration with Telenor, Innovation Norway and Røros Tourist Authority, the Norwegian Football Association and a large Norwegian bank. The duration of the projects varied from 6 weeks to an 8-month design residency. These collaborations offered a quality of

context for the research to take place, as they represent real life business cases within large, established and well-respected Norwegian companies and organisations.

The knowledge is disseminated in the publications that constitute this PhD thesis, and it is embedded in the *Sacred Services Approach* which is a key outcome and artifact of this research. In Chapter 4, a thorough analysis of the approach shows how this knowledge is embedded in a set of connected components: perspectives, concepts, approach and a model that offer a multifaceted analysis of the final solution. This approach then acts as a catalyst for the offering of transferable theory back to service design.

## 1.5 On this Thesis

### 1.5.1 A PhD by compilation

This research is a PhD by publication in the thesis-by-compilation mode. Article-based PhDs are an established norm in Scandinavia (Whitley et al., 2004). However, one of the challenges associated with this thesis format is that the articles and papers that comprise a significant published or publishable main body of the text need to fully link together. This refers to the doctoral researcher's progression as it were, as the research develops, and to making connections between different areas of interest that may arise and may move the research in different directions (Presthus & Bygstad, 2014). The structure of such a thesis mode is to provide an exegesis (or 'kappe' in Norwegian).

The function of the exegesis is to provide a positioning and articulation of the elements of the study and its uniqueness as doctoral research, making connections through publication, practice and interpretative, critical reflection. In this sense, such a thesis is more than a compilation, and this is important for building knowledge in a research through design mode of inquiry in a rapidly changing field such as service design. The status of the work offered is therefore to work towards informing and positioning service design in a socio-cultural frame. The exegesis also presents a full analysis of the final *Sacred Services Approach*, which is the main finding of the research. This allows for an unpacking of the approach through several perspectives

as a collection of concepts, process and as a model. This thesis contains an exegesis and a set of publications. The exegesis includes 5 chapters and the section Publications has 5 peer-reviewed research works.

### ***1.5.2 The exegesis***

**This introductory chapter** aims to orientate the reader in terms of the purpose and focus of the study and points to the implications and findings of the work.

**Chapter 2** frames current views on service, service design and innovation to highlight areas of opportunity for further investigation, not at least of perspectives from outside the current framing of service design. Here, it has been important to go into some detail to define service design, not at least through discussions of views surrounding current approaches defined in research about practice. The chapter will also consider relations between design, design anthropology, technology and culture, as these discourses have bearing on the work.

The chapter also presents a view on the sacred and the sacred experience drawn from several theoretical perspectives from the humanities and social sciences. These perspectives are treated as useful concepts for the development of an approach to the design of experience-centric services. This section focuses on the relationship between ritual, myth, symbol and the community as the driver of the sacred experience, and an assembly of perspectives further guided by structural and material resonance with service design. These concepts were discovered, drawn out, appraised and tested through a broader methodological approach of research through design. Arranged and brought together in this way, these concepts are then drawn upon and inform the resulting *Sacred Services Approach*. It is important to show this construction of concepts here so that their influence and relevance for the final approach can be understood. Finally, the chapter draws together many of the perspectives presented in the chapter through a review that connects work on experiential services and culture, symbol, ritual and the sacred in the marketplace. This frames a space for the elaboration of arguments and material concerning relations between the design of experiential services and the conceptualisation of consumer and popular culture and service design that is oriented towards and manifested as the sacred.

**Chapter 3** details the research method of the PhD. The chapter argues for

a methodology of research through design as the overarching approach that is both exploratory and constructionist in character; that includes research methods that are concerned to develop knowledge through design-based inquiry within transdisciplinary collaboration, and that is connected to contexts and creative design practices. Here, the investigation of concepts, approaches and practice drawn from socio-cultural domains is framed as a form of design bricolage, through assembly and appraisal through the act of designing. The main argument of the chapter is that research through design, supported through mixed methods results in knowledge embedded in the accounts of making and in the resulting artefact of the designing. These accounts of making are included at the end of this chapter in the descriptions and analysis of the ‘real life’ case studies within which the research was undertaken.

**Chapter 4** unpacks and examines the *Sacred Services Approach* in detail, as comprised of concepts, process and model. The aim of the chapter is to offer a multi-faceted perspective on the approach as the main finding and output of the research. The chapter illuminates how the resulting *Sacred Services Approach* weaves together service design practice together with aspects of socio-cultural practice, approaches and concepts. This expands current practice to include forms of cultural mapping, analysis and interpretation to ensure a broader socio-cultural perspective in the approach. Through this activity, the approach aids in identifying sacred symbols, myths, rituals, but also perceived existential anxieties of the community or society within which the service is based. The analysis and interpretation of this material offers deep insight into broader concerns beyond that of user-service interaction. The *Sacred Services Approach* then integrates and actively utilises concepts such as ritual, myth and symbol into the designing for sacred customer experiences, using ritual as a device to construct a new form of customer journey dramaturgy that considers only the flow of time, but also the meaning and intention of this time. This also creates a structure for integrating and designing into the service experience additional relevant rituals, symbols and myths that were identified during the cultural mapping phase of the approach. The chapter then concludes with a discussion on implications for practice, teaching and research.

**Chapter 5** offers closing reflections on the work in relationship to current moves and concerns in service design as part of unfolding events in a global service economy and a service cultural society. The chapter therefore reflects on potential future research for service design practice and the design for the public sector. It includes thoughts on cultural context, service-cultural

innovation and ethics, as well as on how the resulting approach encourages new thinking around the singular user interaction paradigm.

The exegesis concludes with a final section that includes the five publications that underpin the metatext. In reviewing my publications, one can identify a clear trajectory through the articles and papers from their initial positioning to the development and design of an emerging *Sacred Services Approach*. This is then further appraised in its contribution to innovation for service design in service, organisation, process and marketing in the final publication. The publications are positioned, analysed as a whole, and in relation to one another, and lifted further in this exegesis.

### ***1.5.3 The Publications***

The following section summarises and appoints the publications as part of the study. They have all been peer-reviewed. There are two journal articles and three conference papers. The publications are as follows:

#### **Publication 1: Journal article**

Matthews, T. (2014). Sacred Services: The potential for service design of theory relating to the sacred. *Artifact*, 3(2), 6.1–6.9.

This article creates an initial agenda of the research. It raises the potential of concepts and theories from a study of the sacred for addressing the challenges that service design engages with in regards to the distinct nature of designing for service. It then offers a theoretical comparison of perceived, shared characteristics between these two fields. It uses IHIP as an initial framework for this comparison reworked into more design-oriented terms of ‘temporality’, ‘co-production’ and ‘intangibility’. It then brings together concepts framed by sociology and cultural studies into three categorisations as to important factors in the sacred: ritual, myth and community.

The relationship between these fields is shown by considering how strategies and tools from service design deal with issues of ‘temporality’, ‘co-production’ and ‘intangibility’. This is followed by a consideration of how ritual, community and myth deal with the same issues.

However, what the article points to is that whilst ritual, myth and community deal with issues of ‘temporality’, ‘co-production’ and ‘intangibility’, they can also lead to heightened experiences, which offers opportunities for service



design that is concerned with design for experience.

Through this, the article shows that service design and the sacred have many shared characteristics, and that bringing the fields closer together has great potential to create heightened service experiences and customer loyalty. Two examples of contemporary customer experiences in which ritual, myth and community played significant roles show how myths and rituals have been consciously designed in the past. This suggested that it should be possible to utilise concepts drawn from theories about the sacred for the design of similar service encounters.

The article concludes by raising issues to be addressed in further research, such as expansion of the definition of service design terms to include the symbolic rather than just the functional and whether new ‘sacred’ material can be designed or whether it must already exist in the communities for which experiences are designed. It calls for experimentation with ritual structures and development of tools to aggregate cultural material. The next two publications attempt to address some of these issues and develop a rudimentary design approach to operationalise concepts about the sacred.

### **Publication 2: Conference paper**

Matthews, T. (2013). ‘Can insights from the theory relating to ritual be operationalised to contribute to the development of new service development tools’. Paper presented at *Miracles & Management: The 3rd Conference of Management, Spirituality & Religion*. 16-19 May. Lourdes, France.

This paper offers a description of the first test and evaluation of a set of rudimentary service design tools developed through a method of research by design that operationalised several aspects of theory relating to the sacred, with specific focus on the use of ritual. The test was undertaken in a three-hour workshop at Telenor in which 10 participants designed services relating to a ‘digital wallet’. Three tools were introduced and tested:

1. Ritual Layers, which focused on the relation between calendric and ceremonial rites, extended rites and minor ritual interactions;
2. Ritual Actions, which focused on myths, content, audiences and actors; and,
3. Rites of Passage, which introduced the tripartite dramaturgical structure.

Data was collected through observation and later through focused

interviews. Using the focused interview allowed for insights raised during the development of the tools and the workshop to be considered through comparison of the participants' expressed experiences. The initial insights were articulated as questions to be posed to the participants after the workshop, and as such used to be used as a form of analysis to evaluate the emerging model. This showed that the tools produced mixed results contrary to projected expectations from the workshop. However, these results were promising enough to move forward with the research.

Reflection on the exercise led to the understanding that, ritual structures offer a multitude of layers of time and symbols, for which I coined the term 'Experiential Mesh' in this paper. I would later discover that this view aligned with the work of Geertz (1973/2000), where this mesh of layers acted as the depositories of human emotions, values and behaviours accessed, expressed and then strengthened through the media of ritual. It led to an understanding that ritual action could connect the subject to a larger system of meaning, and that if this could be actively utilised by service design it could lead to new approaches the design for experience-centric services. There appeared to be potential for design approaches of this kind to create total experiences that would connect human behaviour, culture and meaningful time structures in services.

This led to further development of the tools and deeper integration of concepts from socio-cultural practice into service design using an approach that I termed the 'Experiential Mesh' model at this point.

### **Publication 3: Conference paper**

Matthews, T. (2014). 'The experiential mesh: A new service development model for designing highly experiential services'. In *Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Service Sciences Innovation* [CD-ROM]. 4-6 June. Taipei, Taiwan.

This paper describes the further iteration of the Experiential Mesh model and the results of its testing, undertaken during a two-day tourist experience design workshop with students from Chulalongkorn University on the island of SiChang in Thailand. The paper also questions whether current service design tools and methods actively and systematically utilise socio-cultural material in their present practice. The model integrated rites of passage into several levels of ceremonial and ritual movement and detail, and it integrated the concept of truthful metaphors of myths into ritual.

Using an analytical framework drawn from the emerging experiential mesh model that embodied concepts from the study of the sacred combined with frameworks taken from studies of authenticity in tourism, the test again showed mixed, yet promising results, given that relatively inexperienced designers used it with success. The paper highlighted the contrast between the often functional nature of current service design methods and approaches like the Experiential Mesh model that focused more on cultural material and the meaningful through a focus on the sacred. The paper questioned the role of the touchpoint as ‘physical evidence’ (Bitner, Ostrom & Moran, 2008), calling for a broader understanding of the term as potentially performative or symbolic. Further work was required to develop the approach into a more systematic method of cultural mapping and utilise this further in modelling techniques. The work in this paper, including the questions raised and findings of the tests, served as a foundation for development of the final Sacred Services Approach, with the concept of the mesh being integrated into a broader approach.

**Publication 4: Conference paper**

Matthews, T. (2016) ‘Introducing graphic experiential evidencing (GEE)’.  
*In 10th International Conference of Design and Emotion. 26-29*  
 September. Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

This paper describes an aleatory outcome of the PhD thesis, the GEE model, which was developed as part of the approach as a new form experiential evidencing. As Sevaldson (2010) suggests, research by design often results in unexpected outcomes beyond the initial framing. GEE was a response to gaps in current service design practice discovered when developing the *Sacred Services Approach* during real-life cases. It was found that no extant tools could adequately communicate the heightened dramaturgy and emotional engagement during experience-centric service encounter development whilst designing using the emerging *Sacred Services Approach*.

The GEE model utilises a graphic novel format to communicate the ‘feeling’ of the new service experience to stakeholders involved in the development of the services. The paper drew from literature on graphic novels (as well as other artistic visual forms) that showed how such art forms have been demonstrated to generate feelings of emotion and empathy in their viewers that mirror the emotions expressed in images. Using an analytical framework based on theory from the study of the graphic novel relating to emotional mirroring, it was shown that the use of this technique provided the

informants, who were engaged through semi-structured interviews, a sense of the experience and the emotions expressed. The publication uses the OECD Oslo Manual of Innovation (2005) as a further framework to evaluate the model in terms of innovation in the design process.

The publication contributes to the PhD thesis by arguing that current service design practice - in this case, its visualisation techniques – is still predominantly focused on modelling and communicating the function of the service for which designers are designing. The GEE model is integrated into the final *Sacred Services Approach* as one of potentially many tools that could communicate a more experiential form of service design.

### **Publication 5: Journal article**

Matthews, T. (2017). ‘Sacred service: The use of “sacred theory” in service design’. *Journal of Design, Business & Society*, 3(1), 67-97.

This extended article is the conclusion of the publications and evaluates the *Sacred Services Approach* as regards to innovation, and is once again framed using the OECD’s, Oslo Manual of Innovation (2005). It introduces the arrangement of concepts from the study of the sacred that are deemed relevant for service design and then shows how they have been utilised in the *Sacred Services Approach*. It then evaluates the approach through a triangulation of methods including observation and questionnaires, however the main vehicle of this evaluation is drawn from semi-structured interviews with nine informants.

Innovation was assessed across four areas identified by OECD, namely in: service, organisation, process and marketing. However, these four areas are evaluated against two frameworks: the first, taken from OECD, is innovation in terms of novelty; and the second, drawing from the framework of Belk et al. (1989), is based on Durkheim’s device for defining the sacred customer experience through its opposition to the profane.

The paper concludes that the approach offered innovation across all four OECD areas. Evaluation of the approach further showed that concepts of the sacred from socio-cultural domains can be operationalised for service design and that it offers innovation predominant in service design processes and customer experience, where a move to the sacred customer experience was demonstrated in the results. The publication contributes to the field of

service design by offering a concrete process for identifying, activating, fine-tuning and orchestrating existing cultural material towards the design of what might be described as sacred service experiences. It then offers a discussion on the implications of such an approach, some of which are discussed further in this exegesis.

## 1.6 Findings, contributions and implications

### 1.6.1 Main directions

My research reaches towards a framing of *Experiential Service Design* informed by socio-cultural perspectives. In summary, the ‘*Sacred Services Approach*’ I have developed, the related body of design cases and their analysis offer research in service design potential paths for further development, application and analysis. It also suggests how concepts, approaches and practice from the study of the sacred may be embedded in service design practice. Such contributions may be understood on several levels. These are presented in the resulting *Sacred Services Approach* detailed in Chapter 4, which builds on the exemplification of its development and use in the case studies presented in Chapter 3.

Concerning the generation and positioning of innovation for service design, my inquiry makes a number of linked contributions. Firstly, framed through business and design innovation frameworks of the OECD, I demonstrate that the approach offers innovation in service, organisation, process and marketing (see Publication 5). Thus, through the resulting design approach and case studies, the research contributes directly to practice offering a blueprint for replication and application in other service design projects.

Secondly, the research offers innovation as an analytical framework and interpretation in an extended perspective on service design as both practice and as a broadening perspective of research. In doing so, it shows the potentiality of such an expansion in a repositioning of service design as a cultural practice and in itself offers a frame of analysis to reflect back on service design as a whole and for further directions for the field.

The research also contributes to the discussion of experience-centric services with an approach that specifically hones in on the sacred customer

experience, as part of experiential service provision, where concepts such as ritual, myth and symbol can be utilised for heightened service experiences. This leads to the broader question of the building of a sub-field of service design research and practice that I call Experiential Service Design. This is a culturally orientated sub-field; it considers ways of actively raising and crafting for experience as part of service provision towards service differentiation, appeal and increased value for the customer.

Through the reflexive, developmental exploration of service design by way of situated ‘cases’ that allowed for the integration of concepts from the study of the sacred, I built a culturally-oriented analysis and understanding that is made material and accessible to service design research in the resulting *Sacred Services Approach* itself. As this implies, it was built through practice and has transferable implications and potential for engagement and impact.

### ***1.6.2 Pathways to the experience-centric through the sacred***

Before concluding of this introductory chapter, I like to offer some sense of how bringing perspectives from the study of the sacred can influence the design of the services focused on in the case studies. My intention here is to provide a preview and indeed an experience for readers as to what it is I have reached for and arrived at in the research. One possible outcome of using the *Sacred Services Approach* would be to shift the focus of functional interactions during the service into meaningful and experiential transitions through the service experience.

On the surface, football might appear to be a purely experience economy ‘product’, as discussed by Pine and Gilmore (1999); however the delivery of football requires a complex service system from arranging games, ticketing, coordinating players, security, media, etc. As part of the football case study, we applied the emerging *Sacred Services Approach* to some of these aspects, including transporting players and the system of contacting players to ask them to play for their national team. Herein lies a good example of how ritual, myth and symbol can be utilised towards experiential touchpoints and towards experience-centricity, even during functional encounters. Previously a functional approach had been used to inform players that had been chosen; they were contacted via agents, email or a phone call. This was redesigned as a gifting ritual, where the national team jersey was sent, gift wrapped together with a letter that was both functional (including relevant information about the game) and emotional (including

story telling that created a context that surrounded playing for one's country). The projected experience is represented in Figure 1.3. Here, the 'gift' has been opened and we can understand that the letter has been read. Following the flow of the cartoons dramaturgy, we see the players sense of destiny and the determination in his facial expression as he reads the first lines of the Norwegian national anthem embroidered in the collar of the shirt. In the image we see the projected emotional response to the use of the gifting ritual in this experiential service touchpoint. The image also exposes the cultural symbols used to convey the meaning of being called to play for the country: the wax-sealed letter, the gift box, the use of the national team's emblem, the national anthem.



Figure 1.3: Using Graphic Experiential Evidencing to describe how redesigning the call up process as a ritual creates an experiential service encounter and enforces the meaning of the moment (see Publication 4) (Image: Syver Lauritzen/Ted Matthews).

The final design resulted in a gift box that included a national team jersey, a specially designed moleskin note pad for capturing experiences, and a call-up letter that contextualised the meaning of playing for Norway and women's football in general (Figure 1.4). The moleskin pad was designed to include Norwegian mountains, and the opening line of the national anthem was included here when it was not possible to add it to the inside of the shirt due to shirt sponsor limitations.





Figure 1.4: Final design used in the call up for national team for the women’s world cup in Canada in 2015. (Image: Ted Mathews).

By applying the ritual of gifting (see, Sherry Jr., 1983) as a culturally ritual act of heightened occasion to the call-up of the players, the experience and meaning were lifted whilst still fulfilling the functional requirements. This example points to how the *Sacred Services Approach* offers an experience-centred model of culturally inflected service innovation. Incarnate in this approach, we see how concepts, approaches and practice from the study of the sacred can be interwoven together with service design practice. The model is an expansion of current practice and shifts focus to where value is created in the design of services. This is a shift that puts emphasis on the experiential, meaningful or indeed sacred in customers’ lives.

Where experience is informed by cultural context and background, the cultural must be raised far more in the process, not least as material in the designs themselves. This again is an important finding of the research:



namely that designing for service experience requires greater consideration of the broader cultural context. If service design is to engage in these issues, new approaches for mapping and translating this cultural material for the design of services are necessary. This research offers such an approach for use, further development and study.

The research also shows that the development and use of the *Sacred Services Approach* offered innovation regarding traditional innovation measuring frameworks. However, the research also highlights the limitations of these frameworks when measuring cultural innovation in service design, approach development and outcome. These issues are dealt with in raising the importance of cultural innovation as a category of innovation in interaction design (Balsamo, 2011) and in branding and marketing (Holt & Cameron, 2010) but they have yet to be addressed in service design.

The research also offers an alternative perspective and focus within service design practice and research in regards to the design of user experience at a point of interaction with the service. Currently service design is framed as a series of interactions between the user and the service (Sangiorgi, 2009; Morelli, 2009). In doing so it creates a view of the individual user's phenomenological experience at the point of interaction with the service. With greater focus on the importance of the intersubjective shared experience raised in this thesis where emphasis is more on transition than interaction, it creates new perspectives on how we frame services and how we go about designing them.

## 1.7 Summary of Implications

This thesis has attempted to open out service design research and practice to concepts and approaches from outside its current framings towards innovation in experience-centric services. The thesis findings are elaborated in Chapter 4 and raise implications for practice, teaching and research. I summarise them here.

Concerning practice, the research shifts the focus of where and what value should be in service provision from function to experiential and sacred, thus demanding a refocusing of the aims of the service designer. It encourages a shift in perspective during all phases of the design process. For example,

during the insight phase of the design process, the research calls for the designer to look beyond the immediate experience of the ‘user’ around the service interaction but to also include the broader socio-cultural landscape. During the design of the customer journey, the research points to the need to perceive the intention of the service phases as part of a series of emotional transitions. It shifts the perspective of designing for a single ‘user’ to ‘users’ and then on to ‘participants’, where experiences that can be intersubjective and heightened which can be the outcome of such shared experiences. On broader terms, it expands the remit of the current practitioner both in terms of a widening skillset as an experiential service designer and as a cultural practitioner. This has further implications for the need to re-skill and rethink their current roles.

In terms of teaching, reskilling for a service designer with a broader remit has implications for teaching as new courses for existing service designers and younger students alike would need to be developed. The research calls for a further subfield of service design that considers experience-centricity in service provision and a greater focus on the cultural dimension. This would require the development of specialisations in service design education and an expansion of both content and perspective. This could lengthen education times or require students to make choices about what kind of the service designer they wish to become.

Implications for research focus on further enquiry into what a more culturally located service design practice might mean to the field. Primarily, this is a call for the expansion of the current framing of design and service marketing/management to include perspectives from socio-cultural domains, and also for further enquiry into the role of service designer as a cultural intermediary and practitioner. There are also implications for how we measure innovation in service provision and design, and the research calls for research into the measuring of ‘service-cultural innovation’. Lifting *Experiential Service Design* as a subfield requires research into this specialisation as an object of study. This might focus on investigations into the aesthetics, craft, approaches and materiality of *Experiential Service Design* as a more culturally located service design practice.

While each of these sets of findings allows us to follow pathways to potential uptake, revision and critique, I see there being great potential and further force for service design when these three areas of implications are also interlinked. Further research allows for further developments in teaching programmes that in turn can expand practice. The expanded practice should be researched and brought back into practice-based learning.

## 1.8 Conclusion

As a whole, the design research I have developed, presented, interpreted and published is itself woven together through cycles of design, reflection and discovery that draws on concepts from the study of the sacred, cultural practice and service design. This is embodied in the final *Sacred Services Approach* described, unpacked and analysed in Chapter 4. The design outcomes of using this approach at different stages of its reflexive development are then illustrated through the case studies in which it was applied.

Concluding this introductory chapter, I would like to point to one more example from the research as a way to show how this interweaving of concepts, themes and practice manifests itself. In the final case study presented in Chapter 3 of this exegesis, a nearly-finalised Sacred Services Approach was applied to the redesign and rethinking of a privilege service in banking. The bank in question had initially designed a service experience concerned predominantly with convenience to wealthy customers, and the new service designed with the *Sacred Services Approach* focused far more on the meaning of the service as a symbol of success.

In this case, a broader socio-cultural understanding of the context was thus key, moving the focus away from the convenience of interaction with the service to the service as a signifier of this success. This required a greater understanding and investigation of what success means in the Norwegian cultural context. The resulting design was more than just a shift in brand values and their communication, as the service directly utilised ritual, myth and symbol as part of the service to embed the meaning in the service experience itself. In cycles of cultural mapping and understanding, it was also important to identify which rituals, myths and symbols should be used in the cultural context to deliver this experience and meaning. This ultimately led to a reframing of the service and a refocusing of its offering, resulting in a service that was far more experience-centric than the initial service and what might be described as a ‘symbolic service’.

The research therefore shows the value of the inclusion and integration of approaches, concepts and methods from socio-cultural domains, in this case with a specific focus on ritual, myth and symbol. The results point to the potential of a new field of culturally located and informed service design referred to here as Experiential Service Design. The research is constructed and executed through an appropriate methodological approach through

research through design aided by design bricolage for transdisciplinary method and theory integration. New knowledge is located in the development of the new approach, in the approach itself and in the outcomes of designing with the approach as an aid to innovation in service provision.

My inquiries have resulted in the development of an approach, concepts, process and model from a service design perspective that guides the service designer in the design of experience- centric services. This points to the potential for innovation in service design and customer experience through the integration and reworking of concepts drawn from theories external to the current framing and practice of service design, and in doing so it calls for service design to further investigate what this means for the field.

The next chapter offers a review of literature deemed relevant for this doctoral thesis, positioning the work within existing theoretical perspectives. It points to relevant perspectives and theories that have further informed the design work; these are then analytically reworked and repositioned in Chapter 4.

As we now live and move within ‘servitised’ cultures, I would argue that the next step is not a matter of becoming enthralled in an experience economy, as predicted by Pine and Gilmore (1999), as one that delivers experience as a ‘product’. Instead, I motivate that we need to develop, critically review and rework services that still offer functional value, and that this may be enriched through a shift to conceptualising, designing, using and researching what may be seen as culturally informed experience- centric services.

## Chapter 2. Situating the Research

### 2.1 Introduction

#### *2.1.1 Transdisciplinary framings*

As a part of the investigation of the research questions addressed in this thesis, I now move to review the relevant literature in service design that will help give an overview and offer a basis for and a transdisciplinary framing for this work. The review will highlight features of current research and some key gaps and opportunities in relation to conceptualisations and research in service design and the topic of customer and service experience more broadly.

In order to delve more deeply into this key concern of my research, I turn to and elaborate further on a number of key aspects on research concerning culture. Links of this kind are rare in contemporary service design research. I therefore include selected aspects of cultural research oriented toward the experiential, drawn from the social sciences, including sociology, anthropology and cultural studies. This is oriented towards the key topic of the study, namely the sacred, comprising matters of ritual, symbol and myth. The chapter works to relate these to the growing attention to experience in service provision. The literature presented is thus linked to the emergent and developmental character of the experiential in service design and the need to assemble and appoint the literature and studies mentioned in a transdisciplinary frame.

Rhetorically, to shape a review of research and situate my study in respect to it, in the second half of the chapter I return to and elaborate on a number of key themes introduced in the first half. These provide more disciplinary detail on the relationship between service design and culture, extending to focus on experience and the sacred and spaces and directions for their connection and realization through design and as research.

As a whole, this chapter acts as scaffolding for the overall study, and it also provides aspects that contribute to the analytical elaboration of the research as given in Chapter 4. This is informed by and developed through a conceptual and methodological interplay in a transdisciplinary of theory and practice. The review and its orientation to my research are arranged in four main parts, which are presented in the following section.

### ***2.1.2 Outline of chapter***

First, I begin with a review of the key concerns in service design. I then move to offer a broader view on services from service marketing and management that culminates in a discussion of the experiential as a measure of value and an introduction to a broader theoretical view on experience that is relevant to this study. I then introduce a view on innovation for services from the OECD and on design approach development, as well as highlighting literature that views the use of culture as a driver of innovation. From here, I outline the nature of service design research and practice highlighting a view on service design as an approach through its processes and material and their evolution from service marketing/management and design. This is followed by a description of the area of experience-centric services.

Second, I present an overview of the relationship between design and culture. I then elaborate on this briefly, referring to work on culture and service design and drawing from fruitful discussions from technology and culture.

I then refer to the growing body of research in design and anthropology before moving more specifically to issues and connections between culture, symbol ritual and the sacred and in terms of the experiential.

Third, I present a view on the sacred and the sacred experience drawn from several theoretical perspectives from the humanities and social sciences. These are framed as fruitful concepts for their relevance for service design. I then present an assembly of these concepts that suggests that sacred experiences are generated through the dynamic interplay between community,

ritual, myth and symbol. I go on to present more detail on each of these elements. Finally, I give examples of how these elements have been utilized toward community construction and community expression in the past.

Fourth, I draw together aspects of the first three parts of the review by connecting work on experiential services and culture, symbol, ritual and the sacred in the marketplace. This frames a space for the elaboration of arguments and material concerning relations between the design of experiential services and the conceptualisation of consumer and popular culture and service design oriented towards and manifested as the sacred. This also includes a brief review of related literature in services and recent developments in design.

As a part of the final summary, I put forth questions that this literature raises and then link these to the publications that comprise the main body of this PhD, to related methods in Chapter 3, and to my further formulation of the design of the *Sacred Services Approach* in Chapter 4.

## **2.2 Key Concerns in Service Design**

### ***2.2.1 Positioning service design research***

Over the past two decades, service design as a design domain and discipline has been realised through the inclusion and elaboration of design-centred service innovation, practice and analytical concepts. In terms of research, in the early phase of the development of service design these concepts tended to originate from studies in management and marketing such as Shostack's blueprint (1984), and eventually shifted to include interaction design concepts (Holmlid & Evenson, 2008; Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011; Morelli, 2009; Sangiorgi, 2009).

Due to these differing conceptual sources and evolutions, service design has been seen as an ambiguous and poorly understood notion (Patricio, Gustafsson & Fisk, 2017). In a review of the development and maturation of service design, Yu (2020) outlines how these locations and foundations have altered over time and contributed to service design to provide a framework for viewing the current state of service design as a research domain.

To do this, Yu breaks down service design into three perspectives of:

1) Marketing/ management-centric service design, 2) Design-centric service design, and 3) Multidisciplinary service design. I will use this framework as a compass to briefly discuss the nature of service design as it stands today (Figure 2.1).

First, Yu points to marketing/management's view of service design as a 'functional activity' (Ibid., p.42), where the focus is on management and control of the service delivery process. A good example that underlines this point is the service blueprint concept, which has greatly influenced current service design practice (Blomkvist, 2015; Kimbell, 2009; Morelli, 2009). The blueprint's focus is distinctly processual, as it looked at ways to manage and structure time, the efficiency of process, service functions and front- and back-office operations and to identify fail points (Shostack, 1984).

Second, from the design-centric, service design perspective, Yu (2020) focuses on the designerly approach to service design innovation, which draws from the approaches and tools of design. Here, Yu, acknowledges the importance of interaction design to the development of service design. Meroni & Sangiorgi (2011) refer to this as the 'interaction paradigm'. Unlike the service management approach, which defines service within the concept of the production process, the interaction design approach defines service as a series of interactions (Pacenti, 1998, 2009; Morelli, 2009). This shifts from a view of 'services as complex organisations to one of services as complex interfaces to the user' (Sangiorgi, 2009, p.416) and it places focus on tangible interfaces between the user and service provider. In this way, service design has shifted from 'designing intangible experiences to designing the tangible elements that enable the desired experiences to occur in a coherent way' (Sangiorgi, 2009, p.416). Much of the focus however is on the tangible elements that a service designer can design, such as touchpoints, which are perceived as physical evidence (Clatworthy, 2011; Parker & Heapy, 2006). It is through these interactions that the customer gains knowledge about the experience of the service and thus evaluates the value of the service (Clatworthy, 2011; Lo, 2011).

Third, Yu (2020) refers to multidisciplinary service design as another type of service design research. Yu argues that service design is multidisciplinary by nature, and that through a human-centred and holistic design thinking approach, a multidisciplinary approach is brought to bear on working with complex service systems.

Yu brings together these perspectives to position current service design



between the two perspectives of management/marketing-centric service design and design-centric service design together with the overlapping approaches of multidisciplinary service-design.

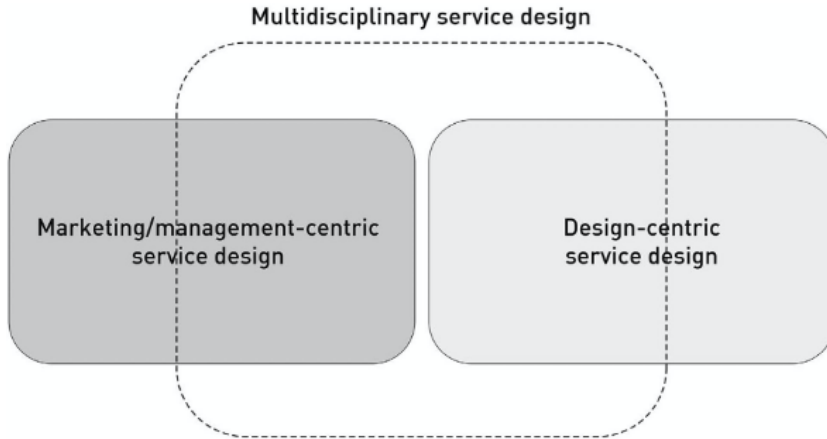


Figure 2.1. Current view of service design as two distinct perspectives where multidisciplinary service design bridges these spaces.

She proposes that the future of service design lies in an expansion of the multidisciplinary to an integrated service design framework that draws marketing/ management-centric service and design-centric service design closer by bringing each domain into an expanded multidisciplinary service design field. This resonates somewhat with Kimbell’s call for design-centric service design to develop closer dialogue with other service disciplines (2009). Despite this expansion, this view is still fully located within an existing paradigm of service design and its evolution from managing and controlling service systems, and from concerns of improved interaction between customer and the tangible aspects of the service. It does not expand to include other approaches or concepts from other fields such as cultural studies or sociology.

### ***2.2.2 Service Design and the socio-cultural***

This does not imply that design-centric service design is not influenced by sociology. As Evenson (2006) argues, design has adopted and adapted social science practice since the early 1990s to gain insight into user experience. Through the influence from interaction design, this is true of service design (Morelli, 2009; Stickdorn et al., 2011) during the insight or analysis phase in particular (Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011), albeit in a much less in-depth

and rigorous way: where the focus is on understanding ‘operative links and identify opportunities for change’ (Morelli, 2009, p.156).

However, design’s use of ethnographic techniques has been critiqued as lacking the necessary distance to the object of study as well as missing opportunities in the larger socio-cultural context (Kjærgaard & Smith, 2014). This has led to a ‘mechanic understanding of people’s needs and life-worlds’ and neglected the potential for ‘larger contextual and socio-cultural frameworks.’ (Ibid., p.268).

What seems to be lacking is an expansion of service design to include a broader view from sociology and cultural practice. This is curious, given that some service design literature does point to the importance of the socio-cultural without engaging further with the broader thematics as an expanded field. As Manzini makes clear:

Services are complex, hybrid artefacts. They are made up of things – places and systems of communication, and interaction – but also of human beings and their organisations. They therefore belong to the physics of nature and technical systems and to biology, but also to sociology and the culture of human beings. (Manzini, 2011, p.1).

Furthermore, interaction design, to which service design has brought so much, has expanded to integrate notions and perspectives from these areas. This has resulted in an enriched research landscape but also lead to an expanded practice, as will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter in relation to design and culture.

To date however, service design as a field seems to have been concerned with the quality and functional concerns of management/marketing service design despite increased focus on the experiential in service provision (Clatworthy, 2019). An exemplification of this is Meroni & Sangiorgi’s (2011) view on what has come to be known as ‘servitisation’ (see LiveWork, 2020) ); it should be noted that Meroni and Sangiorgi do not refer to this term directly, however. As has been mentioned above they, speak of the ‘interaction paradigm’ and they also refer to what they call the ‘functional paradigm’. Referring to Mont’s work on services being able to deliver the same functionality as products but with less environmental impact, they focus on service design as a way to contribute to a ‘revolution of efficiency’ (Ibid., p.17). They claim that is a ‘change of values, consumption modes and lifestyles related to the selling of services instead of products which enables

an optimization of logistics and distribution' (Ibid., p.17). Where a functional view of service design would be needed to deliver the required logistics and distribution for a transition from products to services, it has been speculated that to make this transition, it might be necessary to consider revolutions in the experiential to make services more desirable than ownership (Matthews, 2018).

In summary, this PhD views current service design research as being located within an ongoing dialogue between a marketing/management service design, design-centric service design and multidisciplinary service design. This dialogue sits between interaction and functional paradigms but has as yet to draw from a socio-cultural practice and a broader view on sociology to enrich and expand both research and practice. This PhD is predominantly concerned with innovation in service design process and outcome, and it draws from fields beyond service design's current framing toward the design of new kinds of experience-centric services. In this way, it contributes to an expansion of the current field of service design. Consequently, I will now address in more detail what is meant by services.

## 2.3 Services

### 2.3.1 *The nature of services*

With the growth of the service economy, service design as a subfield of design practice and research has grown considerably in the last 20 years, with a rapid increase in both professional and research literature, design agencies specialising in service design and new networks in practice and research.

Service design has drawn much from service marketing/management as well as traditions from interaction design (Morelli, 2009). As a practice, it has matured to include some standardised, yet flexible and adaptable approaches and tools (Stickdorn, Hormess, Lawrence, & Schneider, 2018), and with regard to research it could be argued that there are well established orthodoxies related to perspectives, domains and framings. These framings position service design firmly within marketing/management, design and multidisciplinary (Yu, 2020), but unlike interaction design, service design has yet to broaden and expand its field of influence to include discourses and perspectives from a broader view from the socio-cultural.

For many years, service marketing research primarily defined the nature of services through their difference to products. This view, referred to as IHIP, is based on four characteristics of services: intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability and perishability (Edgett & Parkinson, 1993; Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1985). Intangibility refers to the often-non-physical nature of services. Services have been defined as ‘performances, rather than objects, they cannot be seen, felt, tasted or touched in the same manner as goods can be sensed’ (Zeithaml et al., 1985, p. 33). Heterogeneity refers to the relative difficulty of standardising service outputs compared to goods, especially in the case of labour-intensive services, the performance of which may vary each time they are delivered to a customer. Inseparability refers to the co-presence of production and consumption in service delivery. This means that the customer must be present for the service experience to take place. Perishability refers to the fact that services cannot be stored due to their other characteristics. Although the validity the IHIP characterisation has been questioned (Lovelock & Gummesson, 2004), as has the rigour of the research that underpins it, IHIP still forms the basis of much service framing.

Since the mid-2000s however, an alternative perspective, known as service-dominant logic (SDL) (Vargo & Lusch, 2004) has been gaining traction as the prevailing perspective of services, not at least in service design literature (Kimbell, 2009, 2011; Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011; Wetter-Edman, 2009; Wetter-Edman et al., 2014). SDL claims that there should be no differentiation in the market between goods and services where value is phenomenologically defined by and co-created with the beneficiary in use. Value is therefore ‘[v]alue in use’ as ‘[t]here is no value until an offering is used, experience and perception are essential to value determination’ (Vargo & Lusch, 2006, p. 44). Value is co-created with the customer, experience is the outcome and it is an evaluation of this experience is what determines this value.

It has been suggested that this view is similar to that of service design because service design is positioned in the tradition of interaction design (Sangiorgi, 2009) and the focus of SDL is the perceived value of interactions between the customer and the service. Despite this, it seems that IHIP has not been fully abandoned as a way to talk about service design. For example, Meroni and Sangiorgi (2011) use IHIP as a framework to consider how service design has developed strategies to deal with the particular characteristics of services.

Both IHIP and SDL offer useful insights into the nature of services and, as has been highlighted, they are still relevant in the discourse concerning

service design research. SDL offers a particularly useful view on service outcomes: the experiential determines value from the beneficiary's perspective. But, as Blomkvist, Clatworthy and Holmlid (2016) point out, although SDL might suggest that the distinctions between goods and services are irrelevant, for a designer who works with 'shaping materials this is not necessarily helpful' (Ibid., p. 3). For this reason, I also refer to IHIP, as this is a particularly useful model for understanding the characteristics and material nature of services when designing. It has been used for this purpose in several of the publications comprising this thesis (particularly Publication 1), but I do not take a specific position regarding whether or not services should be defined by their opposition to goods.

I refer to both positions in the findings as useful ways to frame concepts, material and outcomes. This is not a conflict; I believe that, although SDL is a strong theoretical view, characteristics such as inseparability and intangibility are still relevant and can be used when operationalising an SDL viewpoint. However, SDL limits its view of experience to one that is phenomenological and individual. From this viewpoint, the customer experience is a key determinant of the value of the service exchange, and this is evaluated phenomenologically by the customer. This is to say that the experience takes place in the mind of the customer and is individual and internal.

Value creation in service consumption as internal and subjective has become a dominant perspective in service management and marketing (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Meyer & Schwager, 2007; Sandström et al., 2008; Helkkula, 2011; Smith, Maull & Ng, 2014; Jaakkola, Helkkula, & Aarikka-Stenroos, 2015), and the view has also populated and informed service design literature. As Miettinen, Ryttilahti, Vuontisjärvi, Kuure and Rontti (2015) point out, this value is culturally informed and negotiated.

However, despite this dominant view of customer experience as internal and subjective, in recent years this perspective has been expanded to include the importance of the shared experience of consumer communities for creating collective service experiences (Caru & Cova, 2015). This suggests the importance of interpersonal interaction and a degree of inter-subjectivity in shared experiences. (Pullmann & Gross, 2004). At the same time, shared experiences have been linked to heightened experiences in consumer experience (see Arnould & Price, 1993; Schouten et al., 2007).

### ***2.3.2 Intersubjective, sacred customer experiences***

A particular discourse from consumer culture theory concerned with the sacred and the meaningful in secular consumer behaviour offers several relevant perspectives on heightened customer experience for this research. Arnould and Price (1993) draw from anthropologist Abrahams (1981) to describe what they call ‘extraordinary experiences’. Abrahams (1986) uses the term to refer to experiences that have special meaning or are meaningful as opposed to mundane; this is at times linked with personal growth and development. Arnould and Price develop this further to include newness of perception and process and the connection to others as part of these kinds of experiences.

At the same time, Schouten et al. (2007) describe transcendent customer experiences through the connection to a brand community. To conceptualise these kinds of experiences, they bring together the Maslow’s writings on peak experiences and Csikszentmihalyi’s writings on flow. They describe peak experiences as ‘ephemeral, yet powerful, personally meaningful, and potentially transformational experience’. Flow produces ‘a state of transcendence, a suspension of temporal reality, a sense of separation from the mundane, and a sense of unity with some higher plane of experience’ (Ibid., p.358).

Whilst peak and flow experiences differ conceptually, they are relatable to heightened forms of customer experience, especially in connection to shared experiences within a brand community. Here, where brand community is understood as consumers of a brand who have a sense of relationship to each other in terms of e.g., perceived likeness, consumption patterns, tradition, and feelings of responsibility for the welfare of the brand (Muñiz & O’Guinn 2001).

Belk, et al. (1989) also draw from Maslow and Csikszentmihalyi to describe heightened customer experiences in regards to the role of ritual and the sacred in consumer behaviour. However, in an attempt to show the depth of variety of sacred customer experiences, they also integrate perspectives from sociology and anthropology, not at least those of Durkheim and Turner. Durkheim (1912/2001) describes ecstatic states during ritual acts, which he refers to as ‘collective effervescence’. These are shared experiences when ‘all individual consciences vibrate in unison’ (Ibid., p.152), expressing and strengthening community values, through action and interaction with symbolic objects, resulting in highly emotional episodes that lead to strong bonds in said community.

Turner (1969) describes heightened emotional states during the transitional phases of those experiences that separate us from the mundane of everyday life, for example during pilgrimages or rituals. He refers to these phases as liminal, where the breaking down of social barriers results in a deep sense of connectedness with others in their social group, a phenomenon he refers to as ‘communitas’ (1969). However, Turner’s view, located within that of the anthropology of experience offers a perspective on experience that draws from the epistemology of Dilthey and the concept of the ‘lived experience’ (Kreinath, Snoeck & Stausberg, 2007), which from a tradition of phenomenology is concerned with the recollected and reflected on experience. Turner expands this view to argue that experience can be learned and re-experienced through performative, cultural expressions such as ritual, theatre, myth and stories (Bruner, 1984).

In this view, experiences are informed by culture as well as expressions of it. ‘Expressions (of experience) structure experience in that dominant narratives of a historical era, important rituals and festivals and classic works of art define and illuminate inner experience’, and thus ‘experience is culturally constructed while understanding presupposes experience’. (Bruner, 1984. p.6). These experiences and their expressions, undergo an interpretive process of meaning creation. This is the cultural intersubjective that negotiates and frames the meaning of the experience that lies behind it. This is significant, as it points to the importance of the cultural context in how an experience is experienced, and how we through mapping and ‘reading’ these expressions of culture might understand the lived experience of people, or to relate this specifically to the service context in study.

Belk et al. (1989) suggest that heightened experiences can happen when people are alone, and they are therefore not dependent on assembly. However, Rook (1985) shows that individual heightened experiences are often remotely linked to ongoing participation in larger shared ritual acts and as such still driven by the culturally intersubjective.

In summary Belk et al. (1989) pull together many of these concepts within a framing of sacred experience. They describe the experiences as ‘ecstatic’, existential, ‘joy’, ‘outside of oneself’, like the ‘enchantment’ of ‘love, hope, ambition, jealousy.’ (p.7-8). They state that the level of intensity of sacred experience can vary dramatically and argue that there is no real measure to capture the spectrum of this variability. Here, they use the Durkheimian device of defining the sacred in its opposition to the profane, that is to say,

the everyday or ordinary. This device is useful, as it encapsulates the breadth of the types and intensity of shared and heightened experience simply within their opposition to the quotidian.

Drawing on this research literature, in the context of this PhD experience is described as a key determinant of value and an individually derived outcome of a customer's interactions with a service. However, there are also types of heightened experiences that deliver value that are generated and brought into being through collective shared experiences. These experiences build connections with others and can lead to fleeting yet extraordinary episodes through transitional spaces and time. They can be described as meaningful, higher-plane, ecstatic, special, yet shared and intersubjective. They are as such culturally informed and can be experienced alone when connected to larger community activities of meaning, like rituals. Within the context of heightened service experiences, I will refer to these as sacred customer experiences, and they are defined in their opposition to ordinary or quotidian service encounters. However, understanding or designing for such experiences requires an understanding of the cultural expressions and the underlying meanings from which they emanate. Little attention has been dedicated to designing for these kinds of service experiences in service design literature; accordingly, such topics follow below in this review and offer opportunities for further research.

## **2.4 Service Innovation**

### ***2.4.1 Prevailing views on innovation in Service Design***

My research aims to investigate whether concepts drawn from theories of the sacred can be used to inform and expand service design as an approach to service innovation. It is therefore important to understand what innovation means from a service perspective and how this has been influenced by practice. I also refer to this work on service innovation to point to ways in which service design has gone about positioning its research with respect to predominant views from management, marketing, services research and innovation located primarily in organization, business and technology domains and sectors. In the next sub-section, I shift this focus to service design, innovation and cultural perspectives.

According to *The Oslo Manual* (OECD (2005)), the OECD aimed to



standardise terminology and methods for gathering statistical data to measure innovation in both services and products. For my more qualitative and culturally oriented research, I refer to its definition of innovation in goods and services:

The implementation of a new or significantly improved product (good or service), or process, a new marketing method, or a new organisational method in business practices, workplace organisation or external relations' (p. 46).

*The Oslo Manual* describes four types of innovation in relation to services:

1. **Product innovation:** the introduction of a good or service that is new or significantly improved with respect to its characteristics or intended uses. This includes significant improvements in technical specifications, components and materials, incorporated software, user- friendliness or other functional characteristics.
2. **Process innovation:** the implementation of a new or significantly improved production or delivery method. This includes significant changes in techniques, equipment and/or software.
3. **Marketing innovation:** the implementation of a new marketing method involving significant changes in product design or packaging, product placement, product promotion or pricing.
4. **Organisational innovation:** the implementation of a new organisational method in the firm's business practices, workplace, organisational or external relations. (OECD, 2010, p.20).

*The Oslo Manual* suggests that 'measuring' innovation requires implementation in addition to invention. For service design, new design solutions can demand more systemic changes to the service delivery system, and it may thus take longer for solutions to arrive on the market. This can be problematic for those attempting to measure innovation when many of the designs resulting from use of the final approach developed as part of this PhD have yet to be fully implemented. However, *The Oslo Manual* does report that there is a close 'interrelationship between the development of new services and the process to produce them' (OECD, 2005, p. 30). Innovation development therefore has a direct relationship to the outcome. This is what OECD (2005) refers to as on-going innovation 'activities which are in

progress but have not reached implementation’ (p. 10). This allows focus on the innovation of the design approach or process itself.

A considerable body of research focuses on the development of design tools, methods and approaches specifically for service, positioned as drivers of service innovation (e.g. Kimbell, 2014; Miettinen & Koivisto, 2009; Stickdorn et al. 2011). These drivers of service innovation have offered support to the design and development of services at several points of the design process, and are framed through their contribution to innovation in services design and development. They offer and conceptualise innovation for the following contexts:

- In planning, such as service blueprinting (Shostack, 1984) that visualizes and organizes the system delivery, the customer journey (Rosenbaum, Otolara & Ramírez, 2017) that maps and visualizes the service flow from the customer’s perspective, or Multilevel Service Design (Patricio, Fisk, Falcao e Cunha, & Constantine, 2011) for planning across several levels of the service system to offer a multilevel approach to service development.
- In new service development through tools and methods such as AT-ONE (Clatworthy, 2011) that aid design teams by prompting design activity through five perspectives on services such as ‘Actors’ or ‘Touchpoints’.
- In aiding collaboration through techniques like the desktop walk-through (Blomkvist & Wahlman, 2018), which uses miniature service landscapes for making abstract concepts, such as service processes and flow more tangible.
- In prototyping through methods such as roleplaying (Kaario, Vaajakallio, Lehtinen, Kantola, & Kuikkaniemi, 2009) that give service development teams the opportunity to experience through performing aspects of the service or storyboarding (Segelström, 2009), that offers insight into the planned experience through a visual narrative of the service flow.
- In new ways of translating brands and trends into service experiences like approaches developed recently at AHO, such as ‘Brandslation’ (Motta-Filho, 2017), an approach that aids service designers in translating the brand values and aesthetics into the service experience,

and ‘Trendslation’ (Dennington, 2018), which assists designers in the transposition of cultural phenomena into new service offerings.

In this research, as in mine, ‘design approach’ is viewed as an overall way of doing that include guidelines, frameworks, processes, methods, techniques, tools and related research that support the act of designing (Rogers, 2004; Stolterman, 2008; Stolterman & Pierce, 2012).

When assessing design outcomes that have yet to be implemented, *The Oslo Manual* reports that novelty is another important conceptual component of innovation (OECD, 2005). From this view, innovation and novel solutions that are yet to be delivered are connected. Novelty, according to *The Oslo Manual* (OECD, 2005), requires newness to the firm, the market or the world, relevance and the potential for process and/or service improvements. I therefore use the novelty in design process and, when measurable, in its outcome as a key indicator of innovation when evaluating innovation in the design of new service solutions. This is used as a framework in both Publication 4, as a way to evaluate the GEE model, and in Publication 5, to evaluate the emergent *Sacred Services Approach* in terms of its contribution to innovation. However, despite the framework for the evaluation of innovation in services presented in *The Oslo Manual*, others have proffered a perspective that focuses on innovation through the use of culture in related fields of branding, design and interaction design. I will now move to briefly cover these perspectives.

#### ***2.4.2 Service design innovation through culture***

Writing from a branding perspective and contributing to the discourse in consumer culture theory, Holt and Cameron (2010) critique what they refer to as assumptions in current innovation models that innovation lies primarily in what they call ‘better mousetraps’ (Ibid., p.ix). By this, they mean that innovation models are limited and focused on technical innovation rather what they see as cultural innovation in the framing, communicating and developing of brands. They argue that socio-cultural theories have had little influence on innovation theory, and they present case studies from branding that lift the importance of such framings on the evaluation of how and why top brands currently hold the positions they do. Using Jack Daniels, Nike and Starbucks – to name but a few of their case studies – they argue that the innovation lies more in cultural reframing of what the brands mean to consumers rather than in technical innovation.

They ultimately propose a theory of cultural innovation, and whilst this is positioned in branding it offers a useful perspective for this PhD. They anchor their view on the brand's ability to offer value in *cultural expressions*. Cultural expressions, they argue, are composed of ideology, myth and cultural codes. There is a description relating to these elements in Section 2.7 of this chapter, however, they suggest that cultural innovation in brands can be evaluated through the symbolic, social and functional Value that the brand delivers to the customer. Symbolic value relates to the brand being able to act as 'symbolic anchors for questions of identity, purpose, aspiration and value' (Ibid., p.190). Social value relates to the brand being able convey status but build 'solidarity and community with others' (Ibid., p.190). Finally, functional value suggests that when consumers find 'symbolic and social value in a brand's cultural expression, they tend to perceive that the brand provides better functionality, is higher quality, and is more trustworthy' (Ibid., p.190).

While this innovation framework informs this study, its use is dependent on the existence of an established brand or service. It is therefore arguably not applicable to the evaluation of new service development or service improvement or to new approaches that utilize concepts from culture for service innovation. It does however raise the importance of culture, symbolic and social value for the endeavour of innovation in the marketplace and its role in improving perceived value from the customer.

From a design perspective on innovation through culture, I now turn to Verganti (2009), who introduces a perspective on 'Design-Driven Innovation' in his eponymous book. He argues for a focus on meaning and culture as drivers of innovation in design. In the introduction, he suggests that in the late 1980s, companies viewed 'quality as a top priority: the highest quality performers were succeeding' (Ibid., p.xi). Over time however, quality was no longer a strategic differentiator, as all companies delivered on this principle. Thus, he argues for a shift of perspective to innovation in meaning and culture in the design of products and services. While Verganti offers no evaluative framework for such innovation, he does point to the need for design to engage with the broader socio-cultural context as a way to drive innovation, and as will be elaborated on further in Section 2.5.3, to 'step back from users and take a broader perspective' (Verganti, 2009, p.11).

While Balsamo's main focus is on technological innovation, her focus on the important role design plays in this work offers a relatable perspective for service design and innovation, and so in turn for this PhD. Balsamo (2011) also criticises current innovation models for their focus on only the technological dimension, where value is assessed primarily through economic benefits to the company or firm. I will offer an expanded description on Balsamo's view on culture and technology in Section 2.5.2; in summary however, she believes that 'innovation could be even more innovative in its scope of vision for the future if it were to take culture as a precondition and horizon of creative effort.' (Ibid., p.3).

From a cultural studies view, Balsamo positions culture as a 'socially shared symbolic system of signs and meanings' (Ibid., p.5), drawing on Williams (1981) to describe 'culture as a whole way of life'. Within this logic, technology is not something that is separate to everyday life but rather part of culture. Approaching technological innovation without understanding the cultural impact or failing to integrate aspects of culture drawn and understood from the broader socio-cultural context into its design and development limits the scope of this innovation. Balsamo thus argues that approaches to the design of technology must integrate approaches from beyond its traditional sphere and include approaches and perspectives from socio-cultural domains. With this in mind, she develops and presents a model that integrates these approaches for what she refers to as 'technocultural innovation'. This model will be described in more detail later.

If services are also part of our everyday lives, then arguably Balsamo's logic regarding technology may be applied to service innovation. Thus, what could offer innovation in services is the development of approaches for mapping and integrating culture into the development of services. *The Oslo Manual* offers a framework for understanding innovation in service process and outcome, where design approach development is seen as a driver of innovation in service design. A view on innovation through culture offers a richer dimension. Innovation through culture would demand the integration of views and practice from outside traditional service innovation frameworks to include an understanding of the role of culture and the imperative of integrating views, approaches and perspectives from outside service design's current framing.

## 2.5 Inside Service Design Research

This section will give a brief overview of how service design has been defined as a practice-based discipline. This is important for my study, which researches further into the inclusion of cultural perspectives in service design as a contribution to practice through innovation in process and outcome. Part of this overview will be a description of service design process, tools (specifically the customer journey as a key approach) and the material of service design. Finally, this section will frame service design as a research field, highlighting gaps and opportunity spaces in terms of working with design in cultural frames. I will position this PhD in relationship to these perspectives as we proceed.

### 2.5.1 Framings of service design

Service design has been identified as a contributor and driver of service innovation (Kimbell, 2014). There is still, however, no agreed-upon definition of service design or of the role of the service designer. Over the last 20 years, service design as a subdiscipline of design has developed into its own practice and into approaches that are flexible and variable between practitioners. As an overall approach however, it follows the general structure of most design processes whilst embodying a designerly approach (Stickdorn et al., 2018).

I shall therefore offer an overview that draws on several definitions that have been put forward in service design literature to describe a current view on practice before condensing this into a summary.

Most recently, Stickdorn et al. (2018) engaged 150 service designers and related practitioners to agree on a definition that was initially crowd-sourced by Megan Miller and that serves as a helpful starting point:

Service design helps organizations see their services from a customer perspective. It is an approach to designing services that balances the needs of the customer with the needs of the business, aiming to create seamless and quality service experiences. Service design is rooted in design thinking, and brings a creative, human-centred process to service improvement and designing new services. Through collaborative methods that engage both customers and service delivery teams, service design helps organizations gain true, end-to-end understanding of their services, enabling holistic and meaningful improvements. (Stickdorn et al., 2018. p.19).

This view locates service design in a designerly approach, emphasizing the customer-centric, human-centred and co-creative nature of service design towards improved quality service experiences. It points to addressing both business and customer needs in improving existing services, but also in the design of new ones, pointing to the importance of understanding the whole service experience using a holistic approach.

Back in 2008, Birgit Mager contributed the section on service design to the book *Design Dictionary: Perspectives on design terminology* (Erlhoff & Marshall, 2008). The view Mager offers is still relevant today:

Service designers visualize, formulate, and choreograph solutions to problems that do not necessarily exist today; they observe and interpret requirements and behavioural patterns and transform them into possible future services. This process applies explorative, generative, and evaluative design approaches, and the restructuring of existing services is as much a challenge in service design as the development of innovative new services. When seen from this angle, service design stands in the tradition of product and interface design, enabling the transfer of proven analytical and creative design methods to the world of service provision. In particular, there are close ties to the dimensions of interaction and experience that originated in interface design. Even if these fields of study are still primarily oriented around designing human-machine interfaces, parallels have emerged in theoretical and methodological development, in the search for factors to be noted and influenced when designing an experience, though experience cannot really be designed, only the conditions that lead to experience. (Mager, 2008. p.355).

This view expands somewhat on the previous definition whilst also locating service design practice within a designerly approach oriented toward the visual, explorative, generative, evaluative and the future. Again, there is a focus on iterative improvement as well as on designing new services, whilst the ties to interaction design raise the point that it is not the experiences that can be designed, but rather the channels that can lead to these experiences.

With a focus on experience, Clatworthy adapts the view of the design company LiveWork to a more concise definition that encapsulates an SDL perspective of value creation through experience together with a view that service designers not only design the points of service delivery but a service

offering as a whole. Importantly here Clatworthy also lifts the importance of time as a design factor in service design: ‘Designed offerings to provide experiences that happen over time and across different touchpoints’ (Clatworthy, 2013, p.19).

Finally, through an examination of service design case studies, Meroni and Sangiorgi (2011) see service design’s role from several perspectives. They write that, ‘Service design as an approach to exploring the link between design for services and human experience as it unfolds during the service interactions via the mediation of the service interface.’ (Ibid., p.37). Service design starts by (re)designing service interactions but then expands its influence from this point to transform the service system, ‘organisational culture, stakeholder collaborations and configurations, work practices and business models’ (Ibid., p.83).

Service design may also be understood as an approach for engaging communities in the codesign of public and community services, towards ‘radical service models and innovative usages of social technologies within these processes.’ (Ibid., p. 19). Here, Meroni and Sangiorgi remind us of the evolution of the field from interaction design and the engagement with the lived experience of humans at the point of interaction. However, they also raise service design’s transformational potential within an organisation and the importance and value of cocreation with users for radical innovation.

In my research, I view service design as a practice-based discipline that adopts a designerly approach to design for experiences through the design of interactions between service provider and customers. The service designer uses designerly skills relating to understanding, visualising and communicating the customer experience and needs whilst balancing this with the service provider’s needs. In doing this, the service designer must engage with customers and the delivery systems of the service, which will in turn change the system of service delivery as well as potentially affect the organisational culture of the service provider. The service designer may work to improve an existing service but also may design a whole new future service mindful of future needs, focusing not only on individual interactions but also on the service experience as a whole. Service design is seen as a driver of innovation in organisation, process and outcome. The following section will consider how this is done by accessing related research.



### 2.5.2 *Service design approaches*

Research on service design practice focuses on the service development process as well as the outcome of the service (Koivisto, 2009) and was traditionally seen as part of the new service development (NSD) stage of the development process (Scheuing & Johnson, 1989). It was later expanded to include improvement of existing services (Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996). However, it is now understood that service design involves the whole development process (Holopainen, 2010).

Yu and Sangiorgi (2014) suggest that the service design process follows the Design Council's double diamond model, according to which the design process features four main stages: Discover. Define. Develop. Deliver. The Double Diamond (Figure 2.2) has been used as a way to communicate how the design process works to designers and non-designers alike. The two diamonds represent the designerly problem solving process as an interplay between phases of divergence, where the designer opens the field of enquiry to find and create opportunities, and convergence, where the enquiry closes down and decisions are made.

The Design Council describes the process stages as follows:

- **Discover.** The first diamond helps people understand, rather than simply assume, what the problem is. It involves speaking to and spending time with people who are affected by the issues.
- **Define.** The insight gathered from the discovery phase can help define the challenge in a different way.
- **Develop.** The second diamond encourages people to give different answers to the clearly defined problem, seeking inspiration from elsewhere and co-designing with a range of different people.
- **Deliver.** Delivery involves testing different solutions on a small- scale, rejecting those that will not work and improving those that will. (Design Council, 2020)

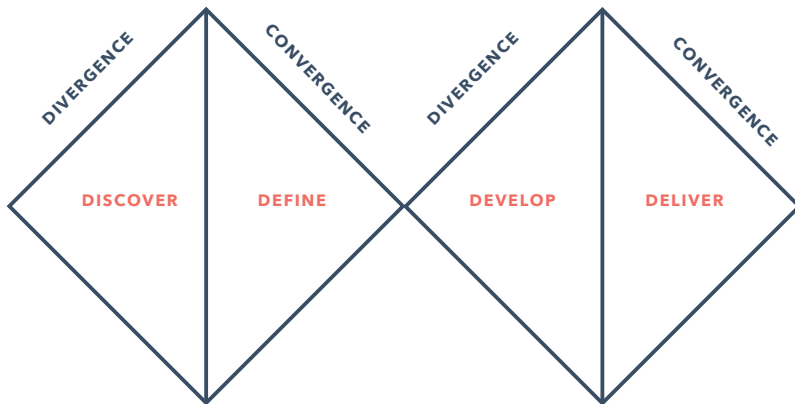


Figure 2.2. A representation of the Design Council's Double Diamond highlighting convergence and divergence phases during the process. (Image redrawn: Ted Matthews)

Stickdorn et.al. (2018) also suggest that the service design process follows the double diamond structure but point out that most design processes, such as 'design thinking', follow this general structure of moving through divergent and convergent phases.

Due to the nature of service design, Meroni and Sangiorgi (2011) adapt the double diamond process into the following four stages: **Analysis. Generating. Developing. Prototyping**. This is summarized as follows:

**Analysis** is about mapping, assembling, recording and sharing contextual information relating to the user's lived experience both in terms of their direct interaction with the service but also other related contextual information. Often using ethnographic approaches adapted from sociology to explore user perceptions and experiences, the service designer uses tools such as the customer journey to understand and visualise the user experience of the service over time.

**Generating** uses visualisations and sketches to construct shared meaning within the project team.

**Developing** explores and develops further initial ideas, connecting them to the larger service system whilst evaluating feasibility. Here, the service designer uses customer journey related tools again to visualise and develop a projected service experience. The staging of service encounters and other interactions with the service are also developed here.

**Prototyping** gives the project team the possibility to test the potential of solutions with people and stakeholders, reducing risk and projecting future service experiences. Here, tools such as experience prototypes and service run-throughs allow team participants to enact service interactions to gain insight into service experiences.

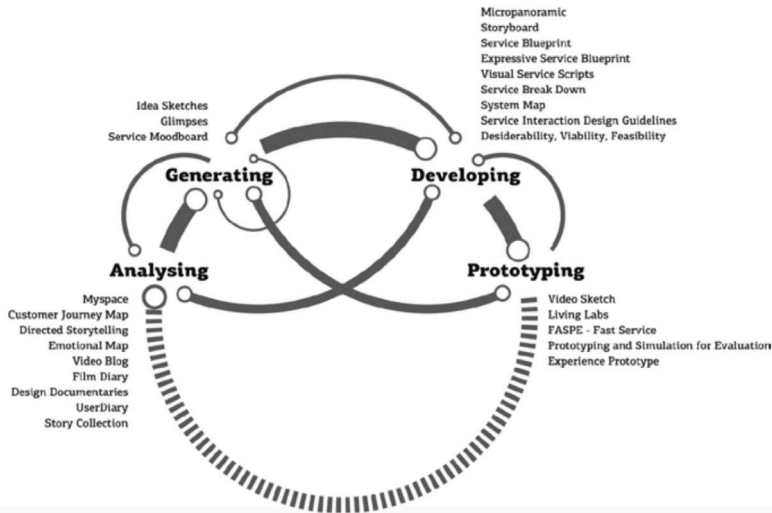


Figure 2.3. A view of the service design process (Meroni and Sangiorgi, 2011).

Meroni and Sangiorgi choose not to represent the design process as in the linear aspects as shown in the double diamond model. Rather, as shown in Figure 2.3, they see this as iterative and dynamic where the service designer moves back and forth between phases as final design solutions are teased out. Their visualisation also shows the kinds of tools utilized by the service designer at each phase of the process.

In this PhD, service design process is seen as a designerly approach to problem-solving, service improvement and development and is applicable through the whole service development, not just NSD. Central here is an analytical and pragmatic view on process that is iterative and dynamic in that the designer shifts back and forth through divergent and convergent phases. In doing this, the service designer uses tools that are adapted from ethnography to understand the customer experience (although as will be argued below, they have a limited scope of contextual perspective) whilst using their skills of visualisation to unpack, understand, organise and communicate these experiences. The same designerly skills are then used to visualise and test projected service solutions and thereby to reflexively

contribute to theory and approaches. Service design tools are described in considerable detail elsewhere (Curedale, 2013; Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011; Miettinen & Koivisto, 2009; Stickdorn et.al., 2011; Tassi, 2009); however, it is relevant for this PhD to discuss research on key tools and related concepts of customer journey, touchpoints and service encounter in somewhat more detail.

### ***2.5.3 The customer journey and touchpoints***

The customer journey and its associated touchpoints are key concepts in service design practice and research. In their systematic review of 55 scientific articles on the subject, Følstad, Kvale, & Halvorsrud (2013) describe customer journey as,

The process a customer goes through to achieve a specific goal involving one or more service providers. By analysing the customer journey we can gain knowledge on how customer care is experienced from the customers' point of view. Furthermore, customer journey visualizations may be helpful to summarize user research and also support design of innovative solutions for customer care. (Ibid., p.4)

Through their substantial review from both service design and marketing/management, Følstad et al. (2013) establish an overview of the role of the customer journey in current practice. They show that the adapted use of tools in service design differ somewhat from their use in service marketing/management to offer methods of improved collaboration and communication. They also show that the approach still reflects its origins as a processual method from service management/marketing, offering ways to structure user insight, a platform to allow for co-creation, and a way to visualise the stages of the design process.

The authors also summarise the literature relating to touchpoints, describing them as points of physical and action-based interaction between a customer and the service (Følstad et al., 2013). Clatworthy (2011) argues for the importance of the touchpoint as part of the customer journey and as part of the assessment of the overall customer experience:

A customer might utilise many different touch-points as part of a use scenario (often called a customer journey)... Each time a person relates to, or interacts with, a touch-point, they have a service-

encounter. This gives an experience and adds something to the person's relationship with the service and the service provider. The sum of all experiences from touch-point interactions colours their opinion of the service (and the service provider). (Ibid., p.15).

Customer journey, touchpoints and service encounters are concepts that allow for an imagining of the customer experience over time and through interaction points with the service. The customer journey considers the whole of the customer experience of a service before, during and after the service interaction (Koivisto, 2009). As Følstad et al., (2013) point out the customer journey is also a tool for mapping, visualizing and communicating the flow of the experience of the customer of the whole of the service through the touchpoints or service encounters. Clatworthy (2013) creates touchpoint cards as a tool to facilitate this activity. As such, both are tools for improving or (re)designing new services. They aid in the planning, forming, as well as communicating and collaborating for design teams.

Some have practically applied the drama metaphor (Hormess & Lawrence, 2018) to the customer journey concept, using structures from films such as James Bond to design new kinds of dramaturgical structures for engaging customers with the service over time. This helps give purpose to the time being designed with, highlighting potential moments of truth in the customer experience during interaction with the service. However, research in this area is limited in service design, and the examples used indicate that this is most applicable to hedonic services (Stickdorn et al., 2018). As opposed to utilitarian services, which focus on function, hedonic services primarily concern fun, entertainment and pleasure, or as Kempf (1999) describes it, as 'affective gratification'.

In summary, the customer journey as a conceptual and operational tool is used in many phases of the service design process and it is hard to imagine a service design project that does not use the customer journey map as part of the process. It is as such a key concept in service design but with its processual heritage its main function is to capture, visualize and communicate the interactions and experiences of customers with the service over time. Save for a few exceptions, generally as a tool for the design of new or future services, the customer journey gives little guidance as to the purpose or meaning of the time being designed with, other than suggesting a before, during and after, time framework.

A customer journey does not explicitly consider the design of shared intersubjective experiences. Designing for shared sacred customer experiences might require other forms of customer journey maps to project possible future service experiences. The customer journey allows the service designer to design and plan with time. In this way, it makes time a more tangible material for the service designer to work with. However, despite much discussion on the materiality of the related field of interaction design (see Pink, Ardèvol, & Lanzeni, 2016; Arnall, 2014; Wiberg, 2014; Nordby, 2011), little has been written on the material of service design. Blomkvist et al. (2016), however, make some first steps into opening this discussion that are useful for this PhD.

#### ***2.5.4 Material of service design***

Blomkvist et al. (2016) offer a theoretical perspective of three ways to consider the material of service design. They place design at the core of this view, using Schön's (1992) understanding of the act of designing as transformation of the materials of a design situation in which design is a conversation with materials.

First, Blomkvist et al. (2016) use the dictionary definition of 'material' as a way to discuss service design material. This offers several views of the term, but what is deemed useful here focuses on the whole, parts and competences. When one focuses on the whole and parts, the authors argue, the material of service design must relate to the whole service and the details and smaller parts that comprise it. They view material framed by competence as the repertoire of the designer, similar to the way in which the repertoire of the comedian is seen as his or her comic material.

Second, Blomkvist et al. (2016) use the concept of service phrases. This is a view of time-based material in which phrases, like music, 'open' and 'close' and allow the service designer to design the 'timing, tempo and rhythm' (Ibid., p.7) of the service.

Finally, Blomkvist et al. (2016) view the material of service design as representational of the designer's process. Where the designer is not working directly with the material of service, materials such as the customer journey map, roleplay and blueprints are used as surrogates for components, things, locations, actions, procedures, interactions and experiences. The authors summarise their argument by positioning the materials of service design

within the categories of process (forming), outcome (e.g. touchpoints) and competence (repertoire).

In this PhD, the discussion of the material of service design is seen as still in its infancy and as such limited. However, using the perspective of Blomkvist et al., (2016) the material of service design can be found in the categories of process, outcome and competence, with time being an important material factor. Although materiality is not a primary focus of study in this PhD, utilizing concepts from theories relating to the sacred has the potential to expand on notions of service material, and as such perspectives on material in service are relevant for this study as part of a broader view of a service design approach.

However, this PhD seeks to expand service design research and practice by integrating perspectives and approaches from socio-cultural. Doing this requires further understanding of the ways in which such world views have been positioned, taken up and developed in service design (see e.g. Holmlid, 2007; Morelli, 2009) and how they inform and impinge on my own inquires and those related to service design, the sacred, consumers, participation and the role of culture (see e.g. Dennington, 2017). I will now turn to this positioning of service design research concerning experience, with a focus in the latter part of this chapter on related aspects drawn from sociology, anthropology and cultural studies.

## **2.6 Service Design and Experience-centricity**

There has been an increased focus on customer experience in service provision by management across several sectors including organisations such as Google, Amazon and KPMG appointing Chief Experience Officers (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). At the same time 81 per cent of global marketers anticipate that by 2020 they will mainly compete in the market through customer experience (Gartner, 2018).

Berry, Wall and Carbone (2006) point out that “Customers always have a service experience when they interact with an organization. They may interact in person, over the telephone, through the internet, or through other means, but they will always have an experience” (Ibid., p.53). With this in mind, the importance of managing positive customer experience has been emphasised (Ranaweera & Neely, 2003; Crosby and Johnson, 2007) not at least as differentiating a company’s service offering and building an

emotional connection to customers (Berry & Carbone, 2007), which leads to customer loyalty (Klaus, Edvardsson & Maklan, 2012; Ranaweera and Neely, 2003).

In 1998, Pine and Gilmore introduced the concept of the ‘experience economy’, which considered experiences as distinct offerings, differentiating them from services and goods. This focus on experience however has led to increased focus from research into customer experience and experiential marketing (Jain, Aagja & Bagdare, 2017), with an expansion of interest in experience from a distinct offering to the general potential of services as platforms for delivering distinct and heightened experiences (Candi, Beltagui, & Riedel, 2013). The expansion has also included non-hedonic services such as tech services, e-commerce, and financial services (Helkkula, 2011).

This distinction between hedonic and more quotidian services lead Vargo and Lusch (2008) to use the term ‘phenomenological’ instead of ‘experiential’ so as to avoid what they called the ‘Disneyworld event’ (Ibid., 2008, p.9) when describing service experience.

### ***2.6.1 Customer Experience***

As we have seen, Vargo and Lusch (2008) have had great influence on the positioning of customer experience in their service-dominant logic framing. From their view, the customer experience is what creates value in the service exchange, and this is evaluated phenomenologically by the customer. This is to say that the experience takes place in the mind of the customer and is purely individual and internal but – as they also point out – co-created between the customer and the service provider. They state:

The customer is always a co-creator of value. Value creation is interactional” where “Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary. Value is idiosyncratic, experiential, contextual and meaning laden. (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, p.7).

However, the sum total of all the service interactions is what the customer uses to assess the value and experience of the service (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Sandström, Edvardsson & Kristensson, 2008), and the sum total of the ‘functional and emotional outcome dimensions of any kind of service’, Helkkula (2011, p.367). As I argue above



however, a view of experience as simply internal, individual and subjective might limit the potential for the design for experiences that are shared, intersubjective sacred customer experiences.

### ***2.6.2 Experience-centric services***

The importance of customer experience in service provision has led to what has been referred to as ‘experience-centric services’ (Voss, Roth, & Chase, 2008). These are ‘services in which firms craft the customer experience proactively to create distinctive product and service offerings’ (Zomerdiijk & Voss, 2010, p.67). However, in their survey of what they refer to as experience-centric service providers, Zomerdiijk and Voss identify companies that do not just deliver hedonic services or experiences as distinct offerings, and include companies that deliver functional services yet have made heightened experience a core part of their service offering, making it clear that experience-centric services can exist across many service sectors. These might be described as non-quotidian experiences in quotidian services.

Zomerdiijk & Voss (2010) propose that experience-centric services actively use design to create engaging encounters and cues as well as heighten the senses, manage the presence of other customers and the way employees engage with customers, pay attention to the dramatic structure of events and to make seamless the connection between backstage operations and front stage experience. This requires a managerial methodology that places the customer experience at the centre of a company’s decision-making processes (Forlani and Pencarelli, 2018). In his book *The Experience-Centric Organisation* (2019), Clatworthy goes as far as to say that the organisation should be built around and drive the experience.

However, what is clear is that design needs to be engaged in the creation of such experiences (Zomerdiijk & Voss, 2010) not at least service design (Clatworthy, 2019). However, where Zomerdiijk and Voss (2010) propose the ‘ingredients’ of the experience-centric service and Clatworthy (2019) proffers an approach to integrating experience into the service organization, neither suggests design approaches to design for these types of service experiences.

Service management and marketing have long since recognised the importance of customer experience in customer satisfaction, in service differentiation and customer loyalty. Service experience has been seen predominantly from a phenomenological perspective, where experience is

internal and subjective. Much of this perspective has informed and been utilized in service design. The concept of experience-centric services and organisations further this discussion to argue that innovations in customer experience are a service provider imperative and that design should be employed to help orchestrate and develop these kinds of services. To date, little attention has been given to how one might design for these types of experiences. This PhD seeks to fill this gap through the development of a new service design approach that aims to use the operationalisation of concepts relating to the study of the sacred to design for sacred customer experiences within the context of experience-centric services. This means we must delve more deeply into relations between design and culture, and thereafter into notions, concepts and formulations of the sacred and their interdisciplinary links.

## **2.7 Connecting Design and Culture**

### ***2.7.1 Introduction***

The aim of this PhD has been to investigate the potential for innovation in service design, reaching across fields of research to draw from perspectives from the study of culture and society. To date, questions of service design and culture are limited. This section aims to illuminate discourses and research approaches relating to culture and design as well as service design. It will also point to parallel writings related to interaction design and culture, where a more established discourse than service design offers relatable and interesting perspectives that inform this study.

### ***2.7.2 Design, service design and culture***

In terms of the broader understanding of what is meant by design culture, it is useful to start with Julier (2013), who sets about understanding design culture through its approaches, attitudes, discourses of self, and values. Julier describes how ‘design culture’:

... lies at the interface between object and individual user, but also extends into more complex systems of exchange. It describes the normative actions, values, resources and languages available to designers, design managers and policy-makers as well as the wider publics that engage with design. (Ibid., p.xiii)

To expand on this, Julier offers a faceted view of design culture, suggesting five perspectives on the term paraphrased below:

1. Design culture as a process, which refers to the approach of carrying out design.
2. Design culture as a context-informed practice, which relates to design as a process but is specific to the way in which geographical context may influence the practice and results of design, i.e. the peculiarities of local culture and/or local materials.
3. Design culture as organizational or attitudinal, as the approach of an organisation or company that concerns itself with innovation. This can in turn be seen as the ‘cultural capital’ of a company and as a way to ‘deliver distinction and differentiation’ (Julier, 2014.p.7).
4. Design culture as agency, as a way to go about changing the approach of an organisation.
5. Design culture as pervasive but differentiated value, transcending traditionally used notions of ‘excellence’ or ‘innovation as value.’

Without reference to Julier, some of these themes are taken up by Zhipeng, Vink and Clatworthy (in press) within a specific focus on service design and culture. They offer a theoretical review of what they refer to as the fragmented and ambiguous discourse on service design and culture to propose a framework for understanding its current landscape. They position existing research within four perspectives: Describing, shaping, adapting, and enacting.

Describing and adapting home in on national culture. Here, referencing Hofstede’s tools and approaches to defining national culture traits, they point to service design’s tendency to describe and make generalisations about culture and its limited view of culture as pertaining to geography. They then show that service design is a form of colonialization, adapting western-centric service design approaches that can end up being a mismatch with structures and approaches of local culture, risking ‘neglecting the intangible values of culture’ (Ibid., p.6).

Shaping deals with service design's tendency to modify and at times transform organizational culture to address specific cultural problems. They postulate that the external view of the service designer entering and manipulating organizational culture can lead to a 'controlling the cultures of others diffusely and in an unrespectful way' (Ibid., p.6). Finally, they focus on service design as cultural performance that is often limited within its own processual approaches, where 'service design is more likely to replicate the world as it is' (Ibid., p.6). With this internality of focus, they argue that service design limits itself, limiting the influence of a 'hidden body of culture' (Ibid., p.7).

Further discussions of the relevance of culture and service design are taken up in Dennington's PhD by publication (in press 2021). In her article entitled 'Service Design as a Cultural Intermediary. Translating cultural phenomena into services' (Dennington, 2017), she argues for the cultural role of service design. Drawing on literature from design, branding and culture, she frames the cultural intermediary as the translation of current culture and trends into and through designed products, brands and services. She argues that whilst services currently act as cultural intermediaries, service design has yet to take up this discussion: 'service design as a cultural intermediary is a view that seems to be missing in current service design discourse.' (Ibid., p.610). This is an area she pursues in her research, presenting an approach for the translation of current trends and culture into service offerings and indeed raising the importance of the role of the service designer as cultural intermediary.

In her article, Dennington also raises the broader limitations in the discussion on the role of culture in service design. This point is highlighted in the papers presented at SERVDES 2018, where, besides the contribution from Dennington, only one other paper took up the question of culture during the conference. Reporting on a case study, Santamaria, Escobar-Tello and Ross (2018) utilize context deconstruction methods from cultural practice in a service design project to widen the insight investigation of the project to include broader socio-cultural trends. What they show is the potential of introducing such approaches to 'enhance designer's strategic skills, building stronger capability to observe and interpret socio-cultural needs and attitudes.' (Ibid., p.1). Although they present approaches they used to investigate the broader socio-cultural context of the service space, they have yet to develop a fully integrated approach for service design. However, their contribution is important, as they raise the value of a broader socio-cultural scope for the service design practitioner.

These views on service design and culture are relevant for this PhD. They point to the role of service designer as a cultural intermediary and the potential of cultural practice for an extended service design practice. Zhipeng et al. (in press) also bring into question how service design interprets and views culture within normative and geographical understandings, pointing to the limitations of service design approaches that do not draw from a broader body of culture in its own repertoire. As we have seen in Section 2.2.1, this is a point raised and elaborated on by Balsamo (2011) in regard to the design of technology that limits its potential for innovation if it does not integrate broader perspectives from culture. Although this view is related more to interaction design, it is still highly relevant for this PhD.

### ***2.7.3 Interaction design and culture***

Interaction design has widened its perspective to include a broader socio-cultural perspective in research and practice. This has been covered in books such as *Inventing the Medium: Principles of interaction design* as a cultural practice (Murray, 2011), in a view of interaction design as and of everyday urban culture (Martinussen, 2015), in approaches to socio-cultural framing of intangible digital material (Arnall, 2014) and to cultural frame shifting in interaction design (Markussen & Krogh, 2008) – to name but a few.

Balsamo (2011) however raises the imperative for the design field to incorporate culture as material of interaction design. She argues that issues relating to culture should be inseparable from those of the technological throughout the design process, where the designer must integrate and interpret cultural material as a natural part of the process. Referencing Slack and Wise (2005), she argues that culture and technology have been approached as separate domains of human life and that separating the design of technology from broader culture makes innovation unthinkable, as it severely limits what she refers to as ‘imaginative space’ (Ibid., p.4) and therefore limits the innovative scope of any possible designed solution.

Balsamo develops a concept that brings together technology and culture within a specific enjoined concept that she refers to as ‘technoculture’. She argues the process of technocultural innovation brings together two critical practices: that of the exercise of technological imagination, and the work of cultural reproduction. She states, ‘It is through their technocultural imaginations that people engage the materiality of the world, creating the conditions for future world-making’ (Ibid., p.6) and through this work

‘culture too is reworked through the development of new narratives, new myths, new rituals, new modes of expression, and new knowledges that make the innovation meaningful’.

In an exemplification of this view she goes about reframing telecommunication as a ritual rather than a technological interaction. Drawing from James Carey’s understanding of a ritual model of communication where ‘communication acts as a representation of shared beliefs across time and space’ contra a telecommunications model that ‘focuses on the transfer of information from active sender to passive receiver’ (Ibid., p.40), she is able to reimagine this exchange.

Introducing ritual as cultural material to a technological interaction changed the design of the format of communication, which in turn shifted the meaning of the interaction as it aimed to bring people together in communication rather than just information transfer. This affected the way the final interaction was experienced and the eventual output of said interactions. To engage the technocultural imagination, Balsamo argues for the introduction of new approaches to the design of technology that integrate approaches from socio-cultural domains towards deeper and broader cultural analysis as part of the design process. She develops such an approach, which I will describe in Section 2.8.4 on cultural analysis.

Although these perspectives are from interaction design, they are highly relevant for service design, which, as I have argued has drawn a great deal from the heritage of interaction design. If service design fails to investigate and utilize the potential of culture as material for the design of services, it will severely limit its own ‘imaginative space’ and in turn potential for innovation. To open this imaginative space, new approaches and concepts are required that draw from the practices and perspectives from the socio-cultural domains.

Balsamo concludes that ‘Culture is both a resource for, and an outcome of, the designing process’ (Ibid., p.326); in this way we are reminded of the role of designer as a cultural intermediary (Julier, 2013) who actively interprets culture through and in the designs they produce, increasingly giving commodities their cultural meaning (Press and Cooper, 2003). This is a role currently held by the service designer, but it needs further consideration (Dennington, 2017).

### 2.7.4 *Design, anthropology and ethnography*

Another important field of research that has informed this study's view on perspectives on culture in design is design anthropology. Design anthropology is said to be a loosely defined term (Clarke, 2017) that incorporates several approaches and perspectives regarding ethnography and anthropological approaches for design, creating a hybrid of

... anthropological and designerly practices such as interventionist forms of fieldwork and design that works through iterative cycles of reflection and action and employs a range of methodological tools such as mock-ups, props, provo-and prototypes, tangible interactions and enactments. (Otto & Smith, 2013, p.11).

Otto and Smith (2013) show that the roots of design anthropology can be traced back to the 1930s and collaborations between anthropologists, management researchers and designers in industrial settings to study workers' productivity. Much of its more recent development might be linked to HCI during the 1980s, with e.g. studies of human behaviour relating to computers and the workplace in Silicon Valley and a focus on situated action in relation to users and technology (Otto & Smith, 2013). While this work had a predominantly technical bias and concerned in-situ interactions, these approaches have been championed and developed more recently by agencies such as IDEO (Clarke, 2017; Otto & Smith, 2013) as a means to understanding the experience of the user in other design contexts, not at least service design (Blomberg & Darrah 2015; Prendville, 2015).

Yet, as has been raised earlier, the critique of ethnographic approaches in design by Kjærgaard and Smith (2014) is that the lack of needed proximity from the subject of study and as well as a greater understanding of the larger contextual socio-cultural framework has led to a 'mechanic understanding of people's needs and life-worlds' (Ibid., p.168). As we have seen through the writings of Balsamo (2011), Ignoring this broader cultural perspective restricts the designer's perspective for innovation.

One of these ethnographic approaches for understanding the life worlds of users is the 'cultural probe' (Gaver, Dunne & Pacenti, 1999; Gaver, Boucher & Pennington, 2004). The cultural probe is often a bundle of artefacts and equipment for users to map and capture their life worlds, and it include things such as notebooks, cameras, questionnaires, audio devices and diaries. The cultural probe is not an analytical tool in itself but a way to capture

something of the life of users to then inspire further design. Gaver argues that it may ‘offer fragmentary glimpses into the rich texture of people’s lives. They allow us to build semi-factual narratives, from which design proposals emerge like props for a film.’ (Gaver, 2002, p.1). The cultural probe is a useful tool for gaining insight into and inspiring the design process; however, as Martinussen (2015) points out in his critique of the approach, they ‘usually limit their scope to a particular set of users and use design to study their activities and contexts’ (Ibid., p.35). This again chimes with a view that such approaches to mapping is limited in the breadth of its socio-cultural scope. This is a point that Bell (2006) underlines in a study of the design of telecommunication services that focused primarily on the human experience of the interaction points but failed to take into account broader socio-cultural issues and concerns, pointing specifically to perspectives on the sacred and other culturally located behaviour.

Whilst it has been argued that service design may include investigation of the potential of culture as material for design, it is equally important to consider whether the field has the approaches and tools to map and understand the broader socio-cultural landscape from which this material might be gleaned and understood.

## **2.8 On Cultural Research Perspectives**

### ***2.8.1 Introduction***

The study of culture has grown massively from early anthropologies of ‘others’ now seen as part of colonial discourses and imperial projects (e.g. Banaji, 1970; Trouillot, 2000) to today’s views on reflexivity, voice, multiple views and insider-outsider perspectives (e.g. Geertz, 1973/2000; Thomassen, 2010). Cultural studies views have introduced perspectives and practices from feminism and identity formation, whether on gender, youth, migration or power (e.g. Spivak, 2013; Storey, 2018). All in all, culture is seen as a dynamic, vibrant part of human endeavour and societal and individual life and daily engagement in groups, interests and communities and companies.

Briefly, Avruch (1998) presents three dominant perspectives of culture. According to the first, culture is a special, intellectual or artistic endeavour that can be defined as high culture and opposed to popular culture. The



second perspective, referencing to earlier anthropologist Tylor, views culture as many systems and structures, such as ‘knowledge, art, morals, customs, capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society’ (Ibid., p.6). This definition claims that culture is part of our everyday lives and is not simply ‘high culture’. This view also argues that cultures have common structures and characteristics across many societies but differ in terms of progress on their evolutionary scale. This is problematic, as it demonstrates a colonial bias in its value judgments of certain cultures. The third perspective is symbolic anthropological and defines culture as a readable web of symbols that illuminate meaning that can only be understood in a unique context. This view dismisses the value judgments of earlier anthropological theories.

The first perspective is of little relevance for this PhD thesis, as it is not concerned with a broader social science-based view of culture rather with a view that frames culture within class and aesthetics. However, looking beyond antiquated questions of ‘value judgment’, the two other perspectives are compelling and useful for this research with reference to a focus on symbol, myth and the sacred in anthropology and also sociology, largely from Durkheim.

### ***2.8.2 A universal approach***

A ‘universal’ view on culture argues that all cultures share similar structures and characteristics that can be generalised across different cultures, whether on a national scale or between smaller communities. This is exemplified in structural anthropology, such as Lévi–Strauss’s (1955) view of myths, which points to shared structures across cultures. It is also evident in folklorist Joseph Campbell’s (1949/2008) argument for a universal mono-myth and in Booker’s (2004) claim that there are seven universal narratives that can be understood across cultures, a perspective broadly built upon the work of Jung. In addition, Bell (1996) and Turner and Stets (2005) argue for a universal structure of ritual that is arranged into three distinct aspects of meaning.

A view of culture as having generalisable commonalities still has traction in the related fields of management and marketing. As discussed earlier, Hofstede’s (1980, 1991, 2001) work on national cultural traits suggests that national cultures share some homogenous characteristics. Whilst his normative model has been critiqued for its generalised understanding of national culture (Fougere & Moulettes, 2007; Said & Escobar, 2006) as well

as its underlying negative value judgments of certain cultures, it has been commonly used as an approach to management and marketing across cultures. His work has therefore been used to frame studies in areas related to this PhD thesis, such as branding (Foscht, Maloles III, Swoboda, Morschett, & Sinha, 2008; Lam, 2007), marketing (Albers-Miller & Gelb, 1996; De Mooij, 2013; De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010) and service experience (Donthu & Yoo, 1998; Erramilli, 1991; Klaus, 2013).

### ***2.8.3 A contextual, interpretative approach***

In contrast to this perspective, a more unique, local and situated view of culture argues for a context-specific interpretive approach. I align more fully with this view that allows us to extend notions and practices of service design to focus on the experiential in which the performative is central. This PhD thesis has drawn from the symbolic anthropology of Geertz and Turner, who place great importance on a hermeneutical approach to understanding culture. According to symbolic anthropology, culture is a unique system of meaning that can be deciphered by interpreting a group's symbols and rituals (Spencer, 1996). In addition, 'beliefs, however unintelligible, become comprehensible when understood as part of a cultural system of meaning' (Des Chene, 1996, p.1274).

Geertz (1973/2000) therefore interprets culture through 'man's webs of significance' (Ibid., p.64). Similarly, Belk et al. (1989) understand consumer culture through a cultural matrix. This 'web', 'matrix' or, to use a term favoured throughout this thesis, 'mesh' is an articulation of culture at every level and includes things such as what we eat and how we eat it (Counihan & Van Esterik, 2012; Douglas & Gross, 1981), the sports we play (Arens & Montague, 1976; Geertz, 1973/2000), the clothes we wear (Davis, 1994; Manlow, 2009) and the rituals in which we engage (Turner & Turner, 1978; Geertz, 1973/2000). Together, these characteristics constitute the 'stories we tell about ourselves' (Geertz, 1973/2000, p.24), and they are 'a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life' (Ibid., p.89).

Another useful perspective on reading culture on which this thesis draws comes from cultural theorist Roland Barthes and his renowned work *Mythologies* (1957/1972). In *Mythologies*, Barthes argues that the modern myths of society can be understood and read through certain symbolic totems

imbued with specific meaning relatable to national perspectives of self. One of the examples he uses relates to the meaning of wine in French society. From Barthes' perspective the wine is a signifier, a mythology of social equality and the beverage of the working class. He draws from Saussure's semiological analysis that describes the connections between an object (the signified) and its linguistic representation (the signifier) and how the two are interrelated. In myth-making, the symbol is itself used as a signifier, and a new meaning is added, which is the signified. He believes however that the meaning is mediated and controlled by those in power and the media they control.

As an example, Barthes uses the cover of the magazine *Paris Match* that depicts a black soldier in a French military uniform as a way to demonstrate his approach to cultural analysis. He points out that the signifier in the image is the young black soldier saluting, and he has been chosen by the magazine to symbolize much more than the soldier himself. Here we see a mesh of the signified; of 'Frenchness', of military power and tradition, of the intensity in the young soldier's eyes and in the ethnicity of the subject that together express something about the French mythology of self. A view that 'France is a great empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag.' (Barthes, 1957/1972, p.116).

#### ***2.8.4 Service-culture under development***

Indeed, it is from these hermeneutical and semiological approaches that Balsamo (2011) draws to integrate cultural analysis into technology design practice. She refers to this as 'hermeneutic reverse engineering', as what is reverse engineered are all the aspects that make up the meaning of any given 'technocultural formation'. She suggests that her approach resonates with other user-centred design approaches where understanding the users lived experience as key, however what her approach explicitly does is raise larger socio-cultural issues that normally fall outside the realm of technological development, such as issues relating to class, gender, ethnicity. The approach has three phases '1) identifying the meanings and assumptions that already structure the scene of technological innovation, 2) isolating key signifying elements that influence the technology-under-development, and 3) providing a sense of the possibilities for rearticulating (or reassembling) different meanings for the technology-under-development' (Ibid., p.16).

Balsamo gives a summary of her approach which I will reproduce below, as it offers useful insight into how an approach might integrate the practice of broader cultural analysis and integrate this into a design process. Parallel to her take on formation, design and technology, we may propose one that concerns service-culture under development.

Balsamo breaks down her perspective into 11 steps:

1. **Observation and description:** Often taken-for-granted, this step involves practices that constitute the elements of signification.
2. **Analysis:** The step of identifying the arrangement among signifying elements whereby a unity is produced.
3. **Interpretation:** The creation of a provisional account of how the elements signify. This step might involve the creation of semiotic analyses of product semantics of similar technologies, the aesthetic characteristics of a communicative genre, the application of a particular interpretive framework (for example feminist, Marxist, post-colonialist), or a functional analysis of a working system. This is an iterative step that continues by drawing more lines of significance.
4. **Articulation:** Identifies the relevant elements or contexts that contribute to the intelligibility of the technology-under-development. This involves determining how elements cohere as a unity and how elements are interlinked.
5. **Rearticulation:** This begins the process of rearranging elements through which meaning is reconstituted when elements are combined in novel ways.
6. **Prototype:** This stage utilizes the full range of prototyping methods: paper, toy, digital, video, sketches, mime, gestures, and improvisation, to name a few. Prototyping is a physical technique of rearticulation. Prototypes manifest possibilities through the unique use of materials or invention of expressive modalities. Rapid prototyping creates alternative rearticulations quickly and plentifully. Prototyping is an embodied dialogue between people and materials.
7. **Assessment:** This stage includes the use of methods of evaluation to determine the effectiveness of a particular interim design effort.

8. **Iteration:** These steps are repeated until a social consensus is negotiated, or until a set of constraints imposes an end to the designing process.
9. **Production:** Sometimes the production and the designing processes are thoroughly merged. In other cases, the production of the design requires manufacturing capabilities beyond the resources of the initial designers. It is always the case, however, that production will necessarily initiate additional (iterative) designing efforts to accommodate the constraints of fabrication, duplication, distribution, consumption, packaging, and disposal.
10. **Reflection:** This step documents, and in some cases actually creates, the rationality of the designing process and outcomes.
11. **Critique:** This is an uncommon final step that turns a critical gaze back onto the designing process itself in order to ask questions about the consequences of the practices, outcomes, and long- range implications. (Ibid., p.17)

Hermeneutical reverse engineering offers a useful approach to technological innovation where cultural analysis is brought into the design process in a systematic way. The approach identifies broader cultural themes, and through the hermeneutical process, draws out the meanings within the technological space being designed, but also from the broader socio-cultural context. Balsamo refers to Geertz and how we must draw from a reading of ‘man’s webs of significance’, and she offers an approach to doing this and integrating it into the design process. The approach offers an interesting starting point and inspiration for the development of more culturally located approaches in service design. However, Balsamo writes from the perspective of a cultural theorist, and unsurprisingly this voice is dominant in the approach. What is less articulated is the designer’s view of the potential of such an approach and how such an approach might be wielded or further developed in the hands of a designer. Referring back to an earlier example in which Balsamo reframes communication as ritual and then ritual is used in the design, we are given insight into the structure and material of ritual which, as we will see shortly, has specific constructions and traits that the designer can use.

These perspectives on reading and analysing culture offer a broader perspective than the mechanical understanding of people’s needs and life-worlds that concern Kjærgaard and Smith (2014). In this way such

approaches offer larger contextual and socio-cultural frameworks to form a broader analysis of people's life worlds. They also expand the concepts and material available to the designer in their task of designing. Despite obvious tension between normative universal models of cultural analysis and interpretive located readings, between them there are interesting approaches for service design to consider in an expanded view of service design as a field of research and practice particularly in relationship to service design and culture.

A universal view of culture is of interest to this thesis, as it suggests that there exist shared characteristics and structures across cultures that might be useful for building service design approaches that can be used across many cultural contexts and design settings. However, the more interpretive approaches highlighted here for the reading and analysis of culture are also relevant to this work, as they show that culture and meaning can be interpreted through its specific mesh and combinations of symbols, myths and rituals. Balsamo offers an approach to how this might be done in the design of technology.

Balsamo (2011) locates ritual as having expanded meaning in communication. By this, she means that approaching communication as ritual reframes the purpose of the exchange between people. She then uses ritual as the cultural material for the redesign of the way people communicate to change the meaning of the communication to be more than information exchange, but also community building. In the same way, it could be argued that by mapping the mesh of cultural material to gain insight into the meanings and values that lie behind them, we also locate the material with which we might design for services.

This thesis is concerned with the potential concepts relating to the sacred and how they might be utilized in the design of sacred customer experiences. A review of selected literature relating to the sacred that has informed this study will follow here. The concepts relating to the sacred presented here are interesting and relevant for service design for the following reasons. First, sacred experiences are often meaningful, extraordinary, memorable and transformational. Second, structures and components, such as ritual, myth and symbols, can generate sacred experiences, leading to emotional commitment and loyalty. Third, the materials comprising these structures and components fit closely with service design (see Publication 1). Fourth, sacred experiences can occur in modern secular and consumer society through brand, product and service provision. Fifth, components such as ritual and myth can be designed, and as such have been created in the past.

This section will offer more details on these points. However, I will begin by further clarifying the source of the sacred experience societally, not in religious terms – that is, not as an external deity, but by way of the community. I will then define the sacred experience itself.

## 2.9 On the Sacred

### 2.9.1 *'Reading' the sacred as a field*

In theology, the sacred is divine in nature and emanates from the 'theos', a force that is external to humankind (Otto, 1923/1958). In sociology, however, this is not so. Durkheim (1912/2001), an atheist, viewed the sacred as a wholly human-generated experience. In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (Durkheim, 1912/2001), he argued that sacred experiences are generated when communities come together in rituals, and through this assembly, which features symbols of meaning and syncopation of action, a state of 'collective effervescence' is achieved. Out of these ecstatic states, the community-generated sacred sometimes manifests in totems such as myths, symbols and artefacts. Thus, the locus of the sacred is in fact individuals, groups and communities, and the manifestation of the sacred in totemic representations are but symbols of themselves.

Although Durkheim's conclusions were drawn from observations of 'primitive' communities, he did speculate regarding the extent to which this phenomenon was present in 'advanced' societies. Collins (2004), building on the work of Durkheim, sees the condition that Durkheim described as a phenomenon of modern secular society. This view is clearly echoed by consumer culture theory and its discourse on sacred consumerism, which will be addressed at the end of this chapter.

Sacred experiences often occur through contact with that which is deemed sacred or through engagement in ritual leading to emotional, heightened and memorable experiences. Durkheim (1912/2001) defines the sacred by its opposition to the profane (or mundane). Building on Durkheim's understanding of 'collective effervescence', Collins (2004) refers to an emotional build-up to what he calls 'emotional entrainment', which is a transformational experience that leads to long-term emotional commitment and loyalty to the group and the object of the sacred.

Belk et al. (1989) summarise sacred experiences as ‘ecstatic’, existential, ‘joy’, ‘outside of oneself’, ‘peak experiences’ and the ‘enchantment’ of ‘love, hope, ambition, jealousy’ (Belk et al., 1989, pp.7–8). At least for some rituals, these kinds of experiences ‘foster enduring episodic memories for initiations, in some cases exhibiting all the features of classic flashbulb memory’ (Whitehouse, 2001, p.178).

I see Durkheim’s (1912/2001) understanding of the sacred as definable through its opposition to the mundane to describe the sacred experience. I define the sacred experience as a non-mundane experience that is meaningful and highly emotional, born out of the values and relationships within a community, generated and expressed through ritual, myth and the symbolic, which are inseparable from the sacred. Over time, values and a sense of group identity are strengthened through sensorial stimulation, assembly and contact with meaningful symbols, which can lead to the emergence of fleeting, ecstatic episodes and transformational experiences.

### ***2.9.2 Structures and components of the sacred***

The construction of different theories into a usable structure for service design is summarised below (see also Figure 2.4). These concepts were identified as a ‘fit’ with service design. For example, time-based structures like ritual have the potential to add meaning and dramaturgy to time-based structures found in the customer journey. Rethinking customers as a community could connect consumers and encourage meaningful interactions.

This construction suggests that sacred and meaningful experiences are generated from groups that might identify themselves as communities, expressed through their meaningful symbols, performed in rituals and through the telling of myths, which are the metaphors of themselves and their values. In expressing these values through symbol, ritual and myth, the community in turn strengthens these values and the sense of identity as a community. Highly emotional and sacred experiences occur within the dynamic interplay between these elements. It is because of this perceived relevance for the potential to generate heightened experiences in service provision that community, ritual, myth and symbol have been investigated. Concepts have been teased out from theory due to their relevance for the design of experience-centric services.



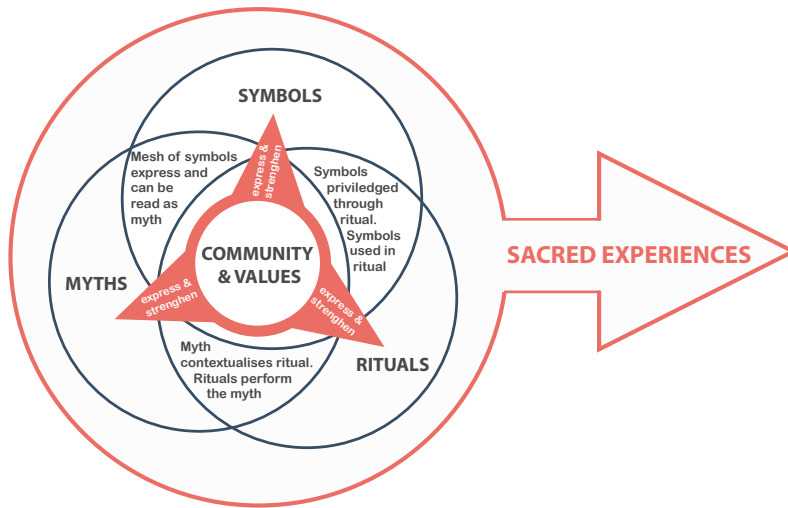


Figure 2.4. Visualisation of the dynamic between community, myth, ritual and symbol from which the sacred experience derives (Image: Ted Matthews).

A description of each of these elements follows here, and it should be noted that their relationships are often overlapping and interrelated.

### ***2.9.3 Community and sacred experiences***

The term ‘community’ has long since transcended its original meaning, which has traditionally related to place (Knott, 2004; Wellman, 1979). However, be it physical or virtual, place still plays an important part in the formation of community. Anderson (1987) argues that, with the expansion and development of modern society, any community that extends beyond a small village can only be imagined. Communities of this kind exist in reality only as an idea in the mind of an individual who finds themselves ‘in-common’ (Nancy, 1991) with others. Nancy goes on to suggest that they can only be found in the myth of community itself. This is a clear ‘consciousness of kind’ (Gusfield, 1975) in which barriers to the ‘other’ are formed (Collins, 2004), and identities are clarified and strengthened as a result of this differentiation.

Through modern methods of communication, individuals have found ‘commonality of purpose and identity’ (Muniz et al., 2002, p.413) despite geographic dispersion. No longer restrained by place, community has come to incorporate a wider definition that includes communities of shared values and beliefs with a sense of identity that, in turn, provides ‘context for (their

own) identity, meaning, morality and politics' (A. Geertz, 2004, p.193). Returning to Durkheim (1912/2001), this identity is manifested through myths, rituals and symbols. If we are to understand community in this sense, then it is through these cultural manifestations that we must look for answers, as 'communities are to be distinguished ... by the style in which they are imagined' (Anderson, 1987, p.6).

In this PhD thesis, community is defined as a group that is aware of its commonality, sharing common values. This includes larger social groups at the national and local level as well as dispersed consumer communities, which might extend beyond land boundaries. As sacred experiences are born out of community through ritual, myth and the symbolic, I see community as a driver of sacred experiences and an important factor in their generation.

#### ***2.9.4 Myths and symbols***

I address myths and symbols together as they are both representations of communities' identity and values. Together, these form ensembles of cultural manifestations via the 'stories we tell ourselves about ourselves' (Geertz, 1973/2000, p.448). Rituals could have also been discussed here, as they too are manifestations of community identity, but due to their breadth and relevance to service design as a time-based structure, I will address with them in their own section.

In common usage, myth has come to mean 'a falsity' or 'a lie' (Segal, 2004), but for many who study the field of myth, it means much more: often, a truth told through metaphor. There are many views of myths. Condensing the endless theories into a single sentence, Segal (2004) suggests they are 'stories of significance' and, to qualify as a myth, a story must 'express[es] a conviction' and be 'held tenaciously by adherents' (Ibid., p.5). For Nancy (1991), the myth is the community; in 'communicating itself, it brings into being what it says, it founds its fiction' (Nancy 1991, p.56), and 'myth and myth's force and foundation are essential to community and there can be, therefore, no community outside of myth' (Ibid., p.57). In this way, the community may express itself through myths, but without these myths, the community could neither exist nor be imagined (Anderson, 1987).

Lévi-Strauss (1955) sees myth as having a universal structure that can be broken down into different elements and beliefs that, through symbolic relationships and oppositions, enable us to identify fundamental truths about

our society. Here, myths are a narrative system that reflects society back at itself with all its contradictions. It also resolves a ‘dilemma or contradiction endemic to that society’ (Brooker, 1999, p.171). This function of myth is mentioned by neuroscientists Newberg and d’Aquili (2008), who see the use of myth as a way for the brain to resolve existential questions of varying magnitudes. As we will see later, ritual also has this function in a literal, performative sense.

As has been mentioned earlier in this chapter, Barthes’ (1957/1972) *Mythologies* includes a series of essays that deconstruct images and social narratives that are constructed and understood through the assembly and use of symbols and their relationship to each other. Where his work may speak of power structures that control these symbols and the ideologies underlying them, where symbols can be ‘read’ by the audience and, in this way, be understood by the community as powerful narratives of identity.

Neo-tribes or smaller communities have specific constructions of symbols (Maffesoli, 1996). Returning again to Durkheim (1912/2001), Maffesoli (1996) rightly notes that he places weight on social relations as the core of community but relies on totems and symbols of the group’s solidarity. So, when these symbols circulate in communities, charged with meaning and values, they quickly become part of the group’s cultural capital (Turner & Stets, 2005).

It would not be possible to talk about myth without mentioning the work of Joseph Campbell. Whereas Lévi-Strauss (1955) observed comparable structures of myths across cultures, Campbell (1949/2008), a comparative mythologist, believed that all myths across all cultures shared a universal structure which he termed the ‘mono-myth’. He claimed that this mono-myth was the hero narrative: the quest of a hero who is called to adventure and, after completing trials that pitch good against evil, triumphs and returns to restore harmony to his community (Campbell, 1949/2008). This not only mirrors the ritual structures proposed by Van Gennep (1909/1960) in *Rite of Passage*, which will be discussed shortly, but it also offers structure for the development of new myths. Campbell argued that, even today, new myths emerge and develop in an organic way or, as proposed by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), through the intentional invention of tradition.

In summary, it is myth that ultimately becomes the foundation of the rituals that we perform together as communities; for many theorists, ritual is the performance of myth (Bell, 1997). In this doctoral research, myth is viewed as

a symbolic narrative that reflects some underlying truth about the community it represents. The community exists as part of the myth, and the myth strengthens the identity of the group. These metaphorical narratives serve to allay the existential anxieties of the community.

In addition, in this PhD, symbols are seen as symbolic representations of a community and its solidarity and as parts of the community's cultural capital. There is a mesh of symbols that relate to each other and tell a broader story or mythology of the community to which they belong. To reiterate, both myth and symbol are seen as important elements in the generation of sacred experiences.

### ***2.9.5 Ritual***

Ritual is as instinctive to humans as to animals that display ritualistic behaviour (Bell, 1997, Newberg & d'Aquili, 2008). At times, modernity has seen ritual as an unnecessary embellishment and a controlling power structure that should be cast off somehow to allow us to be truly human (Bell, 1997). However, it is in our nature to exhibit ritualistic behaviour, and it matters little whether this is due to our neurological makeup or to socialisation. Rituals pervade every part of our everyday lives (Collins, 2004; Goffman, 1967; Rook, 1985). They can be minor interactions, like handshakes (Turner & Stets, 2005), highly elaborate ceremonies, like graduations, and 'rites of passage', like marriage, that can take place over several months (Van Gennep, 1909/1960).

In addition, rituals can be cyclical and happen at the same time each year (Van Gennep, 1909/1960), like Christmas or Independence Day celebrations, for example. These are enactments of rites of passage that, through their performance, bring us back emotionally to the initial ritual and expressions of lived experiences (Bruner, 1984). They give structure to time, and without them we would be less human.

Given the prevalence of ritual action in our lives, it is worth considering what rituals do and how they have been defined. Rituals accomplish many things, and different theorists have proposed that they fill a variety of roles. According to Geertz (1973/2000), they are a form of cultural expression and a communication device that expresses a group's values and emotions, similar to myths, but through their performance, they strengthen the same values and emotions that they express. This echoes the theories of Durkheim (1912/2001) and Collins (2004), who claim that, through gathering, groups

‘vibrate’ together, strengthening their sense of solidarity and generating highly emotionally charged peak experiences that Durkheim calls collective effervescence.

On a micro-level, Goffman (1967) suggests that every interaction we have with others is a form of ritual, as it is comprised of set sequences of actions to protect our ‘face’, or sacred construction of the outward self. Collins (2004) takes Goffman’s theory further, suggesting that all interactions are ritual chains in which energy from one interaction is carried forward into the next. He refers to these as rituals with a small ‘r’, but like Goffman (1967), who recognises the importance and existence of large rituals and ceremonies (Goffman, 1983), he suggests that these small rituals build up to the larger experience of Rituals with a big ‘R’ (Collins, 2004). This echoes the view of psychologist Erikson (Erikson, 1977; Erikson & Erikson, 1998), who suggests that smaller rituals within bigger structures produce physiological and emotional changes in people that relate to a larger social structural movement.

Rook (1985) demonstrates this by looking at ‘sweet sixteen’ coming-of-age rituals in the USA. Despite their grand nature as a rite of passage, it is during a series of smaller grooming rituals that girls undergo their own psychological transition within the larger structure. Rituals, then, are transformational experiences on both the emotional and social planes. At times, they move participants to experience heightened emotions, and, especially when performed in larger ritual structures, they can move participants from one social status to another.

What of these larger structures? In his landmark book *The Rite of Passage*, Van Gennep (1909/1960) proposes that all rituals have a tripartite structure involving separation, transition and reincorporation. They occur at moments of ‘life-crisis’ and are ways for us to deal with changes in our development, such as birth, marriage and burial, and they act as the ‘symbolic and spatial area of transition’ (Ibid., p. 18). Van Gennep shows that ritual as a social and emotional passageway demands that the subject must first spend a period ‘separated’ from their social and emotional status. Through a series of activities and rituals, the subject sheds his or her previous identity.

During this period of transition (or ‘liminality’, as Turner (1969) later termed the phase), the subject is in a ‘non-status’, a form of limbo. It is here that Turner (1969) suggests the great levelling shared emotional state can be found. Described as ‘*communitas*’, it is the moment when the normal

conventions of society no longer apply, statuses are dissolved, and all can share in non-hierarchical shared experiences. This is the core of the ritual experience. Finally, the subject is reincorporated through a series of activities and rituals that confirm the transition or transformation.

This tripartite structure has been generally accepted as the basis of all rituals (Bell, 1997; Rook, 2004). It can be seen in marriage rituals, which involve the separation of engagement with its related activities such as bachelor/ bachelorette parties, the transition or liminal phase of the marriage ceremony with its many smaller rituals such as exchanging rings, ceremonial clothing, the throwing of confetti and reincorporating parties and a honeymoon. We also see the structure in less grand occasions; for example, Houmark (2008) identifies it at sporting events like football games, and Clark (2006) sees it in workshop facilitation. Even rituals with a small 'r', such as arrival and departure rituals, demonstrate the rite of passage structure (Firth, 1972).

Looking at these theories as a whole, a tripartite structure that gives form to a macro structure can be observed. In this macro structure, ritual chains feature the tripartite structure on a smaller scale. These chains are no less important than the larger structure; they carry the subject throughout and are in fact what constructs and drives the meaning of the whole.

This is visualised in the Figure 2.5 below.

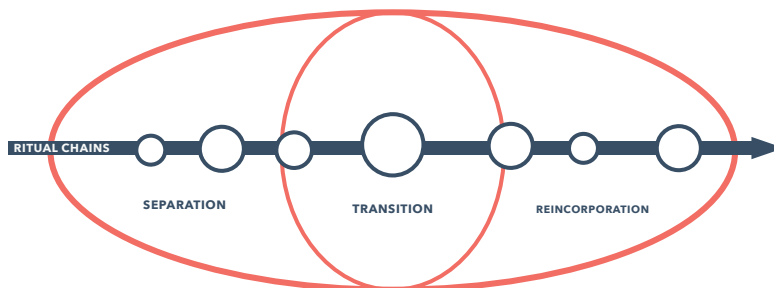


Figure 2.5. Rites of passage and chains of smaller rituals (Image: Ted Matthews).

### ***2.9.6 Ritual ingredients***

Turner (1973) defines ritual as ‘a stereotyped sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place and performed according to set sequence’ (Ibid., p.1100). This suggests that rituals need some form of ordered structure (such as the tripartite structure described above) that includes many forms of expression, from symbolic objects to spoken (or sung) words, in a defined place. As Goffman (1967) suggests, although some of these gestures might be more ceremonial and conscious than everyday actions, we should be aware that some less-conscious actions are ritualistic as well.

Rook (1985) believes that the necessary elements for a ritual are an audience, clear scripts, clear roles and symbolic artefacts to assist in the action. Collins (2004) argues that, for rituals that need an audience, in some cases, the audience is indeed oneself, and the ritual action is in fact an interaction with the self as part of a larger ritual chain. Collins (2004) believes that assembly, barriers to outsiders, mutual focus of attention, a shared mood, stereotyped formalities and common actions are necessary for rituals. Myth is another important aspect of ritual. This was discussed in more detail above, but to reiterate, it is the myth that gives context to the ritual. It is what is performed, it is what the ritual is about, and it reveals the community’s values and anxieties through narrative.

In this PhD, rituals are considered to give structure to meaningful time and make time meaningful. For events of social importance and emotional change, rituals create a dramaturgical structure that allows symbolic and transformative activity to take place and be understood. Rituals communicate and strengthen a community’s solidarity and perform the myths of the self. In addition, within their tripartite structure, there exist chains of transitional rituals in which smaller rituals contribute to creating meaning, emotion and dramaturgy. A community engaging in rituals and performing myths with community symbols can lead to euphoric sacred experiences.

### ***2.9.7 Towards designing ritual and myth***

It has been shown that myth and ritual have been purposefully designed to build communities or fulfil communities’ needs for self-expression. For example, Bell (1997) suggests that the invention of the Olympic ritual resulted in the formation of new communities. This is a form of reverse

engineering that suggests it is possible to create new myths for an imagined community by inventing ritual events. In this sense, a community is formed through ritual. This can also be seen in the Singaporean authority's creation of the Singapore National Day ritual to build identity and connection between its many diverse citizens (Kong & Yeoh, 1997).

Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) devoted a book to the matter, discussing how the British Empire invented a variety of myths and rituals to engage its subjects in a new narrative of itself as an imagined community and to promote the structure of its system as ancient and traditional. The authors show that invoking tradition is a powerful device for validating ritualised activity. However, the invention of such rituals and traditions must appear authentic in order to succeed (Pleck, 2004). In addition, the mechanism of their introduction must remain as invisible as possible, or they may lose their power (Bell, 1997). Yet, new rituals do appear when they are needed. They are often a 'response to the need for new forms of relatedness' (Bell, 1997, p.237) when new groups and movements are formed.

Thus, rituals and myths can be invented and designed or even borrowed and redesigned. They have the best chance of success when they address a need and when a sense of authenticity or tradition is woven into their construction.

## **2.9. Connecting Service Design and the Sacred**

### ***2.9.1 Introduction***

This final section of this literature review seeks to highlight the relevance of the concepts relating to the sacred presented in the previous section to existing literature that is relatable to service design and connected fields. While this is taken predominantly from the study of the sacralization of consumption, highlighted in consumer culture theory, it also illuminates work from service and customer experience management literature that considers the value of ritual in service provision. Finally, the section will highlight current research that seeks to operationalize perspectives on ritual into new design approaches.



### ***2.9.2 Consumer culture theory and the sacred***

Whilst service providers look to increase value for customers through heightened and distinctive experiences, a substratum of consumer culture theory has observed how customers are having sacred customer experiences (Belk, et al., 1989) through their consumption of products and services.

This is important for two reasons. First, it shows that consumers are able to have meaningful experiences through their consumption habits. Second, it shows that theories related to the sacred are relevant for other fields and can be applied to the study and interpretation of modern secular consumer culture. Thus, it acts as a segue into operationalisation of these concepts and designing for these types of experiences in service. A brief review of this material is presented below.

Since the early 1980s, there has been a growing body of work examining particular types of consumer behaviour that can be understood through a sacred lens. This is described well in the introduction to Otnes and Lowrey's (2004) anthology on the subject:

The use of products and services in activities that are expressive, symbolic, dramatically scripted, and performed with formality, seriousness, and inner intensity is an exciting and challenging topic through which to study the intersection of consumption, collectivity, and culture. (Ibid., p.xix).

Belk et al.'s (1989) oft cited article 'Theodicy on the Odyssey' offered the first in-depth study of the manifestation of the sacred in consumer behaviour. They drew on a range of theories relating to what they refer to as 'properties of sacredness', using concepts from sociology, psychology, anthropology and cultural studies. They then used this as a way to understand the behaviour they observed in consumers. As has been highlighted in Section 2.2.3, these researchers used Durkheim's (1912/2001) understanding of the sacred in its opposition to the profane to suggest that sacred customer experiences can be defined by their opposition to mundane experiences; they are meaningful and highly emotional experiences that have elevated consumption beyond the quotidian.

Their findings show that such consumer behaviour created value for said customers through sacred customer experiences. Through these forms of consumption, consumers celebrate their connection to brand communities

as well as reflect their sense of self in broader society. In these experiences, that the meaning and importance is interpreted, informed and drawn from ‘the cultural matrix from which the process ultimately emanates’ (Belk et al., 1989, p.31). They show that the sacralisation of consumption is driven by the consumers themselves. Their focus is primarily on the consumption of products with additional research further underlining consumer impulses to make products sacred, for example appropriating the language of religion to express the value and meaning of the iPhone (Campbell & La Pastina, 2010).

Also with a focus on Apple, Belk & Tumbat (2005) describe how consumers engage in myth-making and forms of hero-ification around the brand and its founder, again in actions of sacralisation. Furthermore, Schouten et al, (2007) argue that consumers are having these types of experiences through their interaction with other customers and through their belonging to brand communities. In service consumption however, particularly in tourist services, Arnould and Price (1993) use perspectives from the anthropology of experience to describe service experiences that are extraordinary and ‘magic’, whilst Huggins (2008) draws on Collins’ (2004) view on ‘emotional entrainment’ to describe the experiences in tourist service consumption.

Replicating or approximating these types of experiences could offer potential for value creation in the context of experience-centric services. Although research has observed this behaviour, no studies have considered how these types of experiences might be actively designed to elicit these kinds of customer responses in service provision. This is an opportunity for further service design research. Where Belk et al. (1989) reached into other research domains as a way to frame and analyse customer behaviour and experience, this PhD sees potential in reaching to the same fields as a way to design for such experiences. This would therefore require a cross-pollination and connection of concepts from sociology and cultural practice relating to the study of the sacred into service design research and practice.

### ***2.9.3 Service rituals and ritual design***

Consumer culture theory has examined the phenomena of the sacralisation of consumption, not at least in services, but this is not the case in service literature. However, the subject of the role of ritual in service provision has gained some, albeit limited attention.

Most recently, Liu and Wei (2020) offered a literature review of rituals in service from which they draw conclusions and offer categorisations. The publication of this article is timely for this PhD, as it offers a state-of-the-art review of literature relating to services and ritual, and a substantial presentation is thus warranted here.

From a service management perspective, Liu and Wei (2020) argue that current related literature, whilst limited, suggests that rituals instigated by service providers ‘enhance customer experience, enhance customer-enterprise relationship and promote brand value’ where ‘the cultural background of consumers will affect their service ritual experience.’ (Ibid., p.178) Due to the potential of value creation for customers and service providers alike, they argue that further theoretical development is needed for what they refer to as a ‘brand new concept’ (Ibid., p.179). They define a service ritual as ‘service provided by a service organisation with ritual elements and ideas applied’. (Ibid., p.179)

With a main focus on the literature of service marketing/management (with particular focus on hedonic services), Liu and Wei also reference perspectives from customer culture theory (some of which are cited earlier in this review) and customer experience management, touching on service design through a reference to Publication 5 of this thesis, and they offer an overview of the discussion to date. They do not draw on broader discourses on ritual from other socio-cultural domains, but mainly make use of behavioural science to understand ritual and actor response.

Their review is particularly useful as it offers several perspectives on service ritual. They offer four views on service rituals: Characteristics, Differentiations, Classifications, and finally, Effects. However, they begin by raising three characteristics of the service ritual:

**Action serialization.** Consistent with ritual, sequence is an important characteristic of service ritual, which is mainly reflected in the sequence and repetition of ritual actions.

**Symbolic.** The symbolism of service ritual is mainly reflected in its cultural significance. The diction and behaviours in rituals can be regarded as symbols, implying a variety of value information and cultural traditions.

**Performability.** Service rituals have fixed scripts, actors and spectators. As service performers, the service personnel must perform the script and behaviour according to the script settings. (Ibid., p.180)

This characterisation is useful as it pinpoints the importance of ritual structures, content and performability in any service setting, whilst reiterating the necessity of taking into account the cultural context and traditions to make sense of the ritual being performed.

Liu and Wei then proceed to differentiate service ritual with consumer ritual. They claim that service rituals mainly take place within service spaces and concern the interaction between service provider and the consumer, and that they are instigated and designed by the service provider. Consumer rituals, in contrast, are more diverse and can take place outside the service spaces, may be about interaction with other consumers and have a focus on the voluntary participation of consumers. This differentiation is useful. Where consumer culture theory has mainly focused on the consumer ritual as ‘bottom up’, customer-instigated phenomena, the emergent discourse on service ritual, considers the ways in which service providers instigate ritual as a way to engage customers. However, they do not point to or present any design approaches to guide service providers in their development of service rituals.

Thirdly, they offer two classifications of service ritual relating to complexity and content. They break down complexity into simple, moderate and elaborate. On this scale, simple service rituals are smaller ritual interactions that are rapid and delivered by service staff; they might be task-related interactions increasing in complexity to elaborate service rituals that are more in-depth, time-consuming and require increased participation from customers. They argue for steps of complexity in service ritual whilst also suggesting that research has yet to define the specific values of low-, medium- and high ritualization.

The other classification Liu and Wei raise is content. Here, they use the categorization presented in Otnes, Ilhan and Kulkarni’s (2012) article on marketplace rituals. Here Liu and Wei highlight six types of service rituals:

1. **Commemoration.** The commemorative type involves companies or employees participating in important moments of the customer’s life, such as providing service support for customers’ proposal ceremonies or giving customers birthday wishes.

2. **Gift-giving.** This includes providing customers with free or unexpected goods or services, such as giving desserts or small gifts.
3. **Greeting.** An employee should express gratitude to customers who have entered the service place.
4. **Incitement.** In this type, collective excitement will be generated for the customers gathered by executing the established script.
5. **Farewell.** This mainly means thanking customers again when they leave.
6. **Inspiring.** This type of service ritual is designed to help customers build knowledge of a product and create sales opportunities (Ibid., p.182).

Whilst they find the classifications useful, they point to the fact the list is limited and only covers a fraction of the types and location of service rituals that might be instigated.

Finally, Liu and Wei (2020) conclude by considering both the positive and negative effects of the use of service rituals, arguing the positive effects have received the most attention in literature. They suggest that service rituals have been shown to enhance customer experience, making service encounters more memorable and making it possible to express the theme and atmosphere of the service experience through performance. They also point to the possibility of creating a sense of respect for the experience in high-end retail, by privileging aspects of the service encounter. In addition, they accentuate service ritual as reducing distance between the service provider and customer, enhancing this relationship and creating heightened intimacy leading to a building of trust and making the customer feel special. They point to service rituals building a sense of 'group notion' (Ibid., p.183) between consumers and service providers that leads to a desire for further consumption of the service and brand loyalty.

On the negative side however, Liu and Wei argue that some service rituals may be intrusively noisy or invade the consumer's privacy, leading to irritation. The other point they highlight is that if the service ritual is difficult to read or understand this might frustrate and confuse the consumer. Finally, if the ritual does not fit with the customers sense of self, a form of what they

refer to as ‘identity positioning resistance’ may occur. This resonates with the importance of the cultural dimensions raised at the start of their review, where service rituals need to be understandable and relatable to the cultural context in which they are performed.

What we can draw from the review is that service rituals have great potential for service providers towards enhanced customer experience and increased brand loyalty. This, it is suggested, leads to increased profitability. The article shows that the rituals can be designed and instigated by the service provider, but that the rituals must speak and be relatable to the culture from which they will be performed. There is a great potential scope for the development and integrating of simple rituals within existing services, however more elaborate rituals offer the promise of further engagement and participation.

#### ***2.9.4. Further recent developments***

Otnes et al. (2012) argue that creating such interactions can convert an individual from ‘spectator to participant to consumer’ (Ibid., p.368). This is an interesting move; where the eventual outcome is indeed consumption/profit, the move to ‘participant’ speaks of greater engagement from the customer, mediated through the rituals instigated by the service provider. Despite the comprehensiveness of the review, Lui & Wei do not uncover literature that points to approaches, concepts or approaches for the design of service rituals (apart from Publication 5 of this PhD, although they choose not to dwell on this aspect of the work), nor do they present their own. They call for further experimentation with service rituals, and although this PhD is concerned not just with ritual but other aspects of the sacred, it contributes to this endeavour.

None of the writings on consumer rituals and service rituals propose approaches for how to design rituals. Outside of service literature, however, design for ritual, or ritual design, has gained some attention of late. Since this PhD research began, several works and research programmes have emerged that utilise concepts relating specifically to ritual as material for design. For this reason, a brief description of this work follows here, as it has a bearing on the work of my thesis. The intention is to locate this research in a broader design research context.

The Ritual Design Lab based at Stanford (see [ritualdesignlab.org](http://ritualdesignlab.org)) draws its inspiration from behavioural science and from sources located in sociology

to find ways to design new forms of interactions. They have also applied their ritual design approaches to offer organisations inspiration to design their own rituals for five operative areas: Creativity and innovation rituals; Performance and flow rituals; Conflict and resilience rituals; Community and team building rituals, and Organisational change and transition rituals. (Ozenc & Hagan, 2019). Their focus is specific to the organisational culture, encouraging a co-design approach as a way to engage employees in designing smaller, shared work rituals.

Ozenc and Hagan (2019) suggest and detail 50 possible rituals that could be enacted in the workplace before moving to a description of an accessible and simple seven-step approach to designing rituals. The first step concerns setting the intention of the ritual, and the second step is to define the ‘context trigger’, such as time, place or people. The third step is to ideate encouraging the uses of prompts like food, costumes or performance, and the fourth is to select a symbol as a main prop for the ritual. The fifth step is about creating a narrative arc to the ritual with a beginning, middle and end, and step six is about acting out and prototyping. Finally, the seventh step is about finalising the design on what they refer to as the ritual canvas template, which brings together the earlier steps to highlight the context trigger, intention and ritual flow. The approach offers a simple and easy to follow codesign tool for engaging colleagues in the design of short rituals without suggesting a deeper socio-cultural analysis of elements such as myth or cultural matrixes of symbols.

At the same time, a research programme at Imperial College has been applying a behavioural science approaches to ritual to product design. As their research partner is Nestlé, much of the research has been focused on rituals relating to food consumption and the effects of ritual on the consumption experience (Ratcliffe, Baxter & Martin, 2019). Many of their research findings are not yet published and are expected in 2020.

Finally, ritual as material for design may be seen in related work located at the Harvard Divinity School and its Sacred Design Lab (see <https://sacred.design>). Coming predominantly from a theological perspective, the centre looks at issues of the sacred in everyday life. Both a consultancy and research centre, this lab draws inspiration from religion and ancient philosophy to rethink and facilitate organisational change and creativity. They have yet to propose a defined method that highlights their exact design approach. Their publications, such as ‘How we Gather’ (ter Kuile & Thurston, 2015), shows post religious era-society’s increased need to connect and create communities

for meaningful interactions and experiences, not at least through service consumption.

Whilst none of these initiatives have looked to design for sacred customer experiences in service provision, they have sought ways to operationalize aspects of theory from outside design practice towards new approaches to design, particularly rituals. Though much of this recent research postdates the cases and studies presented here, it has informed the research as it has progressed and contact and discussion with these institutions has been a source of inspiration and encouragement.

### ***2.10 In Summary***

Service design research is often located within a designerly approach that has adapted tools from service marketing and management for the purpose of designing and developing services. The focus is on the design for experience through the orchestration of interactions between service provider and customer. The tools of service design are used to analyse and understand current service experience as well as to design for projected service experiences. Service design attempts to understand the service experience from the customer perspective, adapting approaches from ethnography to understand the life worlds of said customers. These approaches tend not to take into account the broader socio-cultural landscape of the customer's context, however. Service design is located between design and marketing/management and within the multi-disciplinary domains, but it does not however draw from broader cultural practice in its approaches and framings. Where experience is seen as an important determinant of value, and where experience-centricity has been raised as an important factor in service provision, little research has been done on the development of service design approaches for experience-centric services.

The socio-cultural is an important factor in the perceived value of experience, and studies through a cultural lens have shown that customers are having heightened customer experiences through a sacralization of consumption through their relationships to brands and brand communities. A deeper study into what generates sacred experiences shows the importance of community, ritual, myths and the symbolic. Service literature has considered the value of ritual in service provision, but it has yet to consider these other factors as part of a view on the sacred in service provision. Service design has not



yet systematically utilized these perspectives on community, ritual, myth and symbol in the design for service experiences and their related study. Furthermore, if service design does not draw from the broader socio-cultural context within which the service is located, then it limits its 'imaginative space' and in turns its potential for innovation.

This review has identified gaps and opportunities in current research, raising questions regarding how these might be addressed further. Through a methodology of research through design, the PhD engages with how *Experiential Service Design* might be informed and built on the basis of approaches and concepts on the sacred drawn from socio-cultural domains that have been highlighted and described in this chapter.



## Chapter 3. Methodology, Research and Design Methods

### 3.1 Introduction and Overview

This chapter addresses the methodology, research design, research methods and design tools, techniques and activities that have informed the study. In essence, this study is located in qualitative inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) through practice-based research (Candy, 2006). It employs a research through design (RtD) methodology that is both exploratory and constructionist in character, and it includes research methods that are concerned with developing knowledge through design-based inquiry in transdisciplinary collaboration that is connected to contexts and creative design practices.

Morrison et al. (2019) summarise concisely the challenge facing designers and designer-researchers who:

...often find it difficult to articulate the dynamic relations of procedures, processes and practices of making with methodological locations, selection and positioning, together with the identification and implementation of relevant and apposite qualitative research methods (Koskinen et al., 2011). The problem is one of illustrating and exemplifying, that is giving 'accounts' of making, processes and clarifying how we know what we know because of what we have done to know it. Design inquiry has shifted from disciplinary, top down approaches to contextual, processual and abductive means to knowing through and about making. Designers' expertise and insights

are central in exploring the materialities of making and the means of materialising knowledge through design activities. (Ibid., p.2268).

To address this challenge and to allow insight into how this knowledge materialises through the design activity itself, they argue for a conceptualisation and enactment of design research as a ‘making-analytical practice’ (Ibid., p.2271), proposing an epistemological activity that assists in the uncovering and illumination of how the designer locates fully how they know, what they know, and what they have done to know it. Their four-way, dynamic matrix therefore focuses on research methodologies, research methods, design techniques and design tools as areas of reflection and analysis for the design researcher.

This chapter will thus use these four epistemological constituents to present how the eventual knowledge emerged through RtD as an approach to investigate ways in which practices of service design innovation might be augmented through making and reflection on design practices centred on the experiential in service provision. These constituents will be covered under the headings:

- Design Research Methodologies
- Design Research Methods
- Design Tools
- Design Techniques

The chapter thus also includes a detailed description of a set of design projects, or cases, that were developed in ‘real world’ settings with motivated, interested and participating parties connected to the designer-researcher and related larger projects into service innovation.

Through these design projects, the act of designing becomes the mode of inquiry; framed as a form of bricolage, designing allowed for the sorting and integrating of concepts, approaches and practices from the study of the sacred into service design. Research was released in peer-reviewed publications as the research progressed. Figure 3.1 visualises the research strategy taken, in which theories and practices are woven together through acts of designing, reviewing, iteration, reflection and revision, not in a simple linear, but in a dynamic and overlapping process.

As a whole, this chapter argues that these multiple methods, with mixed means and many actors, facilitated the gradual and reflexively shaped

development of what I call the *Sacred Services Approach*. Although this is not a thesis on methods, I will elaborate on this aspect of my work in the latter part of this chapter. This also serves as a bridge of sorts between the action-centred and developmental design processes and outcomes. Furthermore, the chapter shows ways and how the research was carried out and influenced and impacted on how I developed an analytical framing, perspectives, and the final approach presented through concepts, process and model found in Chapter 4.

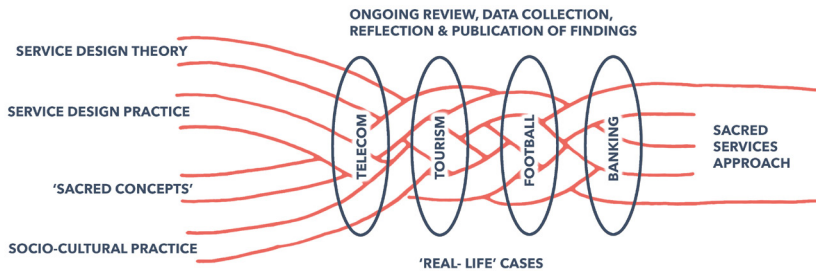


Figure 3.1: Research strategy, weaving threads of service design theory and practice together with concepts drawn from a study of the sacred and socio-cultural practice through designing in real-life cases to develop the Sacred Services Approach. (Image: Ted Matthews)

## 3.2 Research Questions

To reiterate the main research questions are as follows:

1. In what ways may service design be informed by and utilise approaches and concepts of the sacred?
2. How may attention to the sacred contribute to developing and integrating culturally-oriented perspectives on experience-centred service design?
3. What can an approach to services of a sacred character offer to research, education and practice within service design?

### 3.3 Design Research Methodologies

#### 3.3.1 *On research through design*

Since Frayling introduced perspectives around research in education within art and design in 1993, there has been a growing discourse surrounding the value, approaches, definitions and perspectives relating to design as a mode of enquiry. Frayling introduces the three concepts of research into design, research for design and research through design. The first considers research that examines design and those who produce it, and it has little relation to the research presented here. The second considers the research that must be undertaken to gain insight and knowledge to carry out design as part of the design process (this will be discussed further in Section 3.2.3), and the third is research through design, which is the way that designers produce knowledge through the act of designing. Stappers and Giaccardi (2017) offer a useful overview of the moves and developments in research through design (RtD), tracing its development over the last nearly 30 years, from Frayling to research in HCI, and now as a major methodological approach in interaction design, whilst highlighting its increasing use in other design domains, with service design research being no exception (see, Clatworthy, 2013, Motta-Filho, 2017). Over the 30 years of methodological development, RtD has come to mean the ‘design activities, along with designed artifacts...as the chief elements in the process of generating and communicating knowledge.’ Drawing from disciplines and methods from other fields ‘developing in overlap with the diverse and quite different cultures of engineering, the arts, (social) sciences, cognition, business studies, humanities, research methodology, and philosophy’. (Stappers & Giaccardi, 2017, p.x)

Beyond the interdisciplinarity of RtD to which Stappers and Giaccardi allude, they raise the importance on two aspects of the methodology for research relevant for this PhD, namely the doing of design, and the outcome or solution. The focus on the doing of the design refers to activities such as ‘gaining actionable understanding of a complex situation, framing and reframing it, and iteratively developing prototypes that address it’ (Ibid., p.x) and to the knowledge embedded in the solution itself, which they refer to as the artefact or prototype. However, these two aspects are seen to be inseparable. As Stappers and Giaccardi (2017) put it,

The designing act of creating prototypes is in itself a potential generator of knowledge (if only its insights do not disappear into the prototype, but are fed back into the disciplinary and cross-disciplinary

platforms that can fit these insights into the growth of theory.  
(Ibid., p.x)

RtD as a methodological approach to knowledge creation has increasingly gained traction in recent years, and since 2015 the biennial Research through Design conference has been a venue for a variety of design practice-based research. Some of this research is relatable to the PhD presented here; for example Marechal, Bonafont, Koscielniak, and Amatayakul (2019) apply RtD in their transdisciplinary investigation of design for neotribes, drawing on theories by Maffesoli and integrating ethnographic approaches to design interaction devices for smaller communities. The object of study is both their multidisciplinary approach and the final designed artefacts that act as a catalyst of the theory they engage. In another example, Chatting, Yurman, Green, Bichard, and Kirk (2017) use RtD to design a machine that that acts as a totem drawing from a family's existing rituals to facilitate connection and communication.

In this chapter, I use RtD to refer to the transdisciplinary and trans-methodological aspects of design-based knowing through acts of creative, critical making. With an aim to understand the value for service design of concepts, approaches and practice relating to the study of the sacred, I have employed a RtD approach as the overarching mode of inquiry for this thesis in designing with this 'material' and its possible manifestation in the design artefact of the *Sacred Services Approach*. As Archer (1995) states, '[t]here are circumstances where the best or only way to shed light on a proposition, a principle, a material, a process or a function is to attempt to construct something' (Ibid., p.6).

The rationale of choosing RtD is supported by an understanding of the designer's approach as that of a bricoleur: it is a way to sort and assemble a variety of theoretical concepts and materials and then to assess the value through the act of designing. My approach is experimental in its nature but based in real-life practice and collaboration with others. Using this approach has led to a new service design approach and to a new configuration of some concepts relating to the study of sacred that is aggregated and adapted for use in the service design. This resulting *Sacred Services Approach* offers a new perspective on these concepts and makes it accessible for service designers and research.

RtD is gaining increasing acceptance as a mode of knowledge creation in the production of doctoral theses (Dunin-Woyseth & Nilsson, 2011), and many recent PhD theses are built on this form of enquiry (e.g. Nordby, 2011; Clatworthy, 2013; Lurås, 2016; Motta-Filho, 2017).

Sevaldson (2010) describes the unique nature of this mode of knowledge production in his definitive work on the subject, using the related term research by design to describe the approach. As he states ‘Research by Design emphasizes insider perspectives, a generative approach, operates in rich and multiple layers and relates to real life contexts. The output is new communicable knowledge that is only found within design practice’ (Ibid., 2010, p.8). As a design practitioner moving into research myself, RtD is a natural methodology for this PhD, where the research is conducted through a ‘first person perspective’ combined with a reflexive mode of inquiry that helps make design knowledge explicit ... practice and reflection form the unique mode of designerly knowledge production.’ (Ibid., 2010, p. 9). However, to maintain the required rigour for knowledge production, the research is supported by mixed methods of reflection, evaluation and interpretation, which avoid ambiguity of results and promote transparency of data.

### ***3.3.2 On bricolage***

Given that the research presented here must draw from outside of current service design framings in utilising concepts, approaches and practice from socio-cultural fields, it has required a substantial review of theories relating to the ‘mechanisms’ of the sacred experience. This was done to locate concepts that might have potential for the design of sacred customer experiences.

Design has been described as a form of bricolage (Louridas, 1999), where the activity of research to inform and aid designing is not just merely a preliminary activity to the design process, but an ongoing process of material evaluation through designing and utilisation. A form of ‘design bricolage’ has thus informed the development of the final *Sacred Services Approach* and further description is thus warranted to illuminate how concepts relating to the sacred were investigated and assessed by designing with it.

Lévi-Strauss (1966) used the term ‘bricolage’ to describe the pre-scientific man’s approach in his book *The Savage Mind*, which argues that ‘primitive’



man shares the same capabilities for complex thought and critical analysis as ‘scientific’ man. There appears to be no direct English translation of the French word *bricolage*; in French, it is a word rich with meaning. The closest translation is ‘tinkering’; *bricoleur* ‘describes a handyman or handywoman who makes use of the tools available to complete a task’, and ‘some of the connotations of the term involve trickery and cunning’ (Kincheloe, 2001, p.680). Wangelin (2004) summarises *bricolage* as ‘an attitude to a problem; a mental trial and error where every separate phenomenon is placed in relation to the present structure. A *bricoleur* is a person who adapts tools and materials to the current challenge.’ (Ibid., p.3)

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) describe the term as an approach to research that offers new forms of rigour and complexity for social research. Kincheloe (2001) offers a view of *bricolage* as an often-interdisciplinary research approach that allows the researcher to work across the boundaries of existing disciplines and avoid parochialism, thus offering a richer, broader view of the object of enquiry. However, in the context of this research, design *bricolage* refers to the approach of the designer that brings together diverse concepts, selected, appraised and made usable for design, through the very act of designing (Louridas, 1999).

### 3.3.3 Design *bricolage*

Examples of design *bricolage* as part of a RtD methodological approach to service design research appear limited, however, the concept is touched upon in interaction design literature (see Fallman, 2003; Fernaeus & Vallgård, 2014; Hazlewood, Dalton, Marshall, Rogers, & Hertrich, 2010; Tanenbaum, Tanenbaum, & Wakkary, 2012; Wakkary & Maestri, 2008). Vallgård and Fernaeus (2015) offer a particularly useful view of *bricolage* in terms of interaction design research and practice. Due to the closeness of the fields of interaction and service design, this view is relevant to this PhD. In contrast to Louridas (1999), who sees all design as *bricolage*, Vallgård and Fernaeus (2015) offer a series of reflections that frame *bricolage* as a ‘particular way of practicing design’ (Ibid., p.175). This is a useful guide and methodological frame for how I approached my own RtD, which involves sorting and selecting concepts related to theories about the sacred for use in service design.

Vallgård and Fernaeus’ (2015) approach is one of interpreting, adapting, modifying, repurposing, hacking and finding and creating structures in

the material they uncover for design work. They argue that the design bricoleur does not require deep and broad knowledge of all disciplines or fields, but operates through his or her interpretation of the job in hand, prior experience, and an understanding of the user and the context for which they are designing. The bricoleur does not plan ahead, but works iteratively, developing solutions in-situ. In this way, a lack of an ‘optimal’ or coherent selection of materials is not a hinder; instead, it is used to the design bricoleur’s advantage through adaptation and repurposing. This means that materials might be used for other purposes than their original ones, but such an approach often results in ‘more culturally grounded and material rich’ design solutions (Ibid., 2015, p.173). Ultimately, this open approach enables new connections to be made and helps open new design possibilities.

Likewise, the review of literature relating to the sacred in this research located and identified potential concepts, approaches and practices that could be used for the design of experience-centric services, which could then be compared and paired with concepts, approaches and practices relating to service design and management literature.

For this research however, as a design practitioner/researcher with no prior in-depth knowledge relating to the study of the sacred, I was required to immerse myself in literature that was previously unknown to me to create an extended repertoire (Blomkvist et al., 2016) or ‘inventory’ (Levi-Strauss, 1966) of concepts for use in designing. From a designer as bricoleur (Louridas, 1999; Wangelin, 2007) perspective, the concepts drawn from a study of the sacred would be assembled and selected in the manner of a bricoleur. This is a task undertaken without the restraint of empirical traditions, yet guided by the job in hand in an abductive designerly approach as described in Section 1.4.2 in the introduction to this exegesis.

My immersion in this literature did not just take place at the onset of the design activity but was ongoing activity throughout the research. Due to the spiralling, back and forth, overlapping nature of designing (Swann, 2002), this process of assembling promising concepts from the study of the sacred, continued throughout the project. In this way, this ‘material’ was revisited, reworked and tweaked whilst new concepts were introduced, interpreted and synthesised into the emerging approach.

The concept of the designer as bricoleur can be understood by its opposition to the approach of the engineer. The engineer starts by creating the ‘means’

by which work will be undertaken. The bricoleur, however, adapts the means to perform work whilst undertaking the work itself. The designer as bricoleur is constantly adapting and reprioritising their inventory based on the job in hand. In this way, according to Louridas (1999), the bricoleur will ‘enter into a dialogue with his inventory’ (Ibid., p.3), and, through this dialogue, ‘the reorganization that he imposes on them [the inventory], results in a structure, serving the project that he has assumed’ (Ibid., p.4). Structures are thus created ‘in the form of artifacts, by means of contingent events ... bricolage is the creation of structure out of events’ (Ibid., p.5). Louridas goes on to show that the professional designer, who must face new problems, must ‘create their own inventory of materials that he will bring to bear’ on the task (Ibid., p.11) as ‘materials make possible forms that could not be realized without them’ (Ibid., p.12). It is the designer who defines the purpose of this material in their designing.

This emergent design approach is then applied to test the usability of this arrangement of materials, which is flexible and can change for different design contexts. With each application, the inventory of materials or concepts becomes more deeply engrained in my repertoire as a reflective practitioner and designer. I have acted as a designer-bricoleur, who ‘tinkers with the materials, takes stock of the results of his tinkering, and then tinkers again’ (Louridas, 1999, p. 15).

An initial review of concepts, approaches and practices relating to the sacred resulted in Publication 1, which performed an initial sorting of this material and then positioned it in a comparison between these concepts and service design. This highlighted areas of compatibility between concepts relating to the sacred and service design and the potential value for service design of bringing them closer together. Subsequent designing would further understand and evaluate the value of this ‘material’ in and through use.

Gathering concepts relating to the sacred was done through a review of literature that included books and journal articles. It would be fair to describe this as the method of ‘the bibliographical hunt, the literature searcher and the database compiler’ (Downton, 2003, p.19). However, the role of the designer as bricoleur, especially the way in which I adopt these concepts, integrates it into an inventory for use. How this would lead to the development of the *Sacred Services Approach* is worth further reflection as an appropriate approach as part of an overall RtD methodology.

### ***3.3.4 Reflections on design bricolage in supporting research through design***

Given the aim of the research presented here, I have argued for a form of design bricolage as an appropriate approach to locate and assess the potentiality of a wide range of concepts and perspectives relating to the sacred and their value for service design. This approach might seem problematic for some theorists working with the topic of the sacred, as it brings together some concepts that might seem empirically at odds with each other. However, this PhD does not attempt to build a new theory of the sacred, its object of study is on how to design for sacred customer experiences. It therefore looks to the literature relating to the sacred as a source of concepts that might be utilised in this endeavour. Therefore, from a designerly, abductive perspective, where ‘the best or only way to shed light on a proposition, a principle, a material, a process or a function is to attempt to construct something’ (Archer, 1995, p.6), this is not problematic. Whilst the theories from which the concepts were drawn and presented together as part of this thesis originally sought to explain sacred phenomena, designing with these as concepts as an expansion of service design aims to create new knowledge for service design through design, and as such it is framed for a very different purpose. The endeavour is prescriptive, not descriptive. Yee & Bremner (2011) are precise on why bricolage is the right approach for this form of research:

Bricolage is a useful and necessary concept for design researchers as it allows them to deploy available and established strategies and methods, but also grants them the license to create new tools and techniques in order to address questions that are beyond the realm of the established discipline. (Ibid., p.3).

I see this PhD as addressing questions beyond the realm of the established methods and disciplinary framings of service design.

In summary, using bricolage allowed me to arrange concepts drawn from theories relating to the sacred in different arrangements and structures. The purpose, context and material fit with service design guided this process of assembly more than empirical traditions. However, this approach does have some weaknesses. Kincheloe (2001) suggests that the lack of boundaries in the bricoleur’s approach can cause researchers to overexert themselves by trying to cover too many domains, and this might cause the research process to become a lifelong endeavour.

Although the object of study, context and purpose of this PhD thesis offered some boundaries to guide the use of sacred concepts, it was challenging to determine when enough of this material had been assembled and to set my own boundaries regarding which areas to pursue. This meant that I investigated many areas that proved fruitless for the development of new service design approaches. For example, I investigated Eliade's (1961) concept of ritual passageways to sacred and primordial time, but dropped it from the research early on due to its perceived limited value for the design process and context.

Another example of a concept that was considered but discarded is that of kratophany, highlighted by Belk et al. (1989) in their work on sacred customer behaviour. According to this concept, the power of the sacred can be beneficial or, if misused, harmful. It raised some interesting questions in the service design context, where designing for kratophany might promote urgency among customers who do not want to miss out. While the investigation was interesting, it was ultimately not as relevant as other concepts investigated for design for service, at least for this PhD thesis and its context of application. However, that is not to say that this concept would not be relevant to another study, designer or context.

Despite detours into many theoretical spaces, the inventory of concepts ultimately utilised in this work represents only a tiny fraction of the concepts available to the bricoleur for usage in a project of this type. It was assembled in a structure that is useable for me as the bricoleur and how it fit with the job in hand. Its value can be assessed through its contribution to service design.

Valgård and Fernaeus (2015) suggest that a bricolage approach can lead to suboptimal design solutions if designer or bricoleur are not open to all potential material and are constrained by what they assemble in their inventory, the limitations of their experience as designers and the context of study. This might indeed be the case here, and another designer, a different assembly of sacred concepts, material or context may have resulted in 'optimal' or more optimal solutions than those presented in the findings of this research. It could be argued that the designer is always subject to the restraints of materials, user needs, client needs and budget. In spite of this, the bricolage approach has made it possible to develop an approach that operationalises concepts relating to the study of the sacred for service design in a way that allows it to be observed and tested in real-life projects in-situ. Bricoleurs may not be experts in the material they assemble, but as Valgård and Fernaeus (2015) suggest, they might be 'expert(s) in open-mindedness' (Ibid., p.179).

Open-mindedness, however, does not ensure the rigour required for knowledge production. To ensure this rigour, ‘taking stock of the results’ (Louridas, 1999) was supported through a mix of design research methods. What follows therefore is a description of how the research progressed through several design iterations, supported by first-, second-, and third-person perspectives and mixed methods toward the production of new, transferable knowledge embedded in the final artefact of the *Sacred Services Approach*.

### 3.4 Design Research Methods

As described, after an initial review of literature relating to the study of the sacred, the development of an early inventory of material and concepts for use in designing was developed. This would be applied to a series of real-life design cases with the participation of professionals and design students from the Oslo School of Architecture and Design focusing on telecommunication and tourism services. Further tests were conducted with design students from Chulalongkorn University in Thailand, and they would offer reflection and further development for an emerging *Sacred Services Approach*.

An extended, eight-month design residency at the Norwegian Football Association, where I worked with professionals from marketing, digital services, business development, sponsorship, management and design, would develop the emergent approach further. A final test in a shorter six-week project with a Norwegian bank would apply the approach to financial services and develop the *Sacred Services Approach* towards the final incarnation presented in Chapter 4.

Each project presented a new design space and a unique set of challenges concerning the inventory of concepts used in the development of the final approach. In each case, the selected concepts, approaches and practice drawn from the study of the sacred and service design were woven closer together through the process of design bricolage. This process was further strengthened by reflection and evaluation after each design iteration through the use of mixed methods. These methods were chosen to fit the context within which the work took place and to answer the research questions. The eventual *Sacred Services Approach* was developed between 2011 and 2016, and peer-reviewed publications disseminated information about it as it emerged.

The qualitative research methods employed for data collection and analysis were chosen to provide multiple perspectives on the emerging design method, enable ‘triangulation’ of the data sources (Yin, 2011) and ensure solidity (Norwegian Research Council, 2000) in interpretation of the results. I will now proceed to outline the main six methods selected and how they were applied as part of the overall research methodology. In summary, these methods were: participant observation, interviews, semi-structured questionnaires, visualization, synthesis and reflection through language, and and writing.

These qualitative research methods were used within, between and across the mix of contexts in which the research was conducted. This involved a total of two Master’s level courses at AHO, each for a half semester, over three years, with smaller modules - a short workshop in Thailand, and reflection and discussion points such with a visitor from Stanford University - and focused workshops and seminars, over a period of two additional years. These courses and events were developed and run by members of the wider CSI research project team (see Chapter 1 for details CSI), though principally this author. The methods were used in conjunction with the design techniques and tools, presented later in the chapter, adopted in the design of the services, their co-design with clients and related participants in the four ‘cases’ presented in the last part. These methods and cases were devised through consultation, reflection, implementation and review. In addition, details of the related application methods of the cases and specific analyses are addressed in the Publications.

### ***3.4.1 Participant observation***

The research involved real-life projects in which I acted as a practitioner and participated in collaboration with others. The participant observation method (DeWalt, DeWalt, & Wayland, 2010) was an invaluable technique for collection of data relating to the *Sacred Services Approach* and its evolution through usage. Participant observation is typically carried out to develop a situated, nuanced and detailed understanding of the relation between the contexts, purposes, means and participants in research.

Participant observation was used to consider engagement and responses obtained during workshops and co-design activities, during collaboration with students who utilised early iterations of the approach, and during the activities of my eight-month residency at the Norwegian Football

Association. Like an ethnographer on a field trip, I was embedded in the context of research over a longer period of time, and my design collaborators, like ‘tribesmen’, ‘[c]eased to be interested or alarmed or made self-conscious by my presence’ (Dewalt et al., 2010, p. 8) This allowed me to observe how the evolving *Sacred Services Approach* was used, how my collaborators’ language changed to incorporate terms from theories relating to the sacred in work-related conversations (and in interviews) and how adjustments were made to adapt the concepts and the design approach to fit the everyday design challenges of different contexts.

### ***3.4.2 Qualitative interviews with participants***

Throughout the course of the research, interviews were conducted with workshop participants and project collaborators. In addition, design professionals from outside the project were used to offer a practitioner view on elements of the research. This was done predominantly through semi-structured interviews and through focused interviews. Interviews were recorded and then transcribed, from which selected material was incorporated in the publications for analysis as appropriate to a mix of qualitative methods and design techniques and tools.

#### ***3.4.2.1 Semi-structured interviews***

Semi-structured interviews (Fontana & Frey, 1994) were used to gather data relating to perceived innovation (OECD, 2005) concerning the emerging approach and the solutions and outcomes of using it. The interviewees were mainly collaborators from the projects, but other professionals and researchers were also presented with aspects of the work to gain external insight into the research. In total 23 interviews were conducted, in a variety of contexts, from the project research team to the diverse commercial actors. Due to the nature of semi-structured interviews, conversations between the interviewer and interviewee might develop in unexpected directions (Schmidt, 2004) and other insights beyond those related to innovation could be uncovered, particularly in relation to what the research might mean for service design.



### ***3.4.2.2 Focused interviews***

Focused interviews are ‘designed to determine the responses of persons exposed to a situation previously analysed by the investigator’ (Merton & Kendall, 1946, p. 541). The analysis should focus on a reaction to a very specific situation or stimulus. This form of interview was used for the first workshop that was held with participants from Telenor. It fit well with a method of content analysis that I had designed and delivered through the stimulus of a workshop. Interviews were ‘focused on the subjective experiences of persons exposed to the pre-analysed situation’ (Ibid., p.541). Final analysis of the focused interview was based on ‘discrepancies between anticipated and actual effects’ (Ibid., p.541). Interviews began with a question that inquired broadly into the participants’ experience of the workshop, which prompted further semi-structured questions.

### ***3.4.3 Questionnaires***

Two different questionnaires were used on two occasions to gain insight into the progress of work from a large group of practitioners and service deliverers towards the end of 2014. One was completed after a presentation describing the results of the tourist project at a tourism conference with 53 participants from the tourist industry. The other was completed after a presentation describing the process at a design conference. In total, 21 respondents filled out the forms. Most questions used a Likert scale (Churchill Jr., 1979) to measure the extent to which subjects agreed or disagreed with statements relating to their perception of the newness of the process and the outcomes. The OECD’s (2005) framework was used as a measure of innovation of the service design process. These questionnaires were completed by respondents relating to tourism and designers who had only partial insight into the research and design process, and as such, the questionnaires are limited in detail (see Publication 5). However, they offer supporting data for the interviews and observations regarding the newness of the approach and solutions to be achieved with the *Sacred Services Approach*.

### ***3.4.4 Visualisation***

Use of visualisation to ‘facilitate thinking and learning’ (Yee, 2012, p.471) is not exclusive to design; it is often used by scientists to describe theories and processes. However, due to the visual nature of design, it is a natural



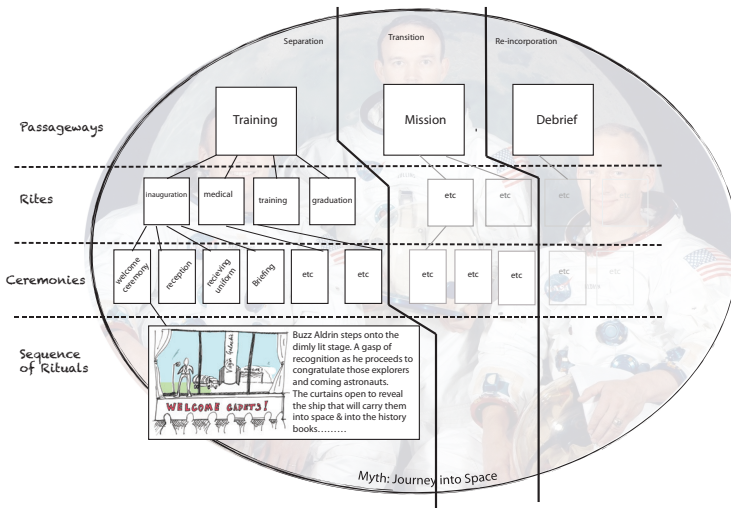


Figure 3.3: A further iteration of the cultural mesh visualised in Publication 3, now to include the overarching myth that would be performed in the ritual. This image shows how visualisation would be used to further develop and then communicate the concepts that would integrate concepts from the study of the sacred. (Image: Ted Matthews).



Figure 3.4: Using post-its as ‘an analysis and knowledge generation tool’ to find patterns in diverse concepts and make them relatable to service design. Here, concepts are categorised into ritual, myth, symbol, community, tradition and values. Post-its were marked with colours relating to their theme and then arranged on the page in relational gatherings. This would help in the understanding of how assemblies of differing concepts might be categories for use in a design inventory as well as facilitating understanding of where the sacred experience is generated. This arrangement of material would be synthesised and simplified into other forms of visualisation for further communication as can be seen below. (Image: Ted Matthews).



### 3.4.5 *Synthesis and reflection through language*

The activity of design is performed and enacted through language, where ‘language does design rather than merely represents design’ (Dong, 2007, p.6). In emerging design spaces, language becomes a key factor in the process itself. Language ‘performatively enacts design through: (1) aggregation – to blend ideas and concepts; (2) accumulation – to scaffold ideas and concepts; and (3) appraisal – to evaluate and assess ideas and concepts’ (Ibid., 2007, p.6). Designers engage in a conversation with the situation they are shaping (Schön, 1983). However, during collaborative projects, much of the design process takes place through verbal conversation between team members who are shaping the situation.

Language as design through aggregation, accumulation and appraisal, which are forms of reflection, synthesis, evaluation and interpretation, has been used in my research in design discussions and presentations (see Figure 3.6). One-on-one design discussions took place with individual team members, in team groups, with external researchers, with external designers and with students. They also took place as part of the reflection process in workshops, during work development, in studio discussions and during teaching.



Figure 3.6: Design discussion with Innovation Norway and the design agency Bleed at their offices to work through concepts and ways to articulate ritual customer journey. (Image: Ted Matthews).

The work was presented throughout the course of the research to practitioners, researchers and non-specialist audiences (e.g. Figures 3.7 and 3.8). Over 40 presentations were given in four years to teams at design agencies, fellow researchers at peer-reviewed conferences and large commercial conferences on design, experience economy, sports, marketing, health care, engineering, city planning, finance, accountancy and branding. Audiences ranged from 20 to 600 individuals.





Figure 3.7. Presenting the emerging Sacred Services Approach in Madrid to 200 branding practitioners and researchers at an event arranged by La asociación de referencia del branding en España. (Image with permission: Medinge Group).



Figure 3.8. Presenting the findings from the football project to an audience of 300 that included business leaders, designers and researchers from across several disciplines at the 2016 Norwegian Center for Service Innovation's annual conference (Image with permission: Beate Anderson).

Using language as design through presentation has functioned on two levels. First, after many presentations, comments have led to fruitful discussions with the audiences that drove further reflection and interpretation. Second, by continuously presenting the research findings to diverse audiences, a form of reflection that would make the assembly of concepts of the sacred accessible and very precise was needed. Choosing the right language became an essential part of knowing. As Burns, Dishman, Verplank and Lassiter (1994) argue, individuals' experiences are not cemented in their own minds until they are clearly communicated to another.

### ***3.4.6 Writing***

This PhD thesis is article-based, and continuous production of written work for peer review was thus needed to produce the main body of this research. In addition, beyond academic writings, it was necessary to make the emerging Sacred Services Approach accessible to others through manuals and instructions (this is not included in this thesis, as the approach was further improved after this). I created a how-to guide to make the material accessible to students and the Norwegian Football Association. Richardson (1994) argues that writing is 'a way of knowing – a method of discovery and analysis' (Ibid., p.516). This is no different for my research: writing functioned as a method of enquiry and reflection, and as Richardson (1994) suggests, different writing formats offer different perspectives on the same object of enquiry. This was an important part of the research development.

### ***3.4.7 Some reflections***

The selection and application of qualitative research methods, and importantly their interconnection in shaping understanding of the design, implementation and participation in the project provided me with additional insights into a learning shift from being a designer to a designer-researcher. Central was working with qualitative means to study and assess how the research worked and what it revealed through different methods that helped me distinguish what knowledge was being generated and accessed through which forms and research tools. This was important to distinguish as I was naturally embedded in the dynamics of making and knowing through design bricolage processes and activities in the form of design techniques and tools, where designing was central. Lury (2018) points to the need to focus on the gerund form (-ing) in this regard.

### 3.5 Service Design Methods and Tools

The following section shows how design methods and tools were used as part of the research methodology during the process of designing and how they acted as integral to ways of knowing through design's reflexive, generative approach. It was through the act of designing, using existing service design approaches and tools whilst weaving into these concepts from theories relating to the study of the sacred, that the Sacred Services Approach emerged. In general, the activities followed a designerly structured approach as discussed in Section 2.3.2, moving through divergent and convergent phases through analysis, generation, development and prototyping. However, as raised by Morrison et al. (2019), this is not a linear approach in which the use of methods and tools are used within iterative flows in response to the needs of the abductive process.

#### 3.5.1 Service safari

The service safari is an ethnographic approach to service design insight and analysis. The service safari is about experiencing the service first-hand (Polaine, Løvlie & Reason, 2013), taking field notes and pictures and then reflecting on the experience afterwards to draw conclusions about the many facets of one's personal experience, as well as the service flow that might be then visualized and communicated in a customer journey map.

The service safari was used in both the tourism and football projects. During the tourism project, a group of master of design students, a fellow PhD fellow and I visited Røros to experience several services. At the end of the week, we assembled, synthesised, evaluated, and visualised these insights as a group. Through this activity, it was possible to understand what the experiences had meant to us as a group and to see how a shift of focus in our analysis, from the functional to a cultural might affect what would become the focus of eventual design work.

The football project entailed attending countless games alone, together with families, design students, senior designers, design researchers, and on one occasion with an ethnographer and cultural studies professor. On another occasion I was joined by anthropologist and cultural historian. In each case, field notes were taken, and reflections, discussion and analysis of the experiences were undertaken that drew on differing and at times expert disciplinary perspectives. Several customer journeys were produced through these activities to encapsulate the experience of the participants, and these



were used as artefacts as a way to discuss flows of time and the meaning of certain aspects of the experience. These were sometimes focused on functional aspects, but also on those that were of cultural performance and expression. These cultural aspects were particularly raised when undertaking the service safaris with those engaged in cultural practice, offering rich insight into the potential material within this specific context.



Figure 3.9: Service safaris during an eight-month-period; capturing games, rituals, transition points, food culture, symbols, systems, touchpoints and interactions. (Image: Ted Matthews).

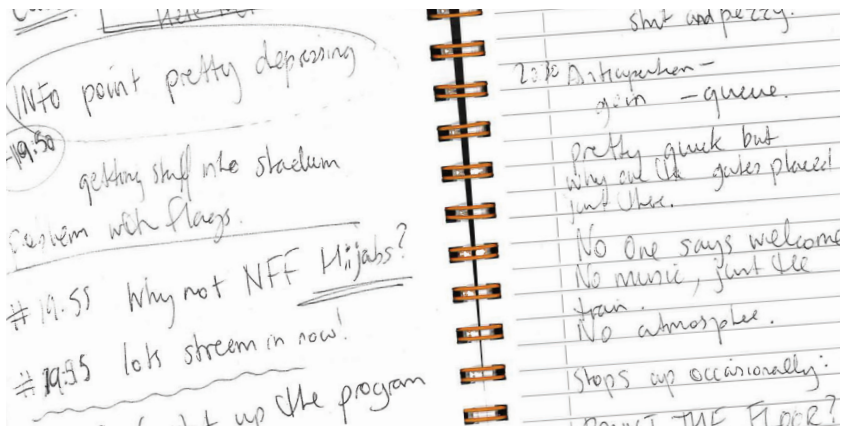


Figure 3.10: A page from field notes I made during a service safari from Norway vs Sweden. It shows how observations are noted with the time at which they were made, as the experience unfolded. The page highlights the abductive nature of design research, where the observations are at times communicated as solutions, reiterating what is missing and creating opportunities for creative leaps. The text moves between describing experiences, functionality of touchpoints and points of interaction, interspersed with possible solutions. (Image: Ted Matthews).

### 3.5.2 Field visits

Field visits to other football spaces, places and services in the UK were made for inspiration and as a way to form comparative perspectives from outside Norwegian culture (Figure 3.12). This included a visit to a Premier League football club as well as the football museum in Manchester. In addition, digital sports- and grassroots football events were visited for further inspiration. Notes were taken and a visual record was made. Each experience was reflected on and offered further perspectives on the Norwegian experience.



Figure 3.11: Images from field trips capturing the use of legends, the naming of streets after football heroes, and memorial plaques for deceased fans. Images also from an e-sport event at a gaming expo in Lillestrøm, ideas from the football museum and experiences from grassroots events in Oslo. (Image: Ted Matthews).

### 3.5.3 Customer journey mapping

Described in Section 2.3.3, the customer journey map was used to capture, visualise and communicate existing customer experience. It was also used to capture ‘dream experiences’ in co-design workshops with fans and used to plan and design for projected experiences. The customer journey was used in every phase of the design process and became a central tool in bringing together service design practice and concepts and structures from ritual. (Figure 3.12).



Figure 3.12 shows how the customer journey was developed over time to become the final ritual journey, which is shown on the bottom of the image. These are just four examples from this process of iteration and synthesis of extensive testing, redrawing, analysis and reflection. (Image: Ted Matthews).

The customer journey was also used as an artefact for discussion. As we see above, the customer journeys that would integrate concepts and structures relating to ritual continued to develop, change and be in a constant state of reiteration until a suitable structure could be found that could be usable as a way to aid in the design of sacred customer experiences. This iterative process would happen together in what might be referred to as a co-productive endeavour, where design conversations with partners at the football association and with designers would work through and reflect on the ever-evolving ritual journey.

### 3.5.4 Evidencing

Evidencing is used as a way to visualise a contingent future where the service might exist to give a sense of the experience. As Diana, Pacenti and Tassi (2009) put it, 'Evidencing means creating images that explore the way a proposed design innovation will feel and work through its touchpoints. The realism of these images, that show the service evidences as they were existed, has the capability to put the audience directly in front of the solution, observing it from a different and more external point of view.' (Ibid., p.71)

Evidencing was used in the football, tourism and banking projects to give a sense of the experience being designed for (Figure 3.13). It worked as a way to see the cultural material being used 'on site', evident in the final designs in a visual and more real way. In this way, it could be evaluated in terms of whether certain aspects needed to be 'turned up' to increase readability or accessibility for a possible user. Graphic Experiential Evidencing was developed to express heightened emotion in the experience (see Publication 4); it was conceived as a new approach to evidencing and as a way to project the experience in a more expressive and emotionally engaging way.

Evidencing allowed for reflection on the potentiality of the lifting of cultural material in the final designs, and in this way, by experiencing this contingent future to an extent, offered further reflection on the potential and value of a more culturally-oriented service design practice, such as tourism shown in Figure 3.14.





Figure 3.13. Photoshop-manipulated image to evidence a new touchpoint that would highlight a well-known, non-material cultural expression of the Norwegian underdog myth. (Image: Ted Matthews).

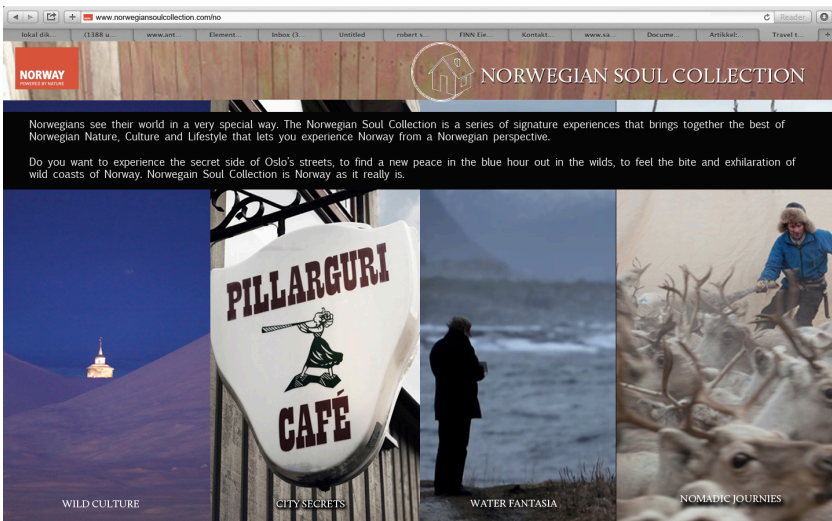


Figure 3.14. Photoshop-manipulated image to evidence a new digital touchpoint for the tourism project. It was used to give a 'feeling' of the service experience through the images and text used. (Image: Ted Matthews).

### 3.5.5 Prototyping

Prototyping allows the designer to try out and test aspects of the service such as touchpoints to give further insight into the potential and viability of concepts. Prototyping was used in both the football and tourism projects to test new touchpoints as part of the service experience being designed for. It was a way to see how cultural material might be designed into the services.



Figure 3.15. Prototype of the experience package touchpoint that was tested as part of the tourist service experience. Here, cultural material relating to Norwegian food, myths and rituals were included and iterated upon. This final image shows a Norwegian ‘Matpakke’ (packed lunch) taking centre stage together with a guide that contextualised the experience for foreign tourist. (Image with permission: Daniel Jackson).

Beyond the ability of prototypes to test concepts, creating them offers a distinct way of knowing through making, such as in the tourist work (Figure 3.15). They make truly tangible and ‘holdable’, the concepts and practices that are made incarnate in the artefact. The example above includes myths, ritualised activity through the food, as well as symbolic aspects and connection to community.

## 3.6 Design Techniques

Beyond the methods and tools used in this research, certain techniques became integral, ongoing approaches to the way I design and discover the potentiality of the concepts drawn from the study of the sacred.

### *3.6.1 Rich design research space*

The rich design research space is developed and described by Sevaldson (2008) as an approach to RtD when working with complexity by creating rich visual design spaces. The technique entails surrounding oneself as a designer with visual material that represents and articulates multiple, complex themes and perspectives to engage and inspire the designer and allow for ‘many types of investigation, from analytical to intuitive. The Rich Research Space provides a flexible framework within which the complexity of research-by-design can be interrelated, discussed, and reflected upon.’ (Ibid., p.28).

The rich design research space functions as a visual representation and an aid to the bricolage of concepts and materials being woven together (see Figure 3.16).

With each project a rich design research space evolved as a natural part of the process. This space would change, and be tinkered with and added to over time. It was used as Sevaldson described, and it aided in the development of the final approach through the design of solutions.

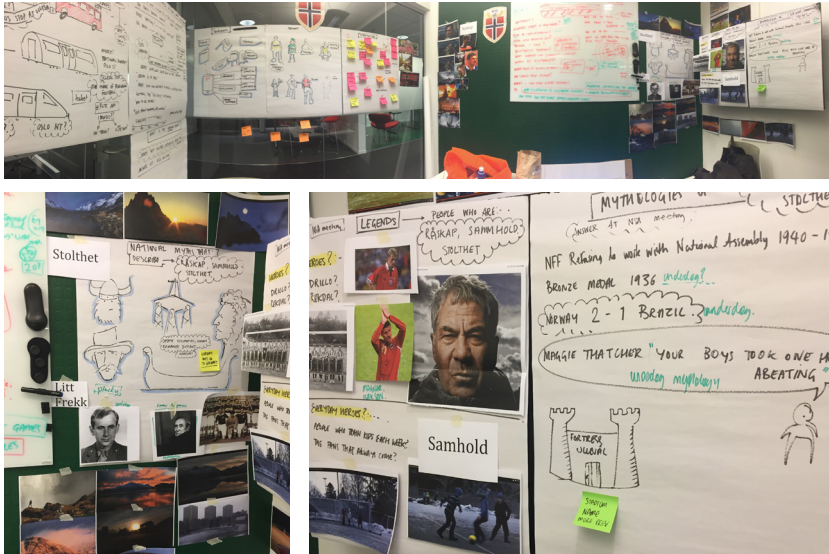


Figure 3.16 shows the rich design space in the design studio set up at the Norwegian Football Association. It brought together ideas and insights relating to actors, myths and legends, traveling to games, symbols, rituals, touchpoints, opportunities, pain points, systems of delivery and brand values. (Image: Ted Matthews).

### 3.6.2 Codesign

Steen, Manschot & De Koning (2011). argue that codesign is a common, effective and useful technique to engage others as part of the service design process, defining the method as follows: ‘In co-design, diverse experts come together, such as researchers, designers or developers, and (potential) customers and users – who are also experts, that is, “experts of their experiences” (Sleeswijk Visser, Stappers, Van der Lugt, & Sanders, 2005) – to cooperate creatively.’ (Steen et al., p.53).

This technique was used in both the telecoms project during a workshop to investigate the first set of rudimentary tools and, more regularly, during the football and tourism projects. It was used as a way to investigate and discuss identified pain points, to identify potentially ‘sacred cultural materials’, and as a way to generate solutions and improvements within the framing of the ritual customer journey that will be described in Chapter 4. It was also used as a way to unpack cultural materials within a cultural symbols mesh, trying rudimentary tools for that purpose, as regards for example the work on tourism (Figure 3.17) and football (Figure 3.18).



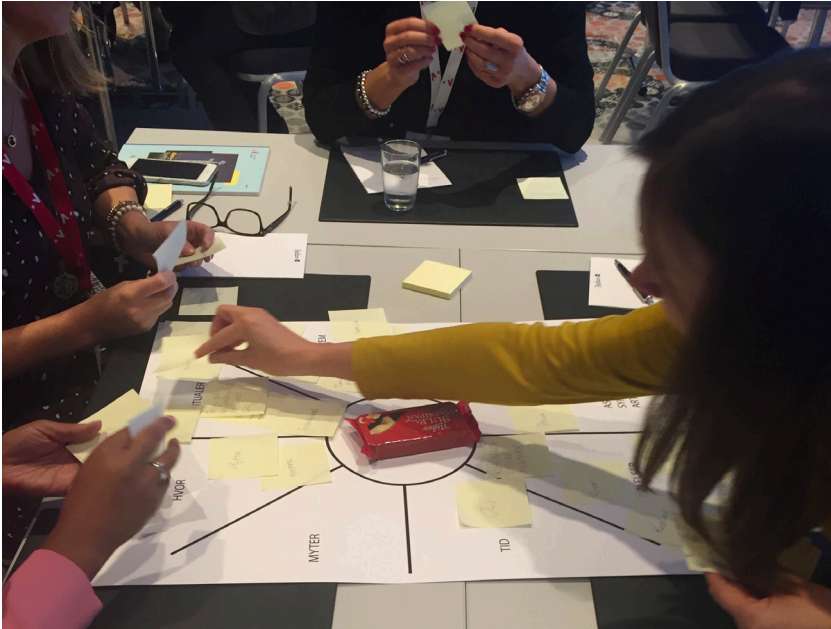


Figure 3.17 shows participants from the tourist industry and Innovation Norway unpacking questions relating to Norwegian culture, starting from the Norwegian symbol of Christmas: the marzipan pig. (Image: Ted Matthews).



Figure 3.18 shows staff at the Norwegian Football Association designing around a customer journey to identify pain points and discuss possible solutions and ideas that might resolve current issues. Here, the team can be seen using 'emotion cards' developed by the author and Simon Clatworthy as tools to help articulate emotional responses to current customer experience. (Image: Ted Matthews).

The co-design space also allowed for further co-reflection through practice, where the concepts and the emerging approach could be tested on and with others. Through observation and discussion, it was possible to draw conclusions on usability and usefulness of the new concepts being developed as part of the overall approach.

### **3.7 Contexts and applications**

#### ***3.7.1 Introduction***

As we have seen, the research design has a methodological base in research through design through bricolage supported by more traditional research approaches. This is then manifested through the design development process itself, utilizing design approaches, tools and techniques as further means for reflection through making.

Finally, I will now move on to shed light on where the research design meets the design development process through descriptions of the ‘real-life’ cases.

Research through design should not be confused with case study research (Hays, 2004), which seeks ‘to answer focused questions by producing in-depth descriptions and interpretations over a relatively short time’ in the examination of ‘people, topics, issues, or programs’ (Ibid., p.218). The cases described give insight into the research by exemplifying how the approach was applied through cycles of design so that the findings of this research can be better understood. In this way, they are, as Schön (1983) describes, ‘exemplars’, and part of the repertoire that has been developed. As such, they are transferable to other contexts. In the cases, I will also highlight examples of some of the many decisions that were made during the design process to give further insight into how design bricolage integrated and utilised concepts relating to the sacred

This section includes descriptions of four real-life projects, referred to as ‘cases’ here. The work took place between 2012 and 2016. The length of each project and information about the participants and partners is included. The length of the descriptions mirrors the size of the cases. Design examples for Case 4 are limited due to the partner’s desire for confidentiality.

### 3.7.2 Case 1: *Tap2Pay*

Project period: February 2013–April 2013.

Participants and partners: Myself, eight service design master's students, Telenor.

A digital wallet service for Norwegian customers was developed by Telenor. The main function of this new service was to allow customers to make cashless payments for goods by tapping their phone on activated terminals. The technology was developed and ready for use. Trials had been conducted, and the service had been proven to work without any considerable technical problems. However, issues relating to initial adoption, the transition from a physical wallet to a mobile device, trust, maintaining service engagement and how and when to introduce new services after adoption were still unresolved.

In 2013, second-semester master's students and I investigated the use of rituals and symbols in relation to payment with this new technology over a period of two months. We made several attempts to turn this investigation into a process that could be used by Telenor. After a period of research for design, which included lectures and reading of literature relating to sacred theory, the students designed a series of workshops to make use of the theory as material for the Tap2Pay service. These activities were set up to discover the relationship between the theories investigated and current service design practice.

These workshops led to many insights and to further work and development. Some of the concepts, manifested in tools, were further developed and tested at a workshop at Telenor involving ten participants representing a multidisciplinary team typical of a new service development team. The workshop was arranged for the purpose of understanding the usefulness and usability of the concepts now embedded in the tools. I facilitated the workshop with the assistance of a service design master's student. The activity was filmed, and together with the design outcomes, the footage showed that the material manifested in the tools offered new ways to approach the design of the new service. One of the design outcomes looked to the design of new rituals using Tap2Pay technology that would assist in how groups might negotiate the at times culturally awkward performance of paying in restaurants at the end of a meal. This shifted the service encounter from one that was interactional to a ritual with a small 'r' (Collins, 2004). Focus interviews with participants after the event offered further insight, and while some of the terms seemed difficult and religious to some, respondents

felt the tools gave them access to a form of reading of society. They fed back that the tools were difficult to use, however the example I have given suggests that using the tools did offer a new approach and framing of the payment in the digital service they were developing. A full description of how the concepts drawn from a study of the sacred manifested in the service design tools and the results of the workshop can be found in Publication 2.

To offer further insight into the process and progress of the PhD as a whole, it was during this project that we developed tools that, although ineffectual, led to an understanding that connecting ritual to the meaningful was important and not just something to 'stick on' to the service experience. This demonstrated the need to connect rituals to that which is deemed meaningful to the consumer community involved. Through use and in reflection, it became clear that myths and symbols are equally important parts of the emerging design approach and central representations of meaning.

The tool developed in this case was forced-association ritual cards. Such cards are often used in design processes to stimulate creative thinking during the initial design phase (Clatworthy, 2011). With this in mind, the students developed a set of ritual cards that could be introduced during the generation phase of the design process. Use of the tool was observed during student workshops. From reflection on the use of the cards together with students in a design discussion following the test, it was clear that whilst the cards did stimulate new ideas about certain customer interactions, these interactions were not located in the cultural context of the customer or the service provider. It was thus concluded that their use resulted in superficial solutions, and that designing with ritual would require the engagement of other context-specific cultural materials.



Figure 3.19: Four of the eighteen ritual forced-association cards. (Image: Ted Matthews).

The cards were tested again during a small segment of an AT-ONE (Clatworthy, 2011) training session with a large Norwegian company to determine their value outside of the student group. Through reviewing ideas generated by participants using the cards, it was concluded that in use, they generated new but meaningless interactions. Therefore, the cards were not tested further at the Telenor workshop and did not become a part of the final approach.

This example gives insight into the work of the bricoleur: application of tools and material to a given context, taking stock, reflection in practice and, in this case, discovery that the material did not work optimally for the context, at least not on its own. The experiment failed, but that allowed for reflection and learning, which leads the bricoleur to tinker more.



### 3.7.3 Case 2: Tourism: Blue Hour – Take Your Time in the No Man’s Land of Røros

Project period: January 2014–April 2014.

Participants and partners: Myself, eight service design master’s students, the Røros Tourist Authority, Innovation Norway and the Norwegian Centre for Design and Architecture.

This project was set up as a way to address issues raised in the first project that highlighted the importance of the other cultural dimensions when designing with ritual. The aim of the project was thus to find ways to orchestrate experiences that would give tourists access to Norwegian culture by identifying and lifting authentic symbols and stories into an experience-centric concept of service that would be delivered through ritual structures.

The first phase of the project was concerned with trying to understand the Norwegian ‘sense of self’, expressed through its own view of its myths, rituals, stories, seasons and nature. This was done through a co-design workshop (Figure 3.20) together with stakeholders, actors from the tourist sector, and an anthropologist and a sociologist working for Innovation Norway. The aim was to investigate Norwegian ‘webs of significance’ (Geertz, 1973/2000).

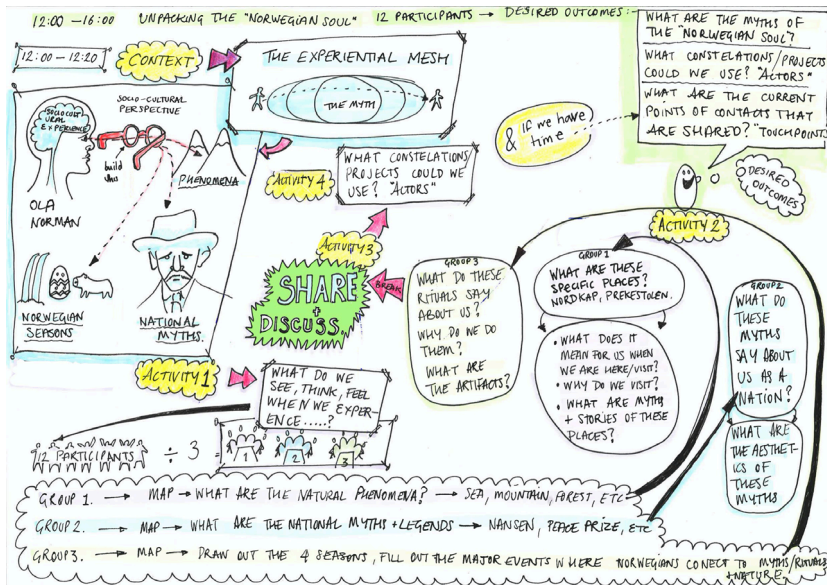


Figure 3.20: Visualisation showing how the workshop on webs of significance would be run and what topics and activities were to be covered. (Image: Ted Matthews).

By examining the many aspects of how Norwegians perceive different aspects of their culture, heritage and nature, we worked as a group to concentrate this into an essence of a Norwegian sense of self, characterised by the following keywords: harmony, survivors, straightforward, proud, equality and natural. We then used this as a myth of ‘Norwegianness’ and a starting point from which the student project team would further explore the Norwegian aesthetics of these keywords and the sensorial experience relating to them (Figures 3.21 to 3.23).



Figure 3.21: This image shows how we worked to understand the aesthetics of ‘Norwegianness’. (Image: Ted Matthews).



Figure 3.22: Grid tool developed to map the sensorial experience of ‘Norwegianness’. (Image: Ted Matthews).

From here, using the keywords, the student project team mapped the symbols, rituals and myths that reflected our interpretation of the Norwegian sense of self, considering how ‘readable’ these elements were from a local to more universal levels.



Figure 3.23: This tool was developed to understand which of the symbols, rituals and myths identified from Norway could be universally understood or were specifically local. (Image: Ted Matthews).



These design activities raised the possibility to create what Geertz (1973/2000) describes as thick descriptions (in the form of text, mood boards, aesthetic maps and sensorial descriptions), extracted through a design technique in their mapping and then in the designerly output and form, manifested in rich visual material depictions. This would allow a basis for our interpretation of Norwegian culture. We then used this as a framing to identify existing tourist offerings in Røros that would give visitors access to this distinctive view of ‘Norwegianness’.

The project team spent a number of days in Røros experiencing many of the tourist offerings we had identified. This gave us the opportunity to determine which of the tourist offerings and other elements of local culture we experienced supported the image of Norwegianness that we constructed. The field trip also made it clear that certain aspects of Norwegian culture were more prominent here than in other parts of Norway, especially in urban areas such as Oslo. Since the local culture evolved out of the remoteness of Røros, the interdependence of residents, the region’s extreme weather and the region’s natural beauty, we chose to focus on the ‘survivor’ and ‘harmony’ aspects of the myth. This guided our selection of materials, existing experiences and aesthetics with which to design with and in turn use as a guide for further development of myths that tell the story of and fit with the local context.

Finally, we had to take into consideration the needs of the ‘client’ and the ‘customer’, which, together with material and the context of place, acted as boundaries that defined the work of the design bricoleur. To this end, the project team took into consideration the local tourist authorities’ need to attract single visitors to stay overnight in the district and to appeal to the needs of potential customers, understood through the profile we received from Innovation Norway. The customer profile could be summarised as educated explorers interested in investigating new territories and their nature, culture, local life, food and traditions.

In the design process, we brought together all of these elements and considerations with the overall aim to design for meaningful tourist experiences through access to local Norwegian culture (albeit a version of this that we interpreted and curated). To do this, we utilised the local phenomenon of the ‘Blue Hour’ (the period at dawn and dusk in which the winter snow creates a special blue light), connected it to place through the integration of local cultural artefacts, rituals and symbols. Through

this process, we connected a natural phenomenon that can be experienced in many places throughout the world to a specific place through cultural framing.

The tourist offering was developed particularly, but not exclusively, for single visitors who wished to escape the stresses of everyday life and connect to the spiritual and, to an extent, the magical. It was delivered through the orchestration of a ritual and development of a specific myth for the 'Blue Hour' service offering. This narrative spoke of the survival and harmony experienced through the magic of experiencing the blue hour alone, specifically in Røros. This addressed the client's needs to attract single visitors and the customer profile's need for adventure.

The design process utilised structures found in Van Gennep's (1909/1960) *Rite of Passage* and interaction ritual chains suggested by Rook (1985) and Collins (2004) to develop a new type of customer journey involving chains of service encounters that were designed to build emotional entrainment. This was done by incorporating the meaningful material that had been assembled with dramaturgical cues from the phases of the ritual. The tourist offering would include several service providers, such as the national rail, a local hotel, food retailers, restaurants and dog sleigh services, into the blue hour myth and ritual dramaturgy in order to curate the experience.

It was during this investigation that I first combined the tripartite ritual dramaturgy with the standard structure of the service design customer journey (i.e., before, during and after). This combination featured five phases: before, separation, transition, reincorporation, and after. How this was manifested in the final designs can be exemplified by looking at the main part of the experience: separation, transition and reincorporation.

**Separation:** The separation experience was delivered through a chain of smaller ritual service encounters, including a slow train journey, a 'last meal', changing of clothes and gathering of provisions. These were designed to build anticipation, prepare and to leave one's old self behind.

**Transition:** The transition experience involved a chain of smaller rituals and artefacts that underlined the magic of the moment, such as, cues like blue bottles to be used in a blue light 'capturing' ritual, special foods and drinks and the traditional sequestered Norwegian cottage. For further context, we also created a poem that connected the blue hour to Norway and making

wishes, hinting at age and tradition through traditional language.

**Reincorporation:** The reincorporation experience was reinforced through celebration with food and recognition of achievement. Users kept the blue bottles as symbols of their transition and experience.

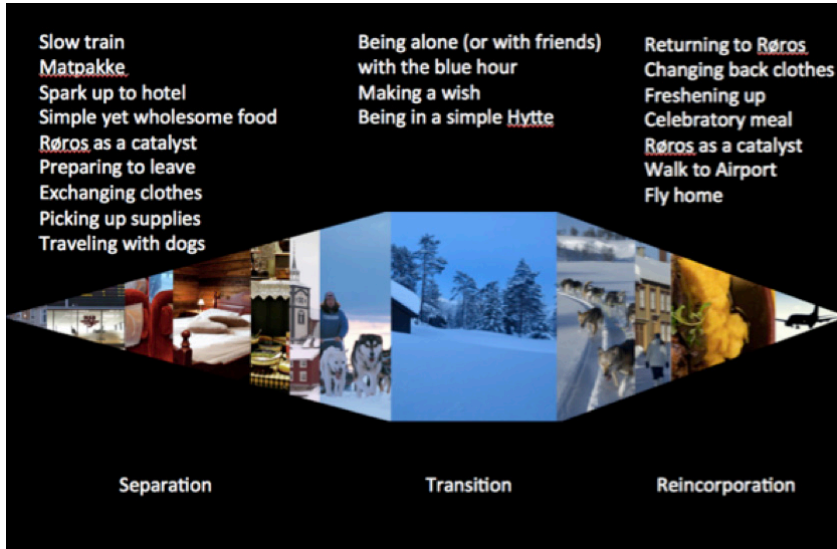


Figure 3.24: Concept visualisation from Power Point presentation that described how the core of the experience had a dramaturgy based on ritual structures and what smaller rituals were included in these phases. (Image: Ted Matthews).

While preparing to communicate the project, results and design concepts to Innovation Norway and the Røros tourist authority, we reflected on the process and the way in which we worked. Reflection through visualisation enabled us to better understand how we had assembled the bricolage of material and, through tinkering and designing, applied this material to develop new design concepts and new structures/processes for designing for services. This was the first time the process was visualised. It was presented to the partners along with descriptions of the work (Figures 3.24 and 3.25).

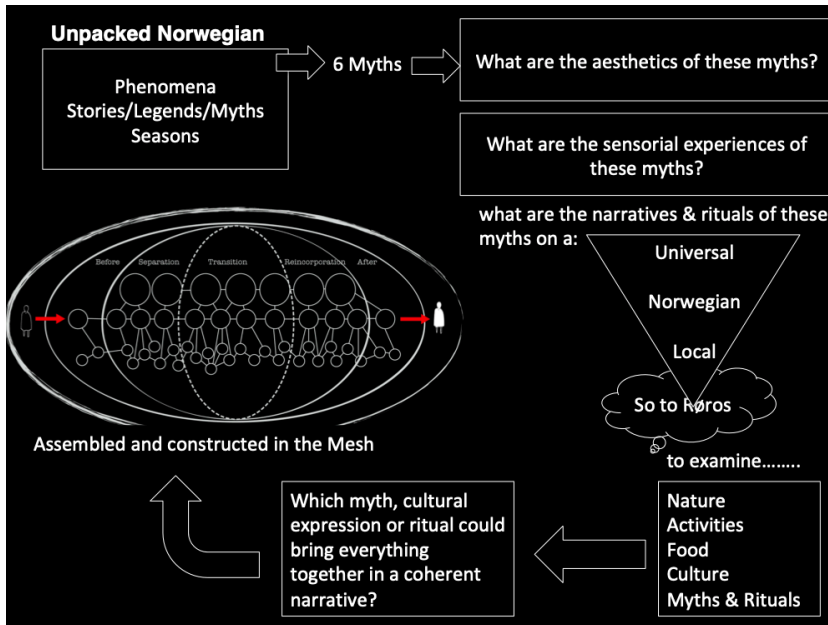


Figure 3.25: Visualisation from Power Point presentation that shows the emerging Sacred Services Approach and the steps of the process. (Image: Ted Matthews).

The same presentation was subsequently presented at several large tourism conferences. The conversations together with question and answer sessions with participants that happened after these presentations provided further information and enabled further reflection on the process. After presentation at Innovation Norway’s annual conference for tourism, a questionnaire using a Likert scale was completed by 51 participants, and the data was used for triangulation of the methods, as described in Publication 5. At this stage of the research, the questionnaire and conversations confirmed that it was worth tinkering with this assembly of sacred concepts towards developing the final design approach.

However, this visualisation is deceptive. As is uncovered in the description above the actual process was a constant move between mapping, interpretation, sorting, idea generation, structuring and arranging. This cyclical activity made the research through design a constant part of the design process and the cultural mapping that was a part of this was understood as a constant process of bricolage in selecting, sorting, testing and evaluation.

### ***3.7.4 Case 3: Football: Alt for Norge – Designing Meaningful Football Experiences***

Project period: November 2014–June 2015.

Participants and partners: Myself and the Norwegian Football Association (NFF). Funded by the Design Lead Innovation Fund.

This project was chosen as it allowed for further development of the emerging approach over a longer period of time, with an eight-month residency at the Norwegian Football Association. The project would focus on the design of the match-day experience for fans attending games involving the men's national football team at the national stadium at Ullevaal. The project coincided with the development of a new brand for the national team by the Scandinavian Design Group, the values and aesthetic of which informed the service experience for which we designed.

Standard service design tools were used as part of the initial design phase to map the customer journey for both fans and players. It was clear that when working with an existing service, 'traditional' service design tools were essential for understanding the current customer journey and the many touchpoints involved.

After establishing this overview, I carried out a series of workshops and interviews with fans, the Norwegian supporters' alliance, staff and stakeholders at the stadium to understand the fans' and the team's 'sense of self'. As in the tourism project, I did this by gaining insight into others' understanding through their legends, myths, symbols, artefacts and songs. In addition, I searched the NFF archive for artefacts whose importance had been raised and that could thus be interpreted as particularly meaningful or privileged, often through their association to moments in history or to players (see Figure 3.26)



Figure 3.26: Rekaldal's boots, which scored the winning goal against Brazil in 1998. Displayed in a case in the stadium archive, they are symbols of the underdog and encapsulate much of how Norwegian view their football heritage and culture. (Image: Ted Matthews).

As this project was focused on the national football team, we further investigated the 'state of the nation', or Norway's sense of self, through review of the media and further reflection on the work that was done in the tourism project. Many of the same themes as in the tourism project emerged, and a sense of anxiety was identified at both the national level and within the national team. Due to this, previously investigated concepts relating to myth as a cultural construction to alleviate anxiety were revisited and used to understand the anxiety that fans expressed regarding Norway's current football performance and at the national level regarding, for instance, the economic downturn and change in national attitude (an issue that is investigated further in the banking case).

We turned to Booker's (2004) seven basic plots to identify a universally understandable contemporary service myth to describe the Norwegian context. After reviewing all of the possible narratives presented by Booker, we felt that the 'quest of the underdog' was a good metaphor for Norway for the following reasons:

- The national football team is comprised of young, enthusiastic players who are not necessarily the favourites to win.
- There are great stories of Norway's football past, often related to when

‘Little Norway’ beat the great teams of Germany (1936), England (1981) and Brazil (1998).

- Norway’s national sense of self is exemplified in underdog stories such as those concerning the heroes of Telemark, Amundsen and Nansen.
- There is a need to alleviate current anxiety regarding changing identity through reaffirmation of the country’s sense of self and to promote the belief that Norway always pulls through in the end. This could also alleviate anxiety concerning the insecurity of larger economic forces that affect the country.

We chose to refer to this myth as the ‘Grand Narrative’ to make the concept more tangible for stakeholders. A conceptual model to communicate the design approach to stakeholders allowed for reflection through visualisation and communication. At many levels of operation, the model showed that the brand guided the aesthetics and the tone at all touchpoints in a service myth of the ‘quest of the underdog’ that will be told until the World Cup in Qatar in 2022. This narrative was exemplified and performed through the games, which were given context within the grand narrative and the brand.

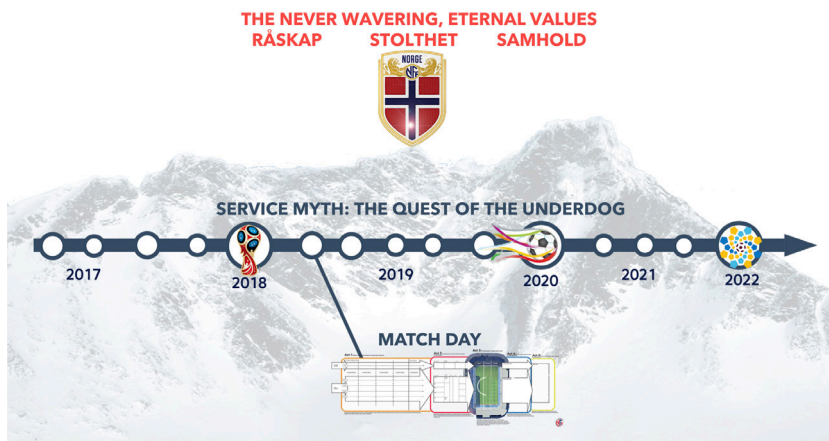


Figure 3.27: Conceptual model of the brand’s grand narrative of the match-day experience. (Image: Ted Matthews).

As first tested in the tourist case, the customer journey was divided into five phases (in this case, five acts) and was referred to as the ritual journey. It was found that the myth-telling and ritual dramaturgy of the process made the experience tonally heroic. Some structures and concepts were drawn from the work of Joseph Campbell (1949/2008) and used to aid the dramaturgy. The five acts were defined as follows:

- Act 1: The call to adventure and a message to the nation.
- Act 2: Separation from the everyday and getting in the mood.
- Act 3: The shared buzz and the game.
- Act 4: Return to the everyday.
- Act 5: After the game and back to the grand narrative.

The acts were populated with a series of what would be referred to as meaningful service encounters (MSE) for both players and fans. We moved away from the term ‘ritual service encounters’ to avoid confusion with the larger structure of the ritual journey. The aim of the MSE chain was to build emotional entrainment (Collins, 2004) between fans and players and create a sense of ‘communitas’ (Turner, 1969) and ‘collective effervescence’ (Durkheim, 1912/2001) during the heart of the experience in Act 3.





The following provides an example of the design of one of these MSEs to offer insight into how the emerging Sacred Services Approach was used in practice. The design of MSEs can only progress after an itinerary of cultural material is assembled, as explained above. The MSE described here is the arrival of the players' bus. The design of the encounter was prompted by the need to redesign the bus to fit the new brand. A design conversation with stakeholders (see Figure 3.29) revealed that within the approach we were taking, a single artefact like the bus could not be designed as a 'stand-alone' touchpoint, but must take place in relation to the grand narrative, the larger dramaturgy of the ritual journey, and other meaningful cultural material.



Figure 3.29: Design conversation with stakeholders, including a graphic designer, about the design of the bus. (Image: Ted Matthews).

First, we considered whether the bus aesthetics fit with the brand. There were stipulations regarding the colour of the bus (white) due to the sponsorship of the coach company HMK. The first design sketches included images of the players, but this changed when we began to understand the role of the bus in the ritual service dramaturgy as a whole.



Figure 3.30: Original proposal for the bus design (designed by and with permission: Tom Wivegh).

Although its main role was in Act 2 of the dramaturgy, the bus also took part in Act 4 (reincorporation) and therefore had to function in the dramaturgy of both. A phrase like a well-known football chant (e.g., ‘Here we go!’) would have been strange in Act 4 (i.e. after the game), especially if the team had lost. HMK also used the bus for general purposes outside of the football season.

In Act 2, the separation phase, the bus serves to build anticipation for the game among both players and fans. We understood that it would play its role in an MSE: the arrival of the team at the stadium, when the players first meet the fans. We knew where the bus would arrive and the route it would take, and we thus had a clear idea of where the action would take place. We also felt that the mundane backdrop of the ‘T-bane’ train line could spoil some of the heroic dramaturgy (see Figures 3.31 to 3.34) we sought to build for the players’ entrance, so we designed a cover to conceal the train line and positioned a team crest and the symbol of the Norwegian mountains behind the players. We also knew that the players would leave the bus and arrive at the entrance portal. Therefore, we redesigned this space to serve as a heraldic welcome. The ‘users’ of the bus are the players, and therefore it should help build their sense of self as stately representatives of the country. In addition, the bus is a barrier between the general public and players. It privileges those on board, which in turn privileges the bus itself. Further privileging could occur either through naming conventions that connected the bus to a sacred individual or event associated with football.

It was decided that, by adding a small record of the games to which it had carried the players (e.g. Norway vs. Sweden, 8 June 2015), the bus would gradually be imbued with the history in which it played a role. As part of this, we also considered what the players should wear as they exited the bus (suits instead of tracksuits, to encourage dignified behaviour among the players), whether there should be music and how the design of the bus might relate to the design of the police vehicle that escorts the bus.



Figure 3.31: Creating a heraldic entrance on a hero's journey. (Image: Ted Matthews).



Figure 3.32: Staging and defining space to work with the bus's arrival. Using the image of Norwegian mountains along with the team's crest. (Image: Ted Matthews).

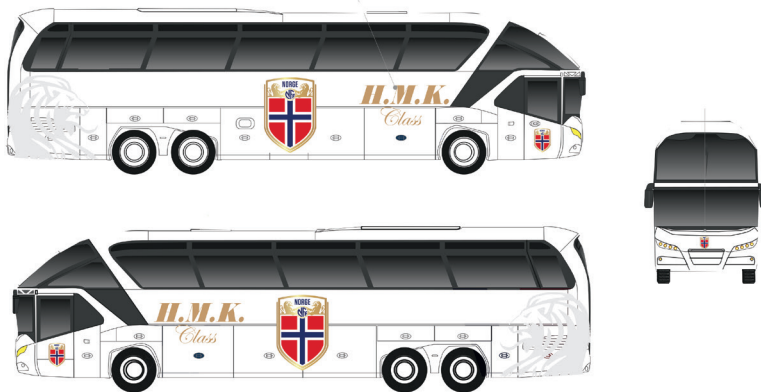


Figure 3.33: Final bus design incorporating meaningful symbols (designed by and with permission: Tom Wivegh).





Figure 3.34: Cues and new rituals of arrival. (Image: Ted Matthews).

This example shows how a brand can be integrated into the design of an artefact/touchpoint whilst considering the following:

- The phase of the ritual journey to which the artefact relates.
- The meaning of the artefact.
- The meaning of the artefact when imbued with further meaning.
- The MSE in which the artefact plays a role.
- The relationship of the artefact to other artefacts
- The artefact's performance of and contribution to the grand narrative or 'service myth'.

The marketing of football games was also integrated into the development of the overall experience and grand narrative. Many channels communicated the idea of the 'quest of the underdog' to give context to the games. For example, sports radio used the metaphor of David and Goliath to highlight the journey in which fans participated and to emphasise the importance of being present to support heroic little Norway.

A new model of evidencing was developed to communicate the desired experience as well as the related roles of front- and back-end staff. Referred to as graphic experiential evidencing, the process provided a sample experience that conveyed the drama and emotion of each MSE through images (Figure 3.35). These images were created in the style of the brand to communicate the feel and values of the brand to employees. An assessment of the tool's value in the design process is presented in Publication 4.

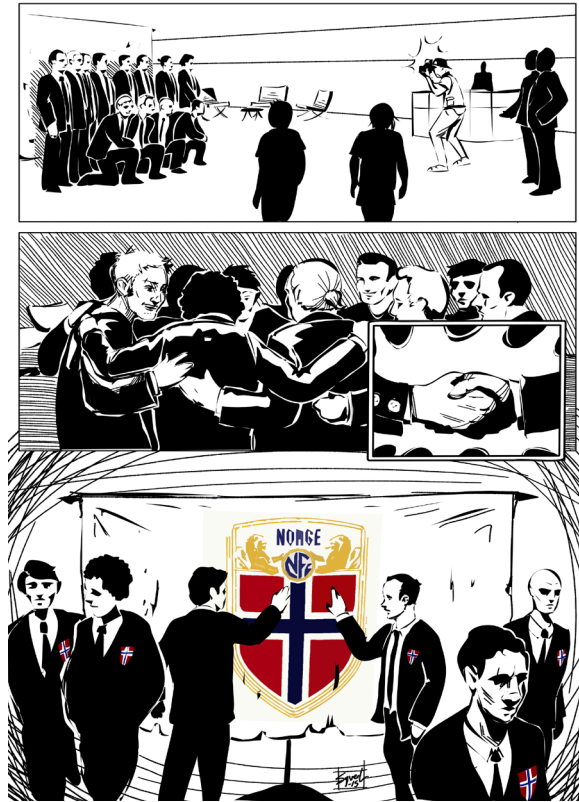


Figure 3.35: The MSE of departure using rituals, symbolic cues and artefacts to build emotion among the players. (Image: Syver Lauritzen/Ted Matthews).

It was during this project that a nearly finalised Sacred Services Approach came together. The defined, yet flexible, structure was tested one final time in a financial services context, described below.

### ***3.7.5 Case 4. Banking: Privilege banking – on being elevated to Royal Gold***

Project period: August 2015–September 2015.

Participants and partners: Myself and a large Scandinavian bank (which requested anonymity and will be referred to as Scandinavian Nordic).

To test the *Sacred Services Approach* on a service that might be seen as

more functional than those in Cases 2 and 3, a financial services partner was chosen through a short design investigation. Customers were not consulted as part of the service development. This was due in part to reflection after the football case regarding the emerging role of the service designer as a cultural intermediary (see Publication 5). This case tested the approach in a functional context from the top-down role of a service designer who interprets a broader cultural need and, in turn, orchestrates a relevant experience for the customer.

The service in question was a privilege account for customers with incomes over an upper threshold or with considerable savings. The service, which will be referred to under the pseudonym ‘Royal Gold’, told a functional story about the benefits that the customer received and the justifications for them receiving better service than standard customers. The service offered better rates, care, queue prioritisation and offers than standard customers. This was not necessarily coordinated into one experiential journey, and the customer base represented a wide demographic in which wealth was one of many attributes. Therefore, a broader socio-cultural investigation of Norwegians’ feelings towards privilege was undertaken. The focus of the customer journey in this case was the onboarding process.

Despite a change in Norwegians’ attitudes toward privilege, arguably due to Norway’s oil wealth, Norway’s long-held values and historical socio-cultural sense of self were investigated. This sense of self was influenced by Norway’s history as a Lutheran society with a ‘non-flashy’ Protestant work ethic and the distinctly Norwegian and untranslatable ‘Jante Loven’ (a term that describes culturally-understood rules of not feeling or expressing that you are better than anyone else). Anxiety regarding a changing attitude has been expressed in contemporary literature, such as Erling Loe’s (2015) *Kampen for tilværelse (The Struggle for Existence)*, the news media, such as *Aftenposten* (2015) (e.g. ‘Uncomfortable reports of a new rich class’) and TV reality shows focusing on privileged youth (TV Norge, 2011). The apparent tension between long-held traditional values and newer, emerging ones produced an image of current Norwegian culture fraught with anxiety about the future of Norwegian culture and its conflict with historical sensibilities.

This situation offered an opportunity to use a relevant myth for resolution. Again, Booker’s (2004) seven basic plots were used. The developed service myth was derived from the ‘rags to riches’ narrative. This myth, used a great deal in the USA (Segal, 2004), tells the story of a poor protagonist who acquires, for example, power, wealth and a mate before losing it all and gaining it back upon growing as a person. This theme was adapted to become



a service myth of Norwegian privilege for those allowed to use the Royal Gold service:

You've worked hard and been smart. You will be rewarded and shown the appreciation that you deserve. You have success that transcends money, and you understand the value of what this success brings. Scandinavian Nordic understands this too and appreciates the fact that you have chosen us to look after your finances.

Due to the short duration of the project, it was decided that just one part of the service experience – onboarding – would be redesigned using the Sacred Services Approach, although several potential areas were investigated. This part of the experience was chosen because Scandinavian Nordic had already designed a customer journey, which gave an overview of the extant touchpoints and thus gave insight into an existing service. Using the Sacred Services Approach, onboarding was re-imagined as a 'rite of passage' and an affirmation of ascension that would perform the service myth. Again, the ritual customer journey was structured in five acts and punctuated with a series of MSEs.

It was clear that the current service had no strong or meaningful symbols that could be understood universally. Therefore, we associated the credit card with privilege and the vehicle of a letter as a symbolic representation of ascension in status. The 'before' phase of the service journey had a timescale of up to 20 years in which the promise that customers would someday receive the letter would be built up in their minds. Already at student fairs, a legend was built around the letter to make it meaningful and relate it to a rite of passage into Norwegian privilege.

The onboarding process was constructed as a rite of passage with eight clear MSEs (Figure 3.36). The letter arrived during the separation phase, and the transformation phase included card-cutting ceremonies and artefacts, an elaborate 'log-in' process and a reincorporation ceremony that integrated existing events offered by the bank to Royal Gold customers into the experience. The resulting design did not require the bank to invest great funds to deliver the new service journey, but only reordering, re-emphasis and a slight redesign of certain artefacts and touchpoints. The main expense was the introduction of a physical letter that would communicate new meaning about the value of an invitation to be part of the service and the establishment of this letter over time.



This case study allowed the transferability of the approach to be tested and offered further insight into the how approaches and concepts from socio-cultural domains now fully integrated into a new service design approach might affect the design of an existing service. Again, this shifted a transactional service exchange to one that lifted the meaningful in Norwegian culture.

Reflecting after this case study, it was clear that as part of the mapping the existing customer journey, I had started to identify transition points as part of the activity, even though this wasn't fully clear to me at the time. Not being aware that I was doing this type of activity emphasised that the concepts and materials from the study of the sacred were far more ingrained in my extended repertoire as a service designer than I had realised during the designing itself, and that they had become part of my tacit knowledge.

### **3.8 In Closing**

This chapter has presented an assemblage of the research methodologies, research methods, design techniques and tools selected and implemented in the study and its six thematic practice-based cases. Details of the implementation of these research and design means have been described and presented visually to provide a sense of the texture of the methods and making. They together provide contextualisation of the setting and shaping of what was done and ways it provides insights and informs the development of the analysis.



## Chapter 4. On Sacred Services

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents what I call the *Sacred Services Approach*. I position this within a broader perspective of *Experiential Service Design (ExSD)*, that is located within an emergent and expanded view of service design practice and research to incorporate experience-centricity, cultural service design and sacred services. The chapter will examine the *Sacred Services Approach* in detail, as comprised of concepts, process and model. It concludes with a discussion of the implications of the broader perspective and the approach for service design practice, teaching and research.

### 4.2 Perspective

#### 4.2.1 *Elements of a view*

This thesis set out to investigate ways in which the experiential in service design might be informed by concepts, design practice and techniques and tools oriented toward and within notions of the sacred in service encounters. I adopted this perspective in order to investigate the opportunities for service design, which currently does not propose an approach for the design of sacred customer experiences in the design for service experiences. This responds to an identified need for new forms of experience-centricity in service provision (Voss, et al., 2008). The research focuses specifically on sacred customer

experience in service provision, as this has been identified as an important factor in heightened customer experience that leads to customer loyalty and identity expression (Belk et al., 1989).

#### ***4.2.2 On Experiential Service Design (ExSD)***

The perspective I articulate and formulate as *Experiential Service Design (ExSD)* has three main intersecting aspects. These are 1) Experience-centric services, 2) Cultural service design, and 3) *Sacred Services Approach*. Each of these aspects highlights what I argue are the main components of an emergent model and character of service design in which the experiential is essential, and where cultural characteristics may be included as critical framings and articulations of a changing, widening view on service design for business, management, and enactment to cultural expression and participants experience via cultural modes, tropes and performance.

I will briefly highlight what each of these aspect does and what it contributes to the overall perspective of *Experiential Service Design*. 1) Experience-centric services accentuate the importance of lifting the crafted and distinct yet inter-subjective shared experience. This is important, as the experiential is increasingly seen as a competitive differentiator in service provision. 2) Cultural service design highlights the need to integrate, appropriate and remodel sociology and cultural studies practice, its models and its observations, as culture is a determinate of lived experience. This is important, as it offers new and untapped sources for enrichening service design research and practice as well as the types of experiences designed for. 3) *Sacred Services Approach* focuses specifically on what is perceived sacred for consumer communities and from a broader socio-cultural context. It also makes use of the mechanisms related to the study of the sacred experience and brings them into the design of services. This is important, as it presents an approach for the design of sacred experiences in consumer service provision that delivers new forms of value for the customer, as well as new material and approach for the design of experiential service design.

I will now continue and elaborate on each of these aspects of *Experiential Service Design* in more detail. Following these elaborations, I discuss how these three aspects may be seen as a whole and what this implies for the approach.

### 4.2.3 *Experience-centric services*

This view might be summarized as having three main elements:

- A. Experience:** Co-created, phenomenological, internal, however potentially intersubjective in heightened shared experiences.
- B. Experience-centric services:** Crafted, distinct, hedonic yet can be found in utilitarian services. Must engage designers in their development
- C. Relationship and relevance to *ExSD*:** Service design has a role to play in understanding experience-centricity through design research.

#### **A. Experience**

Experiences are the outcome of a service encounter and while they cannot be designed, they can be designed for. This means that the service designer must orchestrate the right settings, stimuli, touchpoints, channels, actions of staff, use of brand, dramaturgy, etc. towards creating a projected experience. The experience is phenomenological, occurring in the mind of the customer. In this way, it is a subjective and individual experience that is specific to the customer. Despite the personal and internalized nature of an experience however, some experiences are shared. Such is the power of certain collective experiences, especially when they are generated through gatherings like rituals that are meaningful for groups that perceive themselves as a community and inter-subjective and shared experiences occur. Durkheim (1912/2001) describes this as when ‘all individual consciences vibrate in unison’ (Ibid., p.152), resulting in the highly experiential ‘collective effervescence’. These kinds of experiences have been observed in service provision (Arnould & Price, 1993), and they can be designed for. Experiences of this kind are a category of experience-centric services.

#### **B. Experience-centric services**

Experience-centric services are services that have lifted the experiential in their service offering. That is to say that the experiential outcome of the service is not just a coincidental result of

the service encounter, but has been crafted with a clear, distinctive experiential goal. The role of design is essential in crafting these experiences. Moreover, experience-centric services lift the experiential aspect of the service to be as important as any functional aspect as part of the service offering, if not more important. Some experience-centric services may offer little in the way of functional benefit to the customer and fall into an experience economy bracket, or they could be functional services that have heightened the experiential as part of their service offering.

### **C. Relationship and relevance to *ExSD***

Given the importance of customer experience-centricity in service development and the need to involve design in this endeavour, little research from a service design perspective has undertaken this task. Service design research needs to engage in the question of experience-centric services to connect design and development through research through design to actively designing these kinds of services and approaches for their replication.

#### **4.2.4 Cultural Service Design**

This view might be summarized as follows:

- A. There is a limited discourse on culture in service design.**
- B. Services are not just systems, interactions and technology; they are made up of society and culture.**
- C. Relationship and relevance to *ExSD*: Service design needs to integrate socio-cultural practice into the design of new kinds of experience.**

#### **A. Limited view of culture in service design.**

Discussions of culture in service design have been limited and focused mainly on a view of national and geographic culture (Zhipeng et al., in press), with some attention given to the effect on organizational culture (Bailey, 2016; Holmlid & Malmberg, 2018; Rizzo, Deserti



& Cobanli, 2018, Zhipeng et al., in press) but also on the culture of the service design approach (Zhipeng et al., in press). There has also been some focus on the service designer as a cultural intermediary (Dennington 2017, 2018; Matthews, 2017).

### **B. Service are not just systems, interactions and technology, but made up of society and culture**

Service design has evolved through the appropriation and remodelling of service marketing and management tools and later drawn on themes from interaction design (Morrelli, 2009). This locates service design in business practice and the functionality of interaction. Services are made up of more than the systems, interactions, touchpoints, technology and the functional; they are also made up of and comprise a part of culture and society (Manzini, 2011). Unlike approaches such as hermeneutic reverse engineering developed by Balsamo (2011) for technocultural innovation, service design research and practice has not drawn from broader studies of the socio-cultural, nor has it integrated, appropriated or remodelled its approaches, tools or material in any systematic way. If service design does not draw from broader socio-cultural material, it is in danger of replicating itself and missing opportunities for innovation through a limitation of its ‘imaginative space’ (Balsamo, 2011).

### **C. Relationship and relevance to *ExSD***

Cultural service design in the context of *ExSD* is an evolution of service design that appropriates and remodels sociology and cultural studies practice towards the design of experiences that dig deeper into the broader socio-cultural context of the customer. A person’s culture is a key determinant of how that person experiences something and therefore an important factor for *ExSD*. This is a departure from current practice, where a view of customer-centricity converges around the interactional needs of the customer in-situ at touchpoints through a customer’s journey. This relocates *ExSD* as cultural practice, as a form of cultural intermediation and as a creator of new cultural forms.

### 4.2.5 Sacred Services Design

This view might be summarized as follows:

- A. Customers are already consuming sacred experiences**
- B. Sacred Services offer an approach to *ExSD* for sacred customer experiences**
- C. Relationship and relevance to *ExSD*.**

#### **A. Customers are already consuming sacred experiences**

Customers are already gaining sacred experiences through the services they consume, and these tend to be highly experiential and meaningful service encounters (Arnould & Price, 1993; Belk, et. al. 1989; etc). Sacred customer experiences are often associated with those who belong to brand communities (Schouten et al., 2007).

#### **B. Sacred Services offer an approach to *ExSD* for sacred customer experiences.**

*Sacred Services Approach* understands sacred experiences as happening through a community's engagement with the material that it perceives as meaningful, specifically ritual, myth and symbol. *Sacred Services Approach* utilizes traditional service design approaches and tools to identify and map the many aspects of the service landscape, but then proposes an approach to mine, identify, interpret, re-arrange, re-interpret and utilize sacred material in a systematic way for the design for sacred customer experiences in the context of experience-centric service provision.

#### **C. Relationship and relevance to *ExSD***

*Sacred Services Approach* is an approach to *ExSD* that appropriates and remodels sociology and cultural studies practice, its models and its observations. It does this in a systematic way to create new concepts, praxis, an approach and a model for the design of experience-centric services. It is an approach that has its foundation in traditional service design practice and research, but it creates a bridge

between practice and cultural studies and sociology. Specifically, it utilizes concepts relating to the study of the sacred with the aim of designing for sacred customer experiences in service provision. These types of service experiences are crafted with a clear, distinctive experiential goal: that of sacred customer experiences framed by Durkheim's view of the sacred in its opposition to the quotidian as utilized by Belk et al. (1989) in their study of sacred customer experiences. In this way, *Sacred Services Approach* offers a clear approach to the design of experience-centric services. *Sacred Services Approach* presents concepts, a process and a model, and as such an overall framework for the further development of an aspect of *ExSD*. It is an example of research through design that proposes a facet of an emerging field.

### 4.3. Sacred Services Approach

In support of the perspective on heightened customer experience through notions of the sacred in service encounters outlined above, I will now move on to elaborate on those elements that make up an account of the *Sacred Services Approach* as the main finding and outcome of this PhD. This is presented through concepts, process and a model to allow for an unpacking and clarification of their relationship to concepts, approaches and practices aggregated from a study of the sacred and how these have been woven together with concepts, approaches and practices from service design.

In the descriptions given of the design cases in Chapter 3, I pointed to the occasional use of 'tools' that were developed and utilised as part of the design process. These tools are neither described nor elaborated on here. This is due to these tools being developed for the specific context of these design projects. As such, they were mechanical aspects of the 'job in hand' and not part of a meta-conceptualisation of the emergent *Sacred Services Approach*.

Concepts, process and model were developed in the study. These were developed and devised through a process of connecting theory and practice, analysis and making within a critical reflexive view on research through designing (see Chapter 3). Together, they offer a multi-faceted view of the research outcome.

### ***4.3.1 Concepts***

#### ***4.3.1.1 Concepts developed through design inquiry***

The concepts were developed to account for a number of needs and opportunities as part of an approach to designing for sacred customer experiences. As mentioned in the publications that also constitute this thesis, as well as in Chapter 3 on methodology, research and design methods, these concepts were implicitly and explicitly embedded and teased out in the processes of the development of my perspective on Sacred Services. These concepts are borne out of design-based generation and have been trialled and assessed in use and redesigned and reinvigorated through further presentation and interpretation. The concepts have also been developed as a set of interlinked aspects that provide a holistic, situated view on ideas, notions and materials in extending more strategic, management and functional views of service design. Consequently, it may be beneficial to view these as a set of relational concepts that may be more fully understood by being linked, whether directly or indirectly, in different configurations or weightings depending on specific service experiential encounters or touchpoints in development or use.

#### ***4.3.2 Concept formation***

A total of seven concepts were developed within the study. They form part of a design-based perspective on service innovation central to the overarching *CSI Project* within which my thesis was located, specifically in the programme's work package, entitled *Customer and Brand Experience*. The concepts were developed and shaped by service design research and practice and the related studies of a cultural bent on ritual, myth and symbols, as outlined in Chapter 2 and the related thesis publications. In addition however, the concepts emerged within the acts of design and use as presented in Chapter 3.

As a design domain and discipline service design has been realised through the inclusion and elaboration of design-centred service innovation, practice and analytical concepts over the past two decades. When it comes to research, in the early phase of the development of service design, these concepts tended to originate arrive from studies in business and marketing, for example Shostack's 'Blueprint' (1984), shifting to include interaction design concepts (Holmlid & Evenson, 2007; Morelli, 2009; Sangiorgi, 2009; Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011) but also being seen as a multidisciplinary approach (Patricio & Fisk, 2011).

In a review of the development and maturation of service design, Yu (2020) delineated how these locations and underpinnings have changed over time and contributed to service design that brings together these perspectives as an integrative service design framework in 2020.

A great deal of service design research centres on key concepts that are not only tools, methods or approaches: blueprint, customer journey, etc. Rarely in service design research literature do we encounter concepts derived from the humanities and social sciences where service experiences are located in cultural events (as opposed to transactional) and socially- and culturally mediated experience. While important attention has been given to the experiential in service design (Clatworthy, 2019), it is vital that service design develop further concepts of that focus.

In my practice-based design research, I approach design-centred concept building as a central part of the interface between theory and practice. Concept formation entails developmental processes in design work alongside the reflexive application and emergence of understanding and use of key concepts. Little has been written about concept formation in design research: service design has been active in promoting a set of core concepts that have seldom drawn significantly from cultural domains. As the review of socio-cultural theories and concepts in Chapter 2 indicated, there is massive potential for service design to refer to and selectively incorporate concepts from disciplines such as anthropology and cultural studies. This may help deepen and widen the concepts at play in working to provide improved experiential services, as well as their analysis.

Through the design-based character of the project's work, its context and participative use, together with insights in my research reading and reflections, I refined a number of key idea and concepts, however. Some of these were clearly apparent in the actual designs; others have been elaborated and some generated afresh. Together, these form what I present as a set of seven core concepts that contribute to the perspective on Sacred Services outlined above. I have arrived at this set in order to provide a fuller analytical suite of concepts. I place these in relation to and intersecting with those realised through the actual services and tools in the designing and design work.

### 4.3.3 List of concepts

Briefly put, the concepts may be positioned at different levels of abstraction, they vary in respect to existing concepts, and they pose novel notions and formulations. The concepts are:

1. Transition Map
2. Cultural Scoping & Mapping
3. Cultural Symbols Mesh
4. Service Myth
5. Ritual Service Journey
6. Meaningful Service Encounters
7. Graphic Experiential Evidencing (GEE).

I will now go into each of these concepts in detail, including a proposed core definition and short orientation to their genesis, associations and use.

### 4.3.4 Details of concepts

#### 1. Transition Map

This activity follows traditional customer journey mapping used in service design (Følstad et al., 2013). It sets out to understand the current lived experience of the service from the customer's point of view. The activity maps and in turn visualizes the whole customer journey with touchpoints and service encounters, as well as the emotional response of the customer. This is the 'as is' service experience.

The *Transition Map*, however, seeks to identify encounters in the customer journey that might be described as transitional. These might be points such as entering a service space, transactions, signing up for a service or leaving a service space. This is done in order to identify points in the existing service journey where smaller rituals might be designed and added later in the design process. This view draws on theory from Turner (1969) and Van Gennep (1909/1960) in which transitional space and time are raised as important emotional and social conduits. These happen at specific times, within common dramaturgical structures often through physical spaces. Collins (2004) and Rook (1985) argue that transitions occur in chains of sequences in larger ritual structures that generate heightened emotional states. Collins points out that emotion builds through chains of these rituals in a transition to what he calls 'emotional entrainment'.

The *Transition Map* therefore adapts these perspectives for use in identifying potential areas both in time and space for designing for sacred experiences in service provision. These transition spaces are the points that will be designed as *Meaningful Service Encounters* within the *Ritual Service Journey* structure later in the design process.

## 2. Cultural Scoping and Mapping

This concept is about understanding the scope of the cultural space that is being designed within and for through the mapping of meaningful cultural material. This mapping happens on several levels and for several purposes:

- To gain a broader understanding of the cultural contexts within which the customers and the service exist.
- As an investigation to understand if the customers are a brand community already or whether the service has the potential to form one around it.
- To determine whether the customers already belong to another non-brand related community and if so, what the scope and level of this is.
- To determine what the sacred or potentially sacred material is.
- To determine what this sacred material uncovers about identity, values, morality and beliefs of the community being designed for.

These areas are investigated through the mapping. The activity delves into sacred symbols, significant stories or myths, and rituals, as well as perceived existential anxieties of the community. This draws inspiration from the interpretive anthropology approach proffered by Geertz (1973/2000) and the cultural analysis phases of Balsamo's (2011) approach, where the understanding of the underlying beliefs and sense of identity of a community requires the observer to interpret the meaning of the 'webs of significance' (Geertz, 1973/2000, p.64) that are representative of the observed. The observer's own cultural perspective affects this interpretation and for the designer this is no exception; the interpretation is guided by the intention of the designing, a point Nelson & Stolterman (2003) make clear as a constant motivation of the designer. Mapping this web of significance, which I refer to in this PhD as a Cultural Symbols Mesh, leads to an interpretation of what this mesh says about the community in question and to understanding how the group defines itself through its symbols.

Furthermore, from the generative approach of the designer, cultural mapping also serves to create an inventory of material for use in the future design of a ‘sacred service’. This concept also draws much from Barthes (1957/1972), who shows that the dioramas of our culture seen in the assemblage of symbols tell a distinct story of who we think we are. Barthes uses the term myths to describe these stories, and the term is used to denote what he sees as the narratives constructed to unite and control society through powerful ideas and as a way to naturalize beliefs. Other theories see the invention of myths as more organic (Campbell, 1949/2008), yet still as metaphors that tell a truth about who a community believes itself to be.

This concept is further inspired by the writings on brand community by Muniz and O’Guinn (2001), which present a framework for identifying brand communities through their exhibition of traditional markers of community: shared consciousness, rituals and traditions and a sense of moral responsibility.

With these points of view in mind, *Cultural Scoping and Mapping* collects cultural material to understand the scope of the cultural space in which the design is being done, the underlying beliefs, values and sense of identity of the community being designed for, and as a way to collect an inventory of material for further design. It is also from this assembly of material that a *Service Myth* will emerge. This will be addressed later.

This mapping activity also investigates the existential anxieties of the community being designed for, as they uncover a further dimension of the community’s sense of self, where existential threats are in opposition to the community’s beliefs. In turn, rituals and myths are shown to abate or act as mediators for anxiety on larger existential questions but also in everyday activity (Lévi-Strauss, 1955). Mapping anxieties, again offers further insight into the culture being examined and as potential inspiration for the design and intention of myths and rituals later in the process.

### **3. Cultural Symbols Mesh**

The *Cultural Symbols Mesh* is a way to assemble materials to try to read a community or interest group’s view to develop services, a service myth and a repository of material with which to design. The *Cultural Symbols Mesh* is the output of the *Cultural Scoping and Mapping* exercise. In looking at its totality, the designer goes about reading and interpreting the culture from which it has been drawn.



However, the mesh concept is also a repository for culturally relevant, sacred, symbolic material that can be used in the construction of rituals later. This material must first be sorted and prioritized to determine what of this material is most important and uniquely readable for the brand community being designed for. Some of the symbols uncovered are only readable and relatable to the community when it is combined with others, in a valency of meaning. I have described this further in Publication 5; in summary however, prioritizing this material makes it possible to raise some symbols above others, which can denote their potential power as stand-alone sacred material for use later in the design process.

When stand-alone sacred symbols are limited, symbols from broader society might be appropriated and imbued with new meaning for the community in question. Alternatively, some symbols that have less sacred meaning might be privileged or boosted to have greater meaning by including them in the design of ritual. The *Cultural Symbols Mesh* is dynamic. It can be added to, and new meanings and connections can be made as the design process progresses. This represents a shift from predictability in the design practice and taxonomical understandings of culture towards enabling and becoming of potential futures that can be negotiated and performed through collaborative and material processes of design and intervention (Binder, De Michelis, Ehn, Jacucci, Linde, & Wagner, 2011).

Again, this concept draws from Barthes (1957/1972), suggesting that the meaning of symbols and combinations of symbols can be negotiated and to a certain extent manipulated into new meanings. The mesh concept also draws from Hobsbawn (1968), who shows how certain symbols have been borrowed or adapted and imbued with greater meaning than those initially held. Bell (1997) argued that symbols and artefacts can be further privileged through the ritual act itself. Cultural symbols may thus be re-entered into the mesh after they have been lifted and made sacred through future ritual designs in the *Sacred Services Approach*.

Finally, the concept understands that, as Durkheim (1912/2001) argues sacred experiences happen in contact with a community's sacred symbols or totems during ritual. This is why identifying and applying them in the design process was understood as important when designing for sacred experiences in services.

#### 4. *Service Myth*

The *Service Myth* concept synthesizes all the material in the *Cultural Symbols Mesh* into a myth that is relatable and authentic to the brand community's sense of self from which the material has been drawn. This is a 'heroification' of the sense of self. Through its narrative, the emerging *Service Myth* should also reconcile anxieties of the group by finding a narrative that can also resolve these anxieties in its telling.

Again, with Barthes (1957/1972) as inspiration, the myth being created is devised as a way to encourage narratives that naturalize and propagate beliefs and ideas relating to the sense of self of a community. As Nancy (1991) argues, the myth is essential for the creation of community, and that community cannot exist without it. With this in mind, the *Service Myth* may reflect the brand community being designed for, but it can be used as a device to create one, or at the very least assemble a group of consumers around the narrative that can reflect values and beliefs.

The concept also draws from Bell (1997), who describes how rituals are performances of the community myths, and the *Service Myth* acts as a guide and gives context to the overall ritual to be designed later in the process. The *Service Myth* is the grand narrative of the *Ritual Service Journey*. In creating the *Service Myth* concept, inspiration was also drawn from Booker (2004), Lévi-Strauss (1955) and Campbell (1949/2008), each of whom argues from his specific perspective that there exist universally readable structures and narratives that are understood across cultures. Campbell (1949/2008) pointedly raised the hero as the external expression of the ego.

The *Service Myth* concept must bring into its construction aspects of the brand values of the service provider for which the eventual sacred service is to be designed. This ensures further integration of the service provider's values into the brand community being designed for to bind the community's identity deeper with the values of the service provider. The *Service Myth* must therefore feel authentic to the brand and the brand community or a dissonance will occur. The *Service Myth* must be tailor-made for the brand community it is being designed for or for the brand community it aims to create.

## 5. *Ritual Service Journey* & 6. *Meaningful Service Encounters*

The *Ritual Service Journey* concept is a planning, visualization and designing tool that marries the customer journey concept with that of the tripartite ritual structure presented by Van Gennep (1909/1960) and further elaborated on by Turner (1969). The *Ritual Service Journey* is contextualized by the *Service Myth* and therefore performs and makes tangible the brand community's values, interwoven even more tightly with those of the service provider's brand. As with the *Service Myth*, this aims to build greater brand loyalty as identity is woven together when engaging with the brand through the service interaction.

However, the main purpose of the *Ritual Service Journey* concept is to add the dramaturgy of ritual to guide the intention of the designing, which is the building of sacred experience during the customer's experience of a service. The *Ritual Service Journey* has five phases. Before and after phases, as in a traditional customer journey, charts the projected service encounters of the customer with the service before and after engaging with the core of the service. The core of the *Ritual Service Journey* breaks down into the three phases of separation, transition and reincorporation. Each of these phases have the clear intention to guide the designer in how each part of the service journey should emotionally affect the customer or groups of customers experiencing the service. To make this manageable, each phase is populated with *Meaningful Service Encounters* that move the customer through the whole ritual construction through a series of smaller staged ritual interactions with the service. These *Meaningful Service Encounters* in turn have their own secondary intention, responding to the particular needs and context of the transition spaces identified during the transition map. Drawing from Collins' (2004) theory on interaction ritual chains, they are essential in building the customer's energy and emotions towards an emotional highpoint in the transition phase of the ritual journey.

The separation phase has the purpose of using *Meaningful Service Encounters* that reinforce the sense of leaving behind the everyday, or profane, as Durkheim (1912/2001) would have it. The reincorporation phase aims to bring the customer back to the everyday and reinforce the emotional change and highpoint that has been designed for in the transition phase of the *Ritual Service Journey*. The transition phase is the core of the *Ritual Service Journey* and has the intention of bringing about emotional entrainment (Collins, 2004) or collective effervescence (Durkheim, 1912/2001) in the assembled customers. It must therefore be populated with *Meaningful*

*Service Encounters* that stimulate and energize the community activated in the experience. This means an intensification of sensorial stimulation, use of deeply sacred symbols, centring of attention of the customers involved – aspects of ritual that are drawn from the writings of Durkheim (1912/2001), Van Gennep (1909/1960), Turner (1969), Rook (1985) and Collins (2004).

### **7. *Graphic Experiential Evidencing (GEE)***

*GEE* concept elicits in its viewer emotions expressed in the image through emotional mirroring (see Publication 4). It is thus a form of visualization for emotional imitation in the viewer. The *GEE* concept is a negotiation between the vision of the designer and the graphic artist together with the brand aesthetic that brings forth a visual expression of the emotional response to *Meaningful Service Encounters*. The concept allows for the viewer to experience the service experience in a storable form. The concept draws from writings on the effect of the graphic novel (McCloud, 1993) and art on the viewer and how such images generate feelings of emotion and empathy that deliver a ‘sense of inward imitation’ (Freedberg & Gallese, 2007, p.197).

Together, these concepts inform the *Sacred Services Approach*. They are described here in the order in which each concept as a design activity takes place. However, as with any design process the order of activity is not purely linear and activity moves back and forth between the stages as the design work progresses. As has been described, the *Cultural Symbols Mesh* is dynamic and will change as certain symbols might be privileged and reinterpreted during the design of the *Ritual Service Journey*.

### 4.3.5 Relations between concepts

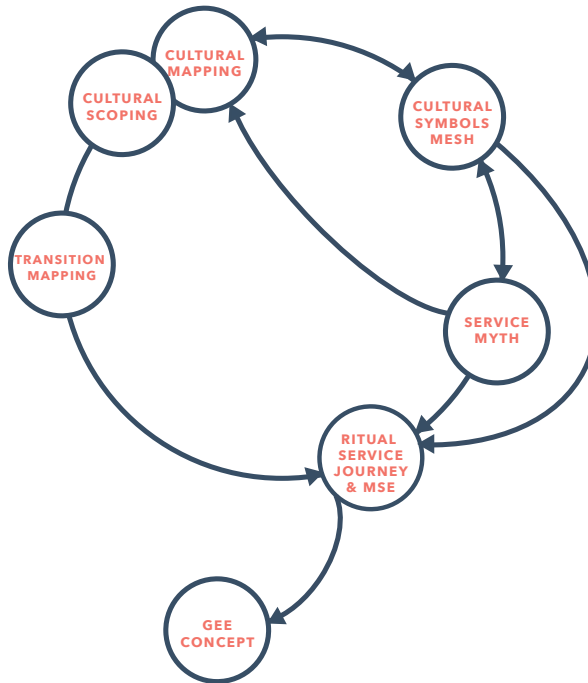


Figure 4.1: Relations between key concepts for sacred services. (Image: Ted Matthews).

Figure 4.1 shows the relationships between the concepts with related components as an overall approach embedded within them. Concept 1: Transition Mapping identifies possibilities for ritual design in the current service experience; this then informs the later design of Concept 5: *Ritual Service Journey*. Concept 2: Cultural Mapping and Scoping investigate the ‘as is’ of the broader cultural space, the brand community and the culture surrounding the service provider and its brand. Concept 3: *Cultural Symbols Mesh* takes the material from Concept 2 and arranges and prioritizes it. Concept 4: Service Myth synthesises the material into its essence through the construction of a heroic myth of self. This then gives a further analysis framework to return to the *Cultural Symbols Mesh* to rearrange and reprioritize. This may also require further cultural mapping. Concepts 5 and 6 use the identified transition points, the Service Myth and material from the

Symbols Mesh to generate a ‘what can be’ ritualized customer experience. Concept 7: GEE disseminates emotional representations of the service experience. These concepts may thereby be read as relational, and they may be applied as analytical resources within with the overall *Sacred Services Approach* given above.

## 4.4. Process

### 4.4.1 Framing

I foresee that the concepts given above may be enjoined and embedded in a process that also constitutes the *Sacred Services Approach*. The process is comprised of 15 key components. While each component demarcates a specific aspect of the proposed process, it is important that they are also read as a whole.

### 4.4.2 Outline of components of the process developed through design enquiry

The components are as follows:

1. Scoping the service-scape being designed for.
2. Identifying opportunities for ritual design.
3. Broadening the focus to encompass the larger cultural space.
4. Collecting and collating cultural material
5. Reading cultural material as a way to gain insight.
6. Appraising the strength of the brand community’s identity.
7. Arranging and prioritizing the value of the cultural material.
8. Reviewing and reappraising the cultural material again.
9. Assembling the *Cultural Symbols Mesh*.
10. Synthesizing the material into the Service Myth.
11. Transposing the *Service Myth* into a Ritual Design Structure.
12. Clarifying the intention of the *Ritual Service Journey*.
13. Appropriation and utilization of material from the *Cultural Symbols Mesh*.
14. Designing the *Ritual Service Journey*.
15. Dissemination of the service structure and experience.

### 4.4.3 Visualisation of the process

These components may also be understood as part of a more systemic interconnected dynamic approach. Figure 4.2 presents a visualisation of the process that manifests its developmental and linked character.

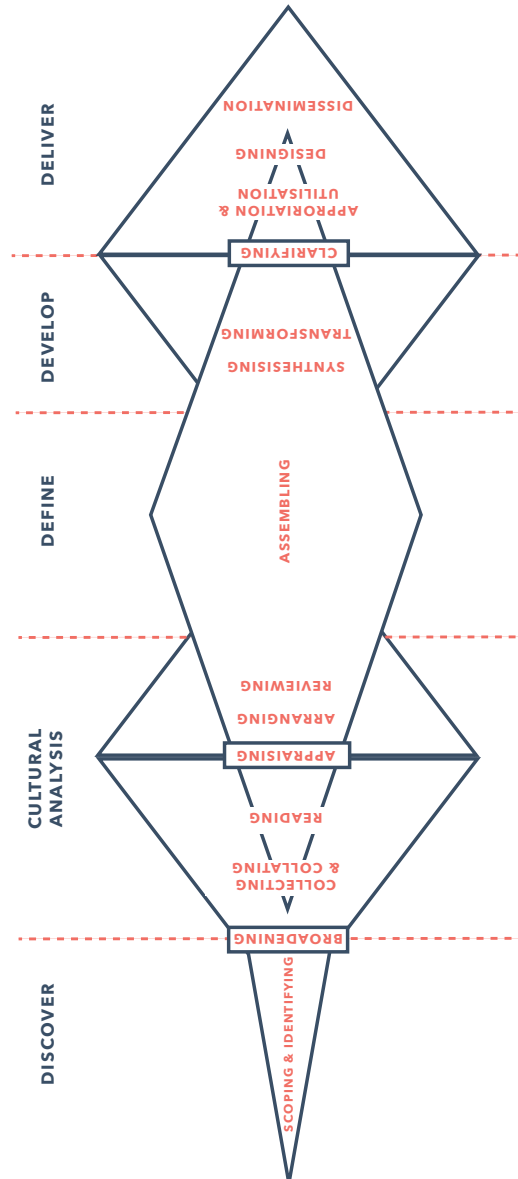


Figure 4.2: Components of the process. (Image: Ted Matthews).

Echoing the Design Council's double diamond design process whilst expanding it to include a cultural analysis phase, Figure 4.2 shows the components as a whole process with convergent and divergent phases. Scoping and identifying considers the elements of the 'as is' experience focused around the service. Scoping focuses mainly on the brand and the user profile. Identifying focuses mainly on the customer experience. From here, there is a broadening of focus onto the larger cultural space of the customer. This is an opening and expansion of the investigation. Collecting and collating is followed by an evaluation of this material, first by reading, then by appraising. This material is then further considered through arranging and reviewing. This results in the assembling of the *Cultural Symbols Mesh*. This assembling allows for a defining of the *Service Myth* and acts as a material repository during the construction of the *Ritual Service Journey*. Assembling is part of the defining phase of the process, but is also in constant development – not least through utilisation in the *Ritual Service Journey* design. It therefore goes through constant cycles of convergence and divergence. The creating of the *Service Myth* synthesises the material into a single narrative, a concentration of the material, which is transposed into the *Ritual Service Journey*. The *Service Myth* acts as a guide for the designing of the *Ritual Service Journey*. The intentions of each of the *Meaningful Service Encounter* and the phases of the *Ritual Service Journey* are clarified and then developed by appropriating and utilising material from the *Cultural Symbols Mesh* using the transitions of the customer experience uncovered during the identifying phase. Dissemination of the designed service is delivered through the visualisation of the *Ritual Service Journey* and *Graphic Experiential Evidencing*.

#### 4.4.4 Details of Components

I now turn to details of the components of the process together with some brief notes on their generation and type of application (not the actual application, which belongs to the implications section below).

1. **Scoping** creates an initial understanding of the service-scape being designed for, including the customer experience, the customer profile and the service brand. This draws greatly from traditional service design process described in literature such as Meroni & Sangiorgi (2011), to understand the current 'as is' experience of the service.
2. **Identifying** opportunities for ritual design by locating transition spaces in the current customer journey being designed for. This



draws on the transition mapping concept described which takes its inspiration from Van Genep (1909/19060), Rook (1985), Turner, (1969) and Collins (2004). A customer journey map is made, however with transition points highlighted. The resulting map will be used as the basis for the *Ritual Service Journey* later.

3. **Broadening** the focus from the current service experience being designed for onto the larger cultural space that the customers inhabit, particularly or potentially as a brand community. This is an expansion of the scope of the traditional service design process. This is not an investigation that only puts focus on the customer as an individual and their interaction with the service; instead, it is a much broader investigation into the cultural space of the brand, of the user group and of broader society. The users exist in many layers of cultural belonging, and these need to be investigated. These could be described as the micro community of a brand, for example, that exists with a broader societal community, e.g. a region or a sector.
4. **Collecting and collating** cultural material. With the broader cultural focus, this investigation demands research into symbols, myths and rituals in and around the user group, the service brand, and broader society. This can be done through activities such as observation in the service-scape, interviews, desk research, checking online discussions and forums, digging into company archives for traditions. Anxieties must also be investigated; these might be discovered through user group online forums and interviews. The larger societal contextual backdrop can be found by reading the news media, but also through certain fictional pieces that express concerns of modern society.
5. **Reading** is central to understanding connections between cultural material and participants. Having gathered the cultural material, it is read and understood in terms of what this is saying about the communities whose cultural space is being opened up for investigation. This is a form of reading the material as a way to gain insight into the underlying values, beliefs and sense of identity of the user group being designed for. This leads to **Appraising, Arranging, Reviewing** and **Assembling**, which are described below. However, these activities are cyclical and are not linear, with the designer moving back and forth until the meaning of the material is drawn out. An assembling of the material in the *Cultural Symbols Mesh* may evolve from this.

6. **Appraising** the extent of customers' collective identity. What is of concern here is the degree to which the customer group might identify as a brand community and consider the potential for strengthening an existing brand community or creating a new one.
7. **Arranging and prioritizing** the value of the cultural material in relation to its distinct symbolic relevance to represent the brand community or to what is perceived as most sacred for them. This can also draw material from outside the micro cultural layer in which the community finds itself. This might come from broader society and therefore be still readable and relatable. This material can be redesigned and repositioned to make it specifically relevant for the community on the micro level.
8. **Reviewing** the material that has been assembled once again and reappraising it.
9. **Assembling** the *Cultural Symbols Mesh*. This is very much creating a hierarchy of materials and understanding their relationship to each other. It is a representation of the culture being investigated, but also an inventory for later design. This draws inspiration from Geertz (1973/2000), Belk et al. (1989), and Barthes (1957/1973), as has been described above, but also from the idea of the designer as bricoleur who enters into a dialogue with the material, reorganising it, creating a structure that serves the project and in turn creates an inventory that will be brought to bear on the design task (Louridas, 1999).
10. **Synthesizing** the revealed beliefs and values drawn from the cultural material and the brand values to create the *Service Myth*. This is about bringing together much of what has been gathered into a concentrated and easily relatable caricature. This serves for communicating inward within the service organisation and outward in the design of the service experience. It is the essence of the cultural material, and it is a guide for later development.
11. **Transposing** the *Service Myth* into a ritual design structure. Ritual is the performance of the myth (Bell, 1997). Transposing the myth over the designing of the *Ritual Service Journey* offers context and intention to its creation.

- 12. Clarifying** the intention of the whole *Ritual Service Journey* and *Meaningful Service Encounters* throughout the emerging design. The separation, transition and reincorporation phases of the *Ritual Service Journey* have specific purposes, described earlier. The *Meaningful Service Encounters* must carry emotional energy forward to heightened and sacred experiences as proposed by Collins in his view of interaction ritual chains (2004), so the overall intention of the *Meaningful Service Encounters* is guided by this ritual phase in which they find themselves, but also relate to the transitional space for which they are being designed and in which they are located, as identified at the start.
- 13. Appropriation and utilization** of material from the *Cultural Symbols Mesh*. The material from the mesh is used and applied during the design of the *Ritual Service Journey*. However, in this process, the material is being re-appraised, re-assembled and re-arranged through the act of designing. As Schön (1983) describes, this is reflection in practice and with the view of bricolage describing a constant dialogue with the material (Louridas, 1999).
- 14. Designing** the *Ritual Service Journey* through constant iteration. Here, the designer must bring together the elements of the context, materials, intentions on several levels, as well as the projected customer experience, the service system, and time. This is done through constant iteration and is a task of cultural interpretation into the framework of ritual time, with an iterative and constant reappraisal of material.
- 15. Dissemination** of the service structure through the *Ritual Service Journey* and the customer experience and emotional reaction through Graphic Experiential Evidencing. This communicates internally the structure of the new ritualised service and the projected heightened experience of the customer.

In the following section, I address a number of matters concerning how these components may be understood as linked with concepts.

## 4.5. A Model

Taken together, the above material provides some of the building blocks for the further specification of a model for framing, positioning and understanding the role and potential of the sacred and ritual in shaping experiential service futures. I refer to this as *A Design Model for Sacred Services*. The model presented here is an expansion and elaboration of what is described as the Sacred Services Experience Method in Publication 5.

*A Design Model for Sacred Services* is presented in Figure 4.3. This visualization offers a blueprint of the *Sacred Services Approach* as a whole and connects to both the process and the concepts. The model charts a broad chronology of activity during the design process.

*A Design Model for Sacred Services* is arranged according to a set of key elements. These elements are connected in an overall reflexive, dynamic developmental model, one that has been built by way of research through design and experimental uses in real world contexts.

The elements are as follows:

1. Transition Map
2. Cultural Mapping
3. Extraction of Material
4. Service Myth Formation
5. Cultural Symbols Mesh
6. Reappraisal Paths
7. Brand Filtering
8. Service Myth framework
9. Ritual Service Journey Construction
10. Graphic Experiential Evidencing (GEE)

I will now move on to elaborate on these key elements.

### 1. Transition Map

The Transition Map creates an overview and visualization of the existing customer journey of a service that is to be redesigned using the *Sacred Services Approach*, with specific focus on the points of transition in the journey where rituals might potentially be designed later. As such, this informs the position of *Meaningful Service Encounters* in the *Ritual Service Journey*.

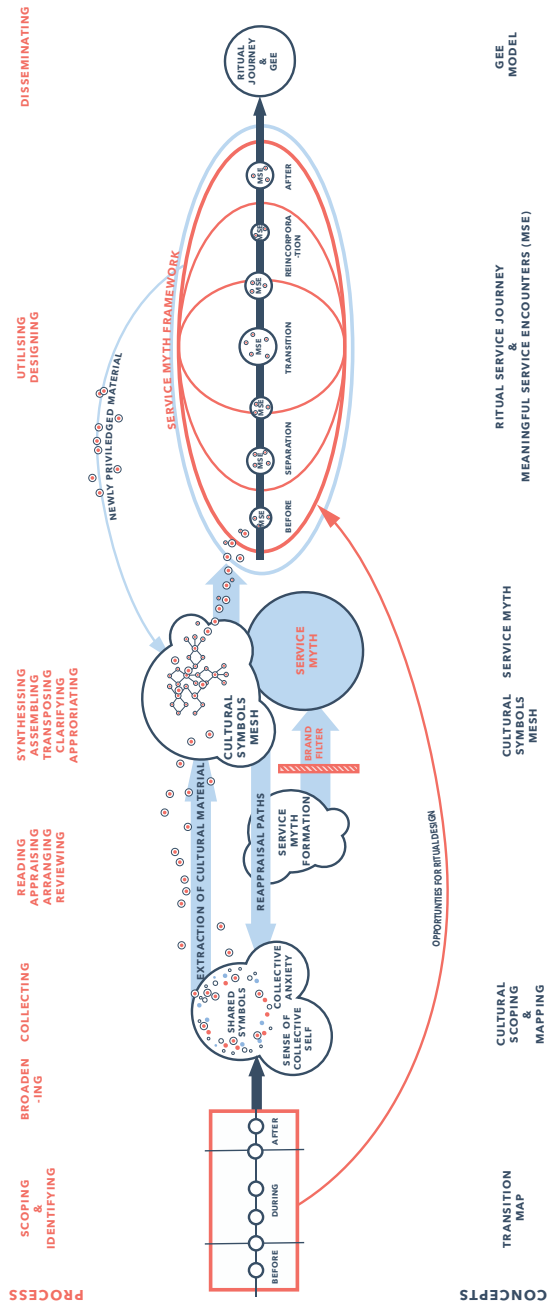


Figure 4.3: A Design Model for Sacred Services.(Image: Ted Matthews and Renata Mikal).

## 2. Cultural Mapping

Cultural Mapping investigates the cultural landscape within and beyond the service context of the user group. This investigates existing shared symbols and collective anxieties relating to the customer group directly and in a wider socio-cultural perspective. It also considers collective sense and identity. This material is extracted for a reading and understanding of the culture.

## 3. Extraction of Cultural Material

Cultural material is selected, extracted, viewed, read, appraised and arranged into the *Cultural Symbols Mesh* as a way to understand and form an image of the culture from which it is extracted. This extraction is synthesized and concentrated during the *Service Myth* formation.

## 4. Service Myth Formation

The *Service Myth* formation takes the material arranged in the *Cultural Symbols Mesh* and concentrates and characterizes this into an emerging myth that is relatable and metaphorical for community formation or expression. The *Service Myth* is further formed through the use of the brand filter to ensure a connection to the brand identity. The emerging *Service Myth* is then used as an additional filter for reappraisal of the relevance, importance and usability for later design with the cultural material that has been extracted.

## 5. Cultural Symbols Mesh

The *Cultural Symbols Mesh* also acts as a repository for the cultural material that has been appraised and reappraised using the brand filter and the *Service Myth* as a measure of its relevance. The mesh is a repository of sacred material for use in the design of the *Ritual Service Journey*. The *Cultural Symbols Mesh* is dynamic and can receive newly designed, re-appropriated or newly privileged material if and when they emerge.

## 6. Reappraisal Paths

Reappraisal paths constantly review the cultural material extracted during the Cultural Mapping exercise. This is an ongoing process to understand the value, meaning and potential new meanings of material for the design process.

### 7. Brand Filtering

The brand filter uses the service provider's brand as a way to further appraise the value of the cultural material that is mapped and extracted. The aim is to see whether some of the material is particularly relevant to the brand values and profile. Brand material might also be important cultural material and be lifted as such. The brand filter leads to further appraisal of material but also contribution to the *Service Myth* formation.

### 8. Service Myth Framework

The *Service Myth* creates a framework and narrative to be performed through the *Ritual Service Journey*. This gives purpose and a tonality to the service experience as a whole.

### 9. Ritual Service Journey Construction

The Ritual Service Journey construction uses the potential transition points identified in the transition mapping to create a new customer journey using a ritual structure to construct ritual phases. The *Ritual Service Journey* uses *Meaningful Service Encounters* at the transition points to redesign the customer experience. The *Ritual Service Journey* utilizes the material stored in the *Cultural Symbols Mesh* as the material for design for sacred customer experiences and acts as a device to aid in design of the process and then as a device to communicate the final design to others. The *Ritual Service Journey* also takes its cues and is a performance of the Service Myth.

### 10. Graphic Experiential Evidencing (GEE)

Whilst the *Ritual Service Journey* disseminates the structure and flow of the sacred service experience, *Graphic Experiential Evidencing* articulates and expresses the emotional response from customers and staff during the *Meaningful Service Encounters*. *Graphic Experiential Evidencing* stimulates emotional mirroring in the viewer.

These ten elements comprise the *Design Model for Sacred Services*. This construction has evolved over many iterations and through designing for Sacred Services. It is therefore a model in flux, and it should be used flexibly in different contexts. By nature, it will undoubtedly evolve over time through further iterations, just as it has done since it was first described in Publication 5.

## 4.6. Implications

In this thesis, I have argued and demonstrated that Service Design may deepen its understanding and application of the experiential in the ongoing development of the notion and provision of services through design.

For service design as a rapidly developing practice this offers an expansion of its current practice and a broadening of a horizon for future development. A culturally informed view and practice offers new concepts, processes, approaches, frameworks and material towards an enriching of the field which considers, integrates and interprets the broader socio-cultural perspective into its own view and practice.

This cultural perspective is important, as it offers a richer understanding of the human condition beyond the interactional space of the user-service context. This view is valuable beyond service design as a cultural phenomenon or as an agent in the managing of organisational culture but as practice that is far more aware of the potential of integrating cultural practice and material into its own way of knowing and doing.

I now briefly consider some of the implications of what has been hitherto presented for design practice, education and research. I address these by referring to the perspective and the *Sacred Services Approach* expressed through its concepts, process and model and developed in the research as a whole.

### 4.6.1 Perspective

The perspective on *Experience Centric Service Design (ExSD)* proposes a new field of study and practice in service design. This raises the following implications for:

**Practice:** An evolving field of *ExSD* would require new approaches for service design practice, as well as a shift in the designer's own perspective of their broadening remit. It would require service designers to consider more seriously the craft of the designer as a creator of defined, specific and in some cases heightened experiences, beyond fixing functionality issues and pain points understood from a user-focused perspective. It would also require a repositioning of service designers' service offerings to the companies that engage them. It would be an extension of a designer's repertoire and



would require a broader communication of service design's role in service development. *ExSD* also would require designers to understand better their role as cultural intermediaries from a broader perspective, to have the confidence to utilize materials from a broader socio-cultural perspective, and to apply these even in purely utilitarian service contexts. Furthermore, a perspective shift from user to users is required that achieves new forms of collective experiences rather than just tailor-made individual ones.

**Teaching:** Service Design would need to expand its scope to include the design for *ExSD* in education. This could ask questions of how we teach service design today and as to whether more focus should be given to the craft and aesthetics of the service experience. It may require further focus on theories relating to the performative such as theatre, music and drama. It may also require courses in cultural practice/studies, as well as a deeper understanding of socio-cultural domains, their approaches, concepts and perspectives. This would then require research to support these areas. Finally, there are questions regarding what kind of service designers can we educate. Service design was initially a specialization of design; will it now be necessary to create specializations in service design for those who might wish to pursue design for experience-centric services contra specializations in public service innovation, for example?

**Research:** *ExSD* opens up for a number of possible questions for a specialised area of research to investigate. This would demand research into the aesthetics of the experiential relating to *ExSD* and to question and expand the definition of materiality for an expanded field. It requires an expansion of our definition of the touchpoint to be more than just tangible interaction points with the service and to include intangible, immaterial, experiential and culturally relevant cues. This leads to considerations related to the new skills and approaches of the experience-centric service designer and to what the role of the experience-centric service designer as cultural practitioner and intermediary means for service design generally.

### **What are the new roles and domains of the experience-centric service designer?**

This PhD has only operationalised one small aspect of the study of society and culture, namely limited concepts from the study of the sacred. However, this calls for further *ExSD* research that should look to consider what other themes and areas from socio-cultural domains might be taken up and examined through an operationalising method and lens for the development

of further approaches for *ExSD*. Areas under consideration might be e.g. theories relating to art, theatre and music. Related research found in Claire Dennington's work on trends and popular culture is already underway within this framing, but further work may offer richer and more nuanced approaches for a subfield of service design research.

Finally, the work raises issues relating to a general view that might be referred to as service-culture and its contribution to service innovation. In Section 2.2.1, I point to Balsamo's argument that 'innovation could be even more innovative in its scope of vision for the future if it were to take culture as a precondition and horizon of creative effort.' (Ibid., p.3). This should be true of service innovation. I have pointed to the fact that services are a pervasive part of our everyday lives and economies and therefore, following Balsamo's logic regarding technology as part of our everyday culture, to design for services is to design with culture. Balsamo merges what have been seen as two separate domains of technology and culture in the concept of techno-culture as an imperative to drive technological innovation. I thus make the same move in service innovation and bring together service and culture to create the concept of service-culture as an imperative to drive service innovation.

This PhD contributes to this endeavour by presenting an approach that brings practice from socio-cultural domains and integrates it with service design practice. In doing so, by definition of the Oslo Manual it offers innovation in its novelty and newness to market in process and outcomes (see Publication 5). In addition, by definition of innovation through the use of culture presented by Holt and Cameron (2010), which raises the importance of symbolic and social value, the *Sacred Services Approach* integrates these aspects as part of its approach. This is directed towards innovation in experience-centric services, but also has implications for other areas of service design and innovation.

#### **4.6.2 Concepts**

The general notions expressed in the concepts borne out of this research offer an enriching of the service design discipline and have implications for:

**Practice:** The emerging concepts from Sacred Services introduce general notions for the design of sacred customer experiences in service provision. Many of the concepts offer an additional lens through which the designer

can focus, and this should enrichen the design process. It does this by building awareness of the importance of transitional times and spaces in the customer experience rather than just focusing on interactions with the service. Furthermore, it encourages and directs the service designer in activities of cultural mapping and an engagement with a broader socio-cultural perspective and landscape. The concepts encourage the development of strong storytelling in the design of services to give customers more context to the experience they are having, and in turn gives purpose and dramaturgy to the different phases of the customer journey through the *Ritual Service Journey*. With this as a framework, it demands that service designers are aware of the narrative flow and emotional build-up of the customer experience with concepts such as the staged *Meaningful Service Encounters*. Concepts such as GEE point the way for the further development of new tools for visualising purpose and experience, allowing clients and stakeholders to get a much deeper sense of the experience being designed for and to illustrate different emotional responses to such experiences.

**Teaching:** The *Sacred Services Approach* offers new concepts for service design education at graduate level but also as part of additional training for experienced designers. The concepts allow for concretisation of the perspectives relating to practice that is much more experience-centric and culturally located. These concepts can function as educational tools to broaden the field of service design practice. They offer vehicles to higher-level thinking around approaches for a more culturally located form of service design, and as such give students access to these thoughts through use of the concepts in learning practice.

**Research:** Further research should consider the concepts that relate to other aspects of service design, not at least service design that is more culturally located or that engages with question of ExSD. Regarding Sacred Services, there is room for further investigation and further conceptualisation of the approach presented here.

### **4.6.3 Process**

A view of concepts offers general notions of activity during the design process of Sacred Services. The process considers the ways of doing that are necessary to engage with Sacred Services as an approach.

**Practice:** The process has implications for practice on a top level, as service designers would have to shift and broaden their perspective in terms of what is in fact important for the customer in service interactions. Whether services should or could be part of a broader web of meaning for the customer or could even be the drivers of community development and serve to strengthen identity and related issues of self-expression. This shift in perspective also raises ethical issues of control, mass suggestion and what might be seen as an emotionally persuasive approach to value creation through mechanisms related to the meaningful and the sacred.

In practical terms, the process would see service designers shifting the focus of their insight work to include the broader socio-cultural sphere beyond the in-situ context of the service. This demands a mindset change of what is important in the design process. It would also be time-consuming making client costs greater, which returning to my earlier point, would demand greater awareness of the role of an experience-centric service designer.

**Teaching:** As a whole, the process offers an abstraction for the existing process of service design that is located far more within cultural practice. When visualised, it is comparable with current teaching devices such as the Design Council's double diamond to communicate the flow of the designer's process. Such a representation of the *Sacred Services Approach* is thus a useful construction for the dissemination of a way of doing for the design of sacred customer experiences in service provision.

**Research:** Research through design is increasingly an accepted and utilised approach to knowledge creation. In my view, an interesting question arises regarding the extent to which the *Sacred Services Approach* could as a whole be used as the basis of a research through design approach in further investigations into the experiential or cultural in service design.

#### ***4.6.4 Model***

As stated earlier, the concepts and process together provide the building blocks for the further specification of a model for framing, positioning and understanding the role and potential of the sacred and ritual in shaping ExSD.

**Practice:** The model acts very much as a guideline or blueprint for the service designer to follow. This is only possible when it is supplemented with the view expressed through the concepts and the process. However, the model makes the steps of the *Sacred Services Approach* concrete over time.

**Teaching:** The model again acts as a visualisation of a blueprint for the design of sacred services. For practice-based learning, it offers an overview to an approach to *ExSD*. By being broken down into its elements, it offers module-based education of new ways to research, gain insight, arrange research, and visualise findings and results towards the design of sacred service experiences, and as such offers a planning and educational device.

**Research:** The model emerges as an outcome of the design process and is as such a design artefact. It is an artefact that embodies processes, concepts and the practices of service design combined with concepts and material related to the study of the sacred drawn from sociology and cultural studies. My suggestion is that the model warrants study as a hybrid artefact to further consider what this model might mean in the ongoing development and narrative of service design in which cultural perspectives and orientations are central. As the model has predominantly been used by the author of this doctoral study, more research is needed to understand its use and usability in the hands of other service designers and service design researchers. This may be further connected to work with teams of researchers from design and service design in conjunction with those from cultural research domains.

## 4.7. Conclusion to Chapter

This chapter has presented and offered multiple perspectives from concepts, process and the model of the *Sacred Services Approach* which is the outcome of this research.

As I have shown, it has contributed to and is positioned in a perspective that I refer to as *Experiential Service Design (ExSD)*, which is located within an emergent and expanded view of service design practice and research that incorporates experience-centricity, cultural service design and sacred services.

It has highlighted how the emerging perspective of *ExSD* can be informed by approaches to and concepts of the sacred drawn from the socio-cultural domains, realised through research by design inquiry as highlighted in Chapter 3.

I have also shown here how approaches to the sacred contribute to developing a more culturally-oriented perspective on *ExSD* as well as potentially for service design generally. This raises further questions about what service-cultural innovation might mean for the field and for the future focus of service design research, teaching and practice.

The *Sacred Services Approach* offers service innovation in both outcome and process, but also contributes to a view on cultural innovation by raising the importance of culture, integrating practice and perspectives from socio-cultural domains with service design approaches. This has not been done before. Within this perspective of cultural innovation, the *Sacred Services Approach* also raises the importance of and sharpens the focus on the symbolic and social value of services for sacred customer experiences.

I conclude by returning to Manzini's (2011) definition of services as

... complex, hybrid artifacts. Services are made up of things – places and systems of communication, and interaction – but also of human beings and their organisations. They therefore belong to the physics of nature and technical systems and to biology, but also to sociology and the culture of human beings. Permeated with human activity as they are, with a network of relationships between people, and people and things at their centre, they can never be reduced to the simplicity of mechanical entities. (Ibid., p.1).

If Service Design is to truly engage with questions of the 'sociology and culture of human beings', then it must expand its current practice and framing to incorporate and draw from the body of knowledge from sociology and cultural practice that is already out there and in turn contribute to and expand this knowledge in equal term. A perspective on *ExSD* would serve to do this and the *Sacred Services Approach* presented here contributes some of the thinking and substance to this task.

## Chapter 5. Closing Reflections

### 5.1. Prologue

As we enter the concluding chapter of this thesis, I'd like to begin with some thoughts on current events and how my research relates to them. I see this as an important move to make, given how some of the fundamental assumptions, practices and research frameworks have been challenged when complex systems are threatened globally, locally, and for design.

Much of the writing of the exegesis for this PhD took place during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. Beyond the many tragic events of the last year, the pandemic has changed many of our ways of working and much of what we have taken for granted, not at least in our consumption of services. The world might never be the same again.

So, I choose to open this section with a reflection on what might seem a banal topic (though this might be disputed by ardent football fans) relating to professional football, which was halted across Europe during the pandemic. Football has been a major part of my research and has been a burgeoning domain of experience, marketing and services over the past decade especially. Yet throughout this pandemic, no games were played in any of the major leagues. As a result, I was subjected to the constant grumbles and complaints from friends and family back in England about the lack of Saturday afternoon football on TV to offer some solace during the endless months of lock-down.

In May 2020, the first football league to start up again – albeit with no fans allowed in the stadium – was the Bundesliga in Germany. The first game to be televised was Dortmund vs Schalke 04 in the Ruhr derby. An unprecedented number of football-starved, English football fans tuned in to enjoy what had become the forbidden fruit of the world’s most popular sport. However, the reaction on the major news outlets and social media was lacklustre, and there was general disappointment about how dull the whole experience was. My cousin, who lives in the Yorkshire town of Barnsley in the UK, summed this up best in a Facebook-post that read: ‘So in conclusion, football with no interest in the team and no crowd is boring af (sic)’

It may seem obvious that without a connection to the team and without the roar of a crowd, any sport in question might seem dull. However, during the ‘Alt for Norge’ football project described in this thesis, it came to light that professional football across Europe, not at least in Norway, had had a strategy to focus on the sport of football and not on the culture and meaning of the game. This was apparent in the advertising and promotional material that focused on hair-raising skills, spills and sublime goals. It was also apparent in the design of the stadium experience, where big screens were used to turn fans’ attention to the action in detail. Despite a few exceptions, little of the strategy for promoting or designing the football experience highlighted the collective experience, the fans, the local culture and meaning of football. And football is tremendously important to its fans. It binds communities, offers emotional relief, connects to place and culture; it plays a major part in people’s identity. For many, football is sacred, and the collective performance of the community through its myths and through participation in the ritual of the match lead to heightened and sacred experiences. These sacred bonds go beyond national boundaries; is not unusual to see Norwegians with Liverpool or Manchester United tattoos or wearing team paraphernalia, despite the fact that many have no real personal connection to the towns or clubs.

During the project with the Norwegian Football Association, this shift in perspective became apparent; this included shaping a move away from the focus on football as a sport to its socio-cultural value and meaning and in turn focusing on this as a core part of the experience. It would be wrong to suggest that the project we worked on together initiated this shift alone, as there had been discussions on this matter previously, however the project did facilitate and accelerate this move as the process evolved.



The other point raised in my cousin's exacerbated Facebook-post is also related to the lack of fans. The football game as an event without people was boring. In fact, as Durkheim would argue, other people's presence is what generates much of the sacred experience in such an event. This is why as Experiential Service Designers, we must also consider designing for groups rather than just individuals, as it is often from these collective encounters that heightened and emotional experiences are generated. This inevitably changes the dynamics and approaches of how we design as we find ways to bring people together in transitional spaces to create shared, intersubjective experiences.

This PhD has engaged with these issues relating to the value and potential of culture, the sacred, ritual, myth and the designing for transitional and collective experiences, utilising concepts drawn from several theoretical perspectives and making them accessible to service design through the final Sacred Service Approach described and examined in detail in the previous chapter. It concludes with a discussion on the implications of the research on practice, teaching and research. In this closing chapter however, I'd like to offer further reflection on the work and the issues it raises regarding future areas of development. Therefore, this chapter will discuss how the work might offer new perspectives and reflections on how we respond to current events and as an example to our needs relating to working remotely. It will also discuss future research for service design practice and the design for the public sector and thoughts on cultural context, service-cultural innovation and ethics, as well as on the findings related to moves from interaction to transition and from user to participants.

I should like to begin, however, by returning our attention to our starting point and reiterating the space to which this research contributes and its relevance in an ever-expanding field of service design.

## **5.2. *Sacred Services in the Expanded Field of Service Design***

The scope of influence of service design today and the variety of projects to which the discipline now contributes to have increased enormously since I started this PhD back in 2011. This growth is particularly apparent in public services. The last couple of years have seen a seismic shift in the use of service design in the improvement and development of public services

in Norway and across Europe. The majority of presented papers at the last ServDes conference in Milan in 2018 were related to questions of service design learning, development and examples within Public Services. During this period, and due to the many new contexts within which service design finds itself, the field has changed, evolved and now includes new areas of specialization and concern.

This shift means that service design is now being applied to the design of policy (Mortati, Christiansen & Maffei, 2018). Here in Norway, the service design agency Halogen contributed through a service design process to developing the government's recent policy document on innovation for public sector. We see the development of transdisciplinary teams using design as their main approach to public sector innovation (Deserti, Meroni & Raijmakers, 2018); in Norway the renowned service design consultancy LiveWork was integrated in PWC Group and is currently running all of their projects, using service design as the process for teams that include practitioners from a wide variety of fields of competence. Co-design is increasingly an expected approach, rather than just accepted, with 'T-shaped' skill sets in service design requiring deeper specializations together with broader empathic soft skills for the engaging of diverse groups (Deserti et al., 2018).

Such is the proliferation of service design in the public sector in Norway that the Norwegian government has funded, through the 'Stimulab' programme, service design-led innovation projects to further improve its services. Most recently, this has culminated in the establishment of D-Box (a Norwegian centre for public sector innovation, for which AHO is a main partner) whose aim is to further research and develop service design's contribution to the sector.

Despite such exciting and rapid developments of the field of service design in the public sector however, literature related to design for experience-centric services or customer experience in general is still limited. Furthermore, contributions to the discussion have not grown at the same rate as service design's contribution to public sector innovation. At the 2018 ServDes conference, only two papers explicitly contributed to discussions of customer experience (Dennington, 2018; Koenders, Snelders, Kleinsmann, & Tanghe, 2018), thus highlighting the gap in attention between these two areas.

This PhD has attempted to enliven the discussion of experience-centricity in service provision by focusing on the highly experiential found and articulated in concepts related to a study of the sacred.

The PhD was financed in part by the eight-year research programme of the Centre for Service Innovation (CSI), specifically within the work package ‘Customer and Brand Experience’. It is to this work package that this PhD contributes, not at least as part of AHO’s overall research priorities. Here, together with two other PhD studies – Brandslation (Motta-Filho, 2017), which investigated methods for transposing brand identity into the service experience, and Trendslation (Dennington, 2020), which assists designers in the transposition of cultural phenomena into new service experiences – this thesis considers opportunities for the further development of the field through the investigation of the design of sacred customer experiences in service provision. Together with Simon Clatworthy’s book *The Experience-Centric Organisation* (2019)), to which I contributed a chapter that introduces aspects of this PhD, our work as a whole creates a foundation for specialisation in what I refer to as *Experiential Service Design (ExSD)*, and in my view, the potential of and for cultural contributions and orientations.

As is the case with most PhD research, the unfolding of specifically service design-based work indeed takes the researcher into domains and spaces that could not have been anticipated at the start. The initial intention of the study was to look at how sacred experiences as observed by consumer culture theory could be actively designed for in service provision. This was done, and an approach for doing this was developed and presented. When work on this PhD commenced, it was not yet clear how essential the question of culture would be in this endeavour. While this might seem obvious to the cultural practitioner, it is less so to the service designer who, as I have argued, is ensconced in the traditions and approaches of interaction design and service management/marketing. In essence, I have argued in favour of further considerations for a more pluralistic approach to service design that includes insights, concepts, views and practices from socio-culturalist approaches and design and culture arenas. Just as this has been identified as a need in interaction design, such as argued by Arnall (2014), Martinussen (2016) and Murray (2011), as well as by Balsamo (2011), for service design this invites us to rethink and re-articulate services as cultural enactments, design and reviewed in terms of how the experiential is realised, felt, sensed and shared. In my view, there are great opportunities for service design to widen its ambit to engage productively and critically with such emerging and collaborative relation-making.

What therefore is clear at this retrospective vantage point in this thesis is that a cultural dimension is essential when designing for what I have termed sacred customer experiences, in which a socio-cultural background to the

customer inevitably informs and frames the experience itself. So, whilst entering into domains of socio-cultural practice and looking back over my shoulder at my starting point in service design, I see that it was indeed startlingly devoid of discussions on the role of culture in the discourse and framing of service design and how approaches could or should be integrated into practice. Therefore, through a research through design-oriented, practice-led inquiry, this thesis has taken up the question of the ways in which Experiential Service Design can be informed by approaches and concepts on the sacred drawn from socio-cultural domains. It makes a modest contribution and points to a greater need for the sense and practices of services to be approached as cultural encounters and experiences, not only as marketing and management.

In responding to the limited attention given to how we might design for experience-centric services in practice and research, I have located opportunities for an expanded field of service design in the study of the sacred experience. I have referred to the most prominent discussions on the nature, approaches, processes, material qualities, thematics, methods in current research and practice from service design, as an initial analytical framework to investigate and examine the potentiality and relatability of concepts on the sacred for their utilisation in service design. This allowed for an analysis of concepts and approaches, drawn predominantly from socio-cultural domains through their value and relevance of developing approaches for the design for experiential services. Through cycles of reflexive design practice, these concepts and approaches were woven together with service design theories, concepts and practice to be embodied in the final Sacred Services Approach. This resulting design artefact creates a further analytical position to reflect on service design futures and further moves in its development and the broadening of its domain and its implications for research, practice and teaching.

In summary, the PhD reveals some of the ways and means of how sacred customer experiences can be designed for, but this endeavour raises the need for service design to engage far more in a broader understanding of the customer's socio-cultural context. Simply put, working with experience-centricity means one has to engage deeply with questions, expressions and experiences of culture. One also has to shape, engage and propose ways in which, through design, services can also be understood as cultural events and enactments in their own right.

Therefore, a large part of the PhD has been dedicated to arguing that service design practice and research has to integrate approaches, concepts and practice from socio-cultural knowledge and design domains and the value for research and practice in doing so. If service design does not engage in this way, I therefore argue that the discipline limits its ‘imaginative space’ (Balsamo, 2011), as well as its potential to further develop its own approaches, concepts and practices.

### 5.3 Topics and questions for further discussion

In this section, I would like to raise a number of points for further reflection concerning the value of approaches like *Sacred Services Approach*, some challenges, as well as further implications that its development has raised for how we might rethink aspects of service design. This will inevitably cover questions relating to limitations, contributions and calls for further work, with issues relating to:

- Sacred Services in new digital ways of working together
- Service design practice
- Cultural context
- Sacred Services in health services and the public sector
- Ethics and services
- *Sacred Services Approach* as a design artefact
- From ‘user’ to ‘users’ to ‘participants’
- From interaction to transition
- Service-cultural innovation.

I shall now work through these nine topics and reflect on them in relation to the questions at the core of this thesis.

#### 5.3.1 *Sacred Services in new digital ways of working together*

Arguably, during our current locked-down, digital meeting-centred work and cultural reality, the design for online collective rituals is even more important. During the pandemic, I have held several online webinars dealing with the design of rituals. I have also spoken on experience-centricity, culture, myths and symbols, but it would seem the ritual aspect was most

tangible for some in this context. What became clear – and this has been reinforced by the countless online meetings over the last five months – is that human interactions between large groups of people online feel awkward and unnatural when one removes all of what Goffman might refer to as ‘everyday interaction rituals’. These are missing at the start of meetings, in the transition between speakers, in the natural ways in which we encourage further dialogue, and not at least in our departure rituals. They are missing in the way we create a sense of togetherness when we are in the same space. On the meeting table there is neither fruit nor refreshments – often ritualized aspects of our togetherness. Turner and Stets (2005) argue that collective experiences can happen digitally, a phenomenon I experienced myself during the start of the pandemic when our Central St. Martin’s College reunion group on Messenger started posting emotional messages of nostalgia and concern for each other’s health. Much of the identity and solidarity we felt whilst studying together was rekindled and was expressed in deeply emotional posts and reaffirmations of collective affection. A remote, digital collective effervescence in the face of existential anxiety.

During the pandemic, there have been many media postulations that we will never work the same way again, and that we will continue to work remotely for some time to come. This poses interesting challenges for approaches like *Sacred Services Approach*, but I believe the process could be useful in designing new rituals for digital spaces and meetings, for the building of online community myths, and for creating actions and symbols that help naturalize and humanize this way of working together through digital media. This reminds us of the shift in meaning that Balsamo (2011) makes in turning online interaction from transactional, to ones of ritual communication. This does not necessarily mean transposing existing rituals onto the digital meeting space, but rather developing new ones fit for the context. This opens questions of how we might develop new ritual languages and action in the digital sphere and how we might consider differing formats for differing needs, from one-to-one meetings to larger collective digital work experiences. Within the digital sphere as well as beyond the screen, *Sacred Services Approach* might be utilized to help companies design and mediate ritual activity for their staff to help with increasing issues relating to life/work balance in our new Covid reality. This could mean the design of ritual breaks throughout the day and ritual transitions into work mode, and perhaps more importantly, transitions out of work mode. Further research is currently being planned to investigate such issues.

### 5.3.2 *Service design practice*

One of the major contributions of the PhD to service design practice is offering a fully functioning and useable design approach. The approach is laid out in detail in chapter 4 and supporting data from the publications included as part of this thesis shows that it is useful and useable in several design contexts. The limitations of the work however relate to the process having only being used by myself, teams I have worked with and with students who have utilized and tested the emerging approach. In the end, however, the concepts and practice appropriated and adapted for service design are very much embedded in my own repertoire. Due to this, further work needs to consider the effects of using the *Sacred Services Approach* when used by other designers. This would give broader insight into the transferability of the approach to other practitioners, preferably from across different cultures.

In addition, if the approach is to be adopted by the service design community, it will be necessary to offer professional training courses and accessible direction in the use of the approach use. This is an area already under consideration through new vocational programs at AHO, where this PhD was undertaken, and should be used to reach out to service designers to expand current practice. In addition, moves should be made to turn the approach into actual tools to make it more accessible and indeed usable. Such research is already underway through teaching programmes with Master's students and progress is being made on this development, although there remains work to be done.

Aspects of the approach, however, have been adapted by design scholars in the Netherlands for use in packaging design (Brezet & Selecta, 2019), although the approach should be applied by designers outside of the European cultural context. This leads to other considerations of the PhD's limitations relating to the cultural context where the research was developed, tested and the concepts from which it draws.

### 5.3.3 *Cultural context*

Although one trial of the approach and design work was performed in Thailand (see Publication 3), the majority of the design investigation was undertaken in a Western European context, specifically in Norway. Whilst design conversations have engaged researchers and practitioners from North

America, Europe and Asia the work is still predominantly a product of its cultural context. This relates to service design practice as understood in Western Europe, to the specific cultural context of the real-life projects with Norwegian service providers that constitute the case studies, but not at least the western socio-cultural concepts and approaches that were investigated and integrated into the final approach.

Taking heed of Zhipeng et al.'s (in press) point that established service design research and practice located within a western European tradition of design might be accused of forms of colonialization through practice, one might be cautious about overstating the transferability of the findings to other cultural contexts. Having said this, the work, by its very nature, calls for a deeper engagement in the broader socio-cultural landscapes where service design is applied. To this end, further research from other cultural perspectives and traditions might be undertaken to investigate what other possibilities and models might emerge from these spaces.

#### **5.3.4 Public sector**

Beyond the broader question of culture, this PhD has been limited to the private service sector, and what the approach might mean for the public sector has yet to be investigated. As raised in Publication 5, further research should be undertaken to understand the approach's relevance, particularly to the health sector. Earlier research from psychology has identified rituals used with psychiatric patients to assist with life crisis therapy (Van der Hart, 1983). Less academic literature has discussed the value of ritual in adoption services to help children and their new families adapt to the change (Mason & Parks, 1995; Lieberman & Bufferd, 1999). This suggests that aspects of the Sacred Services Approach, namely ritual creation, are already relevant to health sector services. With a specific focus on the context of healthcare, a three-day workshop in 2020 run together with the Ritual Design Lab at Stanford showed the potential of such approaches for stress relief in health care workers and for help with emotional transitions.

Where the *Sacred Services Approach* contributes to discourse on experience-centric services, further investigations should look to see how the approach, or an adapted version of it, might be applied to help manage health-related anxiety or in the building of care communities. Planning is already underway to investigate these issues within the context of the research programme Centre for Connected Care (C3), located at AHO. Several areas of research



are being considered that would apply aspects of the *Sacred Services Approach* into the design of aspects of services supporting end of life care as well as investigations into its use in remote hospital care at home.

Indeed, such research should not be limited to just the health sector, and other applications of the approach should be investigated in other public sector services. The newly-opened Norwegian Centre for Public Sector Innovation, (D-Box) offers a platform for further research into the value of a more culturally-located service design approach for public sector innovation. Norway has been quick to utilize and adopt service design as a way to innovate in public service provision through increased focus on user experience. This has meant new innovations in cross-agency collaboration, systemic reorganisation and digital services. *Sacred Services Approach* should be also applied to these areas in developing services additionally to further reflect the socio-cultural context in which they are, to reflect the unique ‘Norwegianness’ of their inception, as well as to build stronger meaning and emotional connectedness from their users. Strong public services in Norway are a distinct and important part of Norwegian identity, and as such they should not simply be treated as functional aspects of society.

### **5.3.5 Ethics and services**

As touched upon in Chapter 4, this research does not discuss ethics regarding the utilization of culturally meaningful and emotive material in the design of services as a way to influence behaviour and in turn experience. This raises additional questions of ethics and responsibility into service design to a greater extent than previously. This is especially poignant given the nature of the powerful cultural mechanisms such as ritual and myth that I have chosen to use in the development of the *Sacred Services Approach*. Such mechanisms have a persuasive influence on behaviour and emotional outcome. These have been used towards positive outcomes where for example designed rituals have been used for building unity and identity. In multicultural societies, such as in the case of creating a National Day for Singapore (Kong & Yeoh, 1997). It can also be seen in strengthening pride, identity and unity for discriminated minorities, as seen in the development of the Kwanzaa ritual (Bell, 1997). Ritual has also been utilized as a therapy aid for psychiatric patients (Van der Hart, 1983) and as family therapy for adoptee children (Mason and Parks, 1995; Lieberman and Bufferd, 1999).

However, what is proposed in this PhD is the use of such mechanisms in the marketplace. The question of ethics and the persuasive nature of design and its role in the marketplace is not new. In the foreword to the cumulus working papers on the subject, Le Boeuf (2006) highlights that there is a paradox in design between serving the marketplace, whose main concern is in remaining competitive rather than in ethics and the view of many designers in making the world a better place to live in. Within this paradox, where I also acutely feel myself as a designer (and optimist), especially when using the approach described here, I must also relate back to the work of Thurston and ter Kuille (2015) in their report ‘How We Gather’. As theologians, they conclude that in a post-religious age (at least for many millennials in the west) it is difficult to cast judgement on where people find meaning or value, be this in religion or indeed the marketplace. Approaches like the *Sacred Service Approach* can aid in the delivery of such meaning and value.

Questions of the ethics of designed persuasion have been taken up in studies on the relatable field of ‘Nudging’. Techniques of nudging, which have occasionally been integrated into service design solutions, persuade individuals to improve their behaviour, particularly regarding health (Saghai, 2013); this has been the subject of several ethical studies (see, e.g., Saghai, 2013; Selinger & Whyte, 2011; Sunstein, 2015). However, Sunstein (2015) suggests that the ethics of such cases depend on whether ‘nudges promote or instead undermine welfare, autonomy, and dignity’ (Ibid., p.141). Such frameworks might be useful in a further investigation and analysis of the ethics of approaches whose explicit aim is affecting behaviour or heightened emotional experiences through the employment and appropriation of cultural material. Further research is required to consider the ethics of approaches such as Sacred Services.

### ***5.3.6 Sacred Services Approach as a design artefact***

The findings of the PhD are embodied in the resulting *Sacred Services Approach* through the detailed articulation of the perspectives, concepts, process and model found in Chapter 4, but also through the account of its making and development through real-life case-studies described in Chapter 3. In this way, the *Sacred Services Approach* is in itself a design artefact that embodies concepts and approaches from the study of the sacred and from socio-cultural practice. As an example of an extended approach, it allows for further discussion on current framings, highlighting possibilities for the future of an expanded field. It shows in its eventual form and in the examples

of its use what approaches to the sacred contribute to developing more culturally orientated perspectives in *Experiential Service Design*. The final approach is not developed with the intention of replacing current service design practice, and indeed its use might not be appropriate in all service design contexts. However, it does offer an extended and complementary approach that is both discursive yet useful and useable. The resulting *Sacred Services Approach* therefore expands the processual and material repertoire of the service designer. This expansion encourages a broader cultural analysis, raising in practice the importance of the meaningful, embodied and read through the mesh of symbols that reflect the myths of ourselves and the rituals through which we perform these narratives. In this way, it encourages the role of the service designer as cultural intermediary and interpreter of culture for the design of services. The *Sacred Services Approach* itself also acts as a cultural intermediary between service design and socio-cultural domains. In doing so, it makes the material accessible for service designers as a form of ‘cultural ambassador’ (Aitken, 2008).

### ***5.3.7 From interaction to transitions***

As raised in the literature review, service design has often been framed in terms of interaction. Meroni and Sangiorgi (2011) view the service experience unfolding ‘during the service interactions via the mediation of the service interface.’ (Ibid., p.37). This framing puts focus on the points of interaction between the user and the service; by this we see a move through the service as a series of transactions that potentially misses the broader context and flow through the service experience.

From the perspective of this thesis, we might reframe services more as a series of performative transitions. This makes the service less transactional and mechanistic and draws more on the perspective of service as performance, as dramaturgical and as a chain of connected transitions. If we see service from this perspective, we become more aware of how each transition speaks to the next, how each transition might set up or contextualise further transitions, and of the role of the customer in this dramaturgy.

As Otnes et al. (2012) point out, ritual in the retail context turns the customer into a participant, and this again changes our view of the roles of customer and service provider alike. For Van Gennep (1909/1960), rituals are

transitions through time, physical and social space. Collins (2004) sees ritual interactions as chains that transport energy and build emotions rather than as single points of contact. Framing services in this way further focuses on the imperative of seeing the service experience as an interconnected whole that flows in and around the service encounters, carrying meaning and energy through the experience.

### ***5.3.8 From ‘user’ to ‘users’ to ‘participants’***

My research also points to the importance of collective experiences for *Experiential Service Design*. Service management has indeed pointed to the need to ‘manage’ individual Customer-to-Customer Interaction (CCI) in shared service spaces (see for example Nicholls & Mohsen, 2019). However, what this thesis points to is the power and potential of the collective experience leading to the need to shift the attention of service design from designing for the ‘user’ to ‘users’, and following the arguments made in the last section, to ‘participants’.

This might seem at odds with a view that argues for the use of big data to create highly personalized experiences for consumers (see: Spiess et al., 2014; Kabadayi et al., 2019). However, this move from designing for the user to participants chimes with research that suggests that consumers are increasingly seeking shared experience in services delivered to groups rather than just individuals. Almost 30 years ago, Arnould and Price (1993) showed the value of the shared service experience, but more recently Thurston and ter Kuile (2015) showed millennials’ increased desire for shared meaningful experiences, often delivered through the consumption of services.

A shift from ‘user’ to ‘participants’ would demand a shift in the way we design activity around user interactions to designing specifically for shared experiences and transitions. A shift of framing from ‘interaction’ to ‘transition’ will also help in this move as we consider the performances in and around users rather than individual interaction with the service. Further work needs to consider what designing for ‘participants’ might mean in service design framed through chains of service transitions, however, the *Sacred Services Approach* offers a model for this further development.

### 5.3.9 *Service cultural innovation*

Finally, the *Sacred Services Approach* also raises questions relating to cultural innovation. Where Balsamo (2011) calls for and develops approaches that engage with what she refers to as ‘techno-cultural innovation’, this research encourages the same calls for what might be termed as ‘service-cultural innovation’. Differing from Balsamo’s analytical framings, which begin within the cultural practitioner’s contribution to technological innovation, my research starts from within service design practice, reaching out to socio-cultural domains for concepts and practice that can inform and contribute to service-cultural innovation. Whilst the PhD is a contribution to service design innovation, it calls for further investigation of how we frame and understand innovation beyond what is laid out by frameworks like OECD. It encourages a richer understanding of innovation within other frameworks such as Holt and Cameron’s (2010) use of Symbolic, Social and Functional Value in brand analysis, however made relevant for service development through design.

## 5.4 Epilogue

This PhD has attempted to enliven the discussion of experience-centricity in service provision by focusing on the highly experiential found and articulated through concepts related to a study of the sacred. Through the work of consumer culture theorists, the highly experiential, sacred customer experience has been defined and observed in current service provision. Through practice-based research, this PhD has gone about finding ways to design for these kinds of experiences with clear intentionality, framed through service design and articulated in the *Sacred Services Approach*.

In doing so, it has required me – from a service design standpoint – to reach outside of the field’s current framing of interaction and marketing/management to integrate approaches, concepts and practice from socio-cultural fields and make them part of an approach for designing sacred customer experiences. Furthermore, it has looked for and in turn highlighted the opportunities for the field of service design in broadening its scope of influence and reference to include socio-cultural concepts and practice, leading to a more culturally-orientated form of practice and field of research. The outcome articulated in the *Sacred Services Approach* raises

questions as to what and where service design should focus its attention in regard to what influences and informs the designing for experience generally, but specifically for experience-centric services.

This PhD contributes to the discourse in service design, which finds itself in a perfect storm where the field is maturing, growing, specializing and sensing its relevance in societies that are also increasingly ‘servitized’. This is happening as consumers move away from ownership as way to express themselves but using services and experiences as representations of self-identity, ‘where experiential capital is more useful for their future selves’ (Eckhardt & Bardhi, 2020, p.94). The experiential has become increasingly important, desirable and self-expressive in this move. This should encourage service designers to draw on other aspects of their design repertoire. The power of designerly approaches much valued in the development of services has honed in on skills such as sense-making, understanding user needs, visualization, communication and prototyping – to name just a few. *Experiential Service Design* calls on us as service designers to develop approaches that awaken other facets of our designerly repertoire, such as cultural intermediation, designing for delight, the meaningful and for the further development of approaches for crafting rich experiences as part of the service offering. This, as I have laid out, can only be done if we engage deeply with questions of culture.

More specifically, the approach I have developed and presented here shows that the sacred customer experiences can be mediated intentionally by the service provider to delivering new forms of value relating to heightened and meaningful experiences. These have the potential to build bonds and identity through forms of cultural enactment within a service context. Undeniably, the cultural material in use can be persuasive and powerful mechanisms for influencing consumer behaviour, and further scrutiny on how and when we use them as designers is thus merited. However, as Le Boeuf (2006) argues, from an optimistic view of design there is potential for design to influence the market and consumers to make more ethical choices. It is clear that consumers can attain meaning through consumption, or as Press and Cooper (2003) suggest, they may be filling the lack of meaning in their lives.

However, this can be capitalised upon; services that could deliver meaning to customers may encourage people to consume services instead of goods that damage the environment. While this theme is not investigated in this PhD, it is worthy of further study. Here, experiential service designers have a role; where alternatives to the constant cycles of product consumption driven by designed obsolescence might be broken through services that offer the same or better levels of function but offer desire and delight that can keep step with ever-changing cultural expressions and expectations.

This should also lead to further discussion about service design's role in the design of symbolic and representational services in the same way products are understood as symbolic goods. By 'symbolic goods', I mean 'goods that people define themselves in terms of, goods the consumption and use of which help's constitute people's identity, goods the kind of commitments people have' (Dolfsma, 2004, p.1). As has been indicated, consumers are already consuming services as part of their identity projects (Eckhardt & Bardhi, 2020). Indeed, as Holt and Cameron (2010) note, a purchase from Starbucks was a 'potent sign of cultural sophistication in Seattle' (Ibid, p. 97). This PhD does not take up the discussion of the potential of the design for symbolic services, nor is it part of the current discourse in service design. However, this would be a natural theme for further investigation in an emergent field of *Experiential Service Design*.

In this , experiential economy in which we now live and move, service design is present in and needs to be responsive to its complex systems, changing conditions, cultural diversity and broader socio-cultural contexts. These are in flux, contingent and yet situated; they need to be located in relation to need, purpose and desire, now and in emerging futures in which people are active agents and participants in service-system relations, into which they play out, attach and build their values and identities. This PhD contributes in a modest way to an enriching of the discourse in service design to meet these emerging futures and to broaden the perspective and remit of those engaged in the design for service.





## Chapter 6 References

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## Chapter 7. Publications

### Publication 1

Matthews, T. (2014). Sacred Services: The potential for service design of theory relating to the sacred. *Artifact*, 3(2), 6.1–6.9.

## Sacred Services: How can knowledge from social science relating to the sacred inform the design of service experiences?

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### ABSTRACT

**Service design must negotiate the challenges of intangibility, co-production and temporality in the design for experience. The field currently uses tools and concepts such as customer journeys and touchpoints to assist in this task. However, other fields have the potential to inform the service design process as it seeks to focus more and more upon the customer experience.**

**Theory relating to the sacred speaks essentially of the intangible where extraordinary experiences are co-produced in communities through myths and time based ritual structures.**

**This paper undertakes a theoretical comparison between relevant theory from social science relating to the discourse on the sacred and theory relating to service design. The paper demonstrates the potential for sacred theory to inform service design, and presents some examples from contemporary society in which the sacred is evident in service provision. This shows that there is potential from combining the two fields as part of the service design process and delivery, and identifies a potential to operationalize this theory into new service design tools. Areas for further research are identified that can help introduce theory on the sacred, myth and ritual into service design in a more operational way.**

Keywords: service design, sacred, ritual, intangibility

### INTRODUCTION

Service design is a relatively new field (Clatworthy, 2011; Schneider, Stickdorn, Andrews, & Lawrence, 2010). However, the theory relating to the sacred presented in this article dates back over one hundred years, beginning with the work of sociologist Emile Durkheim (Cladis, 2008).

Service design uses design method to make tangible intangible offerings through the orchestrating of performances, scripts, touchpoints, artifacts and cues in time based sequences at sequestered places. The aim is to facilitate favorable service experiences for customers that differentiate these services beyond their core offering.

The sacred is experienced, communicated in a shared community through the orchestration of rites, ceremonies and rituals, sequenced and repeatable performances that give structure to time, creating passageways through experiences that can allow for social and/or emotional transition. Rituals are often the performance of myth, where the intangible is made tangible through performance, the symbolic, physical artifacts and the sequestered places where they are staged.

Little has been done in examining the potential relevance of sacred for service design. Clark (2006) suggests the use of rites of passage as framing for co-design settings, but does not introduce broader sacred themes nor connect them to service design. Chase and Dasu (2001) express the importance of ritual in the service encounter but fails to suggest how this might be done. Cook et al. (2002) refers to Chase and Dasu arguing that ritual allows for social scripts that alleviates participants from the strain of thinking, which, as this paper will demonstrate, only touches on one element of what rituals do. Finally Nakamura, Tschirky and Ikawa's paper of 2008 links the tea ceremony to service design, constructing a three axis model to deconstruct the tea ceremony. However, this model does not include aspects of myth, sacred or ritual from the social sciences, and therefore does not bring the areas closer together. The tea ceremony would be a good example to deconstruct in terms of service design and aspects identified from the social sciences, but as yet, the two fields have not been bridged. This supports the need for further crossover work in the area.

The similarity between service design with its expected outcomes and the sacred are convergent, and it is therefore valuable to explore as to whether our understanding of the sacred could be used in service design. Indeed, new service design tools might be constructed to operationalize this material offering new opportunities for the field of service design.

This paper will examine this convergence and discuss what sacred theory might offer service design. It will do this by comparing both fields and highlighting areas where elements of sacred theory might potentially offer, through further research, practical improvement to the practice of service design by operationalization.

### ARTICLE STRUCTURE

The paper will proceed with a description of service design based around the notions of Intangibility, Co-production and Temporality, which will be the basis for comparison and discussion later. It will offer a description of the sacred arguing the interdependence of Community, Myth, and Ritual for the sacred experience, concluding with a summary that connects sacred to notions of Intangibility, Co-production and Temporality. It will offer examples of the sacred structures manifest in two consumer settings. Finally it will conclude with a discussion of the potential of sacred theory for the further development of service design.

### WHAT IS SERVICE DESIGN?

Service design uses the tools of design to facilitate processes that can create an “action platform” (Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011) for desired service outcomes where the service designer contributes with “a set of modeling techniques for service experiences” (Holmlid, 2009, p. 2). Using frameworks to assist the service designer in this process to allow it to be more “concrete and controllable” (Koivisto, 2009)

What service design brings to service innovation is a unique user view that constructs the service experience from this perspective (Holmlid & Evenson, 2008; Koivisto, 2009; Schneider et al., 2010). Here therefore service design is concerned with the user experience beyond that which can be referred to as the “Core Service Offering,” which in Koivisto’s words is the “primary need of the customer” or the reason to buy the service. However the service designer must consider other needs of the customer in the service journey that might be existentially more fundamental and relate to issues such as belonging, esteem or fairness etc. (Cook et al., 2002). What

is at stake is how the supplementary services that embellish the core service offering may allow for differentiation of the service and deliver the potential for extraordinary service experiences.

Service design has several unique design challenges and characteristics, here described as Intangibility, Co-production and Temporality. Based on service marketing’s IHIP (Intangibility, Heterogeneity, Inseparability, Perishability) characteristics of services (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1981) they attempt to speak of these themes more in the language of service design. Despite the questioning of the validity of the IHIP characterization (Lovelock & Gummesson, 2004) they still form the basis of much service framing. In what follows, each of these three characteristics will be described, together with a list of common service design tools used for each. These tools are by no means exhaustive but are intended to give an overview of relevant processes employed. They are taken from *This is Service Design* (Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011), *Design for Services* (Schneider et al., 2010), *250 essential Methods for Service Design* (Curedale, 2013), and *Designing Services with Innovative Methods* (Koivisto, 2009).

**Intangibility:** Service design makes the intangible tangible through the use of physical evidence such as the sequestered service space (Zeithaml et al., 1981) touchpoints, evidencing of experience, metaphors such as theatre and performance (Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011; Schneider et al., 2010) and cues that also prompt scripting for both service staff and customer alike (Cook et al., 2002).

*Touchpoints: help make the service experience take physical form through points of contact*

*Customer journey: helps to understand the intangibility of the customer experience as they move through a service experience*

**Co-production:** Service design sees customers as collaborators in both designing the right service, but also in the co-production of the experience its self (Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011). The co-production of experience happens between customer and service provider through “situated actions” and in turn service experiences are formed by this physical context combined with the mood and wider socio-cultural context of the customer and organization. Along with the customers own cultural baggage which informs the potential outcome of the service exchange (de Ruyter & Bloemer, 1996) comes mood, which is less constant and where the customers response to the service staff’s performance again

demonstrates the need for consciously orchestrated interactions between cues, physical context and scripting. Here we see the significance of the role of the customer and influenced also by other customers in the service environment (Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011), where good inter customer interaction can in fact contribute increased positive customer experiences (Martin & Pranter, 1989; Voss & Zomerdijk, 2008) particularly when there is a shared commitment or brand loyalty (Belk & Tumbat, 2005; McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002).

*Cultural probes and user diaries: give service designers insight into the direct cultural context of the customer*

*Emotional map: breaks down customer responses to service encounters into sensorial and/or emotional responses.*

*Emotional blueprint: maps emotional responses throughout the customer journey*

*Service mood board: creates a visual representation of the mood of the service space, journey and/or experience that will impact the experiential outcome for the customer*

**Temporality:** Service design actively designs with time (Koivisto, 2009; Schneider et al., 2010), using time structuring tools and frameworks such as customer journeys to control or at the least make time tangible for the life of the service (Koivisto, 2009). Using a service time-line as a framework assists the service designer to make sense of this temporality, creating touchpoints of experiential delivery that creates sequences and dramaturgy to the service’s

life, heightening the experience through a sense of expectation (Schneider et al., 2010). Here the aim is to give structure to the experience, hoping that the tempo of this structure is balanced to avoid boredom or alternatively stress (Cook et al., 2002; Schneider et al., 2010). Within this structure, through touchpoints the value of the service is consumed, evaluated, experienced in the moment (Miettinen & Koivisto, 2009), this being value-in-context where “value is temporal, because time becomes an important dimension” (Kimbell, 2010, p.3)

*The customer journey; allows for the service designer to design with time and visualize time in sequences*

*Visual service scripts; like the customer journey but allows for a more visual representation through the timescale of the service.*

Table 1 gives an overview of the mechanisms of service design with the characteristic of Tangibility, Co-production and Temporality.

### WHAT IS THE SACRED?

“A thing is sacred because it inspires a collective feeling of respect that removes it from the realm of the profane [everyday]” (Cladis, 2008, p. 96).

This section framed primarily by social science, though taking a bricolage approach draws also on relevant theory from the humanities.

Durkheim the atheist believed it was the community that created the sacred and this paper positions sacred firmly as a secular phenomena, as religion

Service design characteristic	Service design's role	Service design does this by designing	Employs
Intangibility	Makes intangible tangible	Touchpoints Evidencing Cues Physical space Performance	Touchpoint cards Customer journeys
Co-production	To design from the users perspective	In co-design with users To create channels for users to co-create desirable experiences Physical spaces Dramaturgies & Scripts Cues & Props	User diaries Cultural probes Emotional Maps Emotional Blueprints Service mood boards
Temporality	Uses time as design material	Dramaturgies Routes through the service Service moments	Customer journeys Visual service scripts

Table 1. Service design overview

only is one context where the sacred is experienced (Rook, 1985). Many support this view and this paper will refer in part, not at least as a contemporary counterweight to Durkheim, to two papers using a sacred lens to deconstruct consumer behavior which grounds this perspective. "The Sacred and the Profane in Consumer Behavior" (Belk, Sherry, & Wallendorf, 1987) and "The Cult of Macintosh" (Belk & Tumbat, 2005) consider how "consumption has become a vehicle for experiencing the sacred." And how "the ritual substratum of consumption and describes properties and manifestations of the sacred inherent in consumer behavior." The papers also address how "consumers sacralize or desacralize dimensions of their experiences" (Belk et al., 1987, p. 1).

This section will argue that the sacred experience can be a potentially positive, heightened and memorable one. It will try and show how the sacred experience is constructed between ritual, myth and a participating community.

### **Sacred Experience**

Belk, Sherry et al summarize the characteristics of the sacred experience as "ecstatic," existential, "joy," "outside of self," "peak experiences," like the "enchantment" of "love, hope, ambition, jealousy" (Belk et al., 1987, p. 7-8). Where these experiences when shared with others can raise the spirit in what Durkheim calls "collective effervescence" (Durkheim, 2008). Furthermore some rituals would also seem to "foster enduring episodic memories ... in some cases exhibiting all the features of classic "flashbulb memory" (Whitehouse, 2001, p. 178).

The community is central to the sacred experience (Belk et al., 1987; Belk & Tumbat, 2005; Durkheim, 2008; Fry, 2011). The community that gathers itself around that which is agreed to be meaningful relies on mechanisms that in essence creates the core of the community and in addition make the intangible substantive through symbolic action and narrative. This is the symbiotic relationship between community, ritual and myth. We will examine each in more detail.

### **Community**

Durkheim's core argument is that the sacred is the expression of the community. Where the sacred experienced by the group is not external but generated, or to use a service design term, "co-produced" by the group (Durkheim, 2008). And how we strive for community, where there is still a strong "contemporary desire for belonging, and its spiritual meaning and significance" (Knott, 2004, p. 76).

Knott sites Maffesoli to argue that in our postmodern "time of the tribes" the concept of community is long detached from a definition of relating to "locality" but relating to faith. This is not the faith as in religion but the faith in shared ethics, aesthetics, customs and values. But sharing these values can also create interdictions, controlling and regulating what is deemed as acceptable behavior and act to exclude those who don't conform (Geertz, 2004). But as Durkheim (2008) suggests, communities can also raise individuals above themselves and in certain setting allow for status equality referred to by Turner (1995) as "communitas," where "communitas has its own social structure and social norms, based on its own traditions, values, rituals and mythologies" (Collins, 2012, p. 6).

### **Myth**

The myth and the community are inseparable concepts for Jean Luc Nancy. It is the myth that communicates the will of the community and the community that communicates the will of the myth. In "[c]ommunicating itself, it brings into being what it says, it founds its fiction" (Nancy, 1991, p. 56). For Nancy "myth and myth's force and foundation are essential to community and there can be, therefore, no community outside of myth" (Nancy, 1991, p. 57). What this suggests is that the myth becomes its own reality through its communicating of itself and as community is in itself its own myth, it too is brought into existence.

But what is a myth? Segal somewhat reductively defines myth "as simply a story about something significant" (Segal, 2004, p.5); however, for a community it is the something significant that binds it and creates a shared commitment (Durkheim, 2008).

Campbell (2008) goes beyond a concept of myth as a story of something significant and sites Freud to build the argument that myth is not a fictitious narrative but a metaphor for some form of truth. An account of truth that is as valid as any other. This paper therefore considers myth not as lies but as symbolic metaphors that allow us to make tangible the abstract.

For Barthes (1973) the myth is the symbolic signifier of meaning that contains a whole system of values, understood and read through its communication. Here it is worth returning to Durkheim whose view of the symbolic is of making the intangible tangible, whether by myth or by the physical totem; the sacred is manifest in the "intangible substance" (Durkheim, 2008, p. 191).



## Ritual

Ritual is intrinsically linked to myth. Through ritual myths are performed and given a “physical” expression, with ritual becoming more efficacious in combination with myth and vice versa (Eliade, 1961).

For Turner ritual actions are “a stereotyped sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place and performed according to set sequence” (Turner, 1961, p. 36), acting as rules of conduct that prepare one to experience or indeed come in contact with the sacred (Belk et al., 1987). Bell suggests that the strategy of “ritualization” creates action that is “designed and orchestrated to distinguish and privilege what is being done in comparison to other, usually more quotidian [mundane] activities” (Bell, 1992, p. 74).

But rituals are also a form of communication, as ways to express inward emotion, meaning and a reaffirmation of values (Geertz, 2000) that are often held through the community, strengthening the conviction of these values through enactment to be performed for those in the community as well as for those outside. In this way rituals often need an audience, clear scripts, clear roles and symbolic artifacts to assist in the action (Rook, 1985).

On a grand scale Van Gennep (1960) describes ritual in terms of “rites of passage” where the ritual construction allows the subject to make movement from one social state to another through set, sequential structures. Rites such as baptisms, coming of age, and marriage create the spaces of Separation, Transition and Reincorporation. Here the subject is disconnected and removed from their current social status, placed into a state of status ambiguity or “liminality,” then finally they are reincorporated into society with their new social identity.

Eliade also refers to rituals as passageways, but to an alternative emotional plane. This plane is not temporal in so far that it connects to the context of the now but connects to “primordial time” that exists outside of our cognitive perception of the now (Eliade, 1961). In this way, what ritual does in effect is lift the subject out of their profane (everyday) context and into an alternative consciousness. This “sacred time” is not dependent on the temporal time that existed before it as the subject is lifted and reconnected to the primordial, independent of the previous time based context.

However Eliade goes on to explain that time can also be experienced within the meta-ritual of the calendar year that moves and renews itself throughout the year (Eliade, 1961). This gives structure to the year, where time isn’t perceived as linear but cyclical, connected to reoccurring celebrations like Easter or Christmas, where time repeats itself in ritual. Within these bigger structures, smaller ritual acts exist (Whitehouse, 2001) where these smaller ritualistic performances strengthen and reinforce the meta-level rites that they exist within (Rook, 1985). The Catholic Church is a good example, from micro rituals such as hand washing within the structure of the weekly performed ceremony of the mass, which in turn exists within the meta-ritual of the liturgical year (Catholic Encyclopedia, 2012).

Given that the sacred is the intangible made tangible through myth and ritual and that the sacred experience is co-produced in the community in ritualized settings, where the ritual gives structure to the temporal; it is possible to use the same structure to analyze the relevance of sacred theory as for service design in the last section. Table 2 shows this convergence.

## THE SACRED IN CONSUMER SOCIETY

This section will offer two short examples of how sacred structures in secular consumer society manifest themselves in product and service offerings. It is not suggested that these examples have been orchestrated actively with the sacred in mind, however they are included to show how sacred experiences manifest themselves already in these settings.

### Apple

Belk and Tumbat’s 2005 paper “The Cult of Macintosh” argues that customers of Apple demonstrate typical human responses to the sacred that in turn facilitate unparalleled devotion and attached value to the brand and heightened experiences of the product. Some go as far as to tattoo the Apple logo onto their bodies to demonstrate this devotion (Kahney, 2006), aping the actions of early Palestinian Christians who tattooed themselves with the cross as a shared totem of faith (Cladis, 2008).

Through a series of constructed myths, a community of Mac devotees understands the brand and their relationship to it. They construct “Hero Myths” surrounding Steve Jobs, reflecting Campbell’s “heroic journey” narrative analysis, and “Satanic Myths” for figures such as Bill Gates.



Sacred characteristics	Community's role	Myth's role	Ritual's role	Employs
Intangibility	To define and create the myths and rituals that represent the intangible	Symbolic metaphors of the intangible.	Making physical through action and performance Using object and artifacts Using sequestered places	Myth and Ritual
Co-production	Defines what is sacred through the community. Collective effervescence Communitas	Communicating what is defined as sacred To bind the community and to represent its reality	Creates passageways to emotional states Creating passageways to tranformation Reinforces what is defined as sacred	Community
Temporality	Playing out role in time based ceremony		Gives structure to time and understands time on many levels Offering sequences to time Offering sequences to the calendar	Rituals

Table 2. Sacred Overview

These myths create a deeper account of why, for them, Apple and its founder are so special. It goes beyond functionality of the product but creates a new way to experience and understand the brand values.

Through interviews with Mac devotees we also hear of witnesses and evangelizing – spreading the good news of salvation through transcending corporate capitalism. Where the sense is that Apple is motivated, not by the desire to make money, but by the desire to bring to the world truly “neat stuff” (Belk and Tumbat 2005, p. 213).

Ritual themes are also apparent on meta to micro levels. Apple stores create ritualized and near church like spaces (Collins, 2012), with new store openings having all the trappings of ecstatic ceremonies and as the way a Mac is packaged allows for ritual enactment, some go as far as inviting friends to unpacking ceremonies (Kahney, 2006).

Finally by the time the iPhone was launched in 2006 Mac devotees appropriated mythologies and symbols from religion to communicate their feelings towards the impending technological release, referring to the new phone as the “Jesus Phone” (Campbell & La Pastina, 2010).

**Memphis**

In the example of Memphis we see a secular destination made special by an Elvis faithful turning it into a pilgrimage center (Alderman, 2002).

What might be described as the Elvis pilgrimage is a collection of designated places in Graceland including the meditation gardens, the tomb, the jungle room, with rites such as the morning vigil and

writing on the wall by the gates (Alderman, 2002). Beyond the Graceland complex there are other essential visits that should be undertaken; a stay at the Heartbreak Hotel, to stand at the x-marked spot where Elvis recorded at Sun Records, to visit Lansky’s clothes shop, with other sites vying for position like his birthplace in Tupelo and Lauderdale Courts where he lived as a teenager (Davidson, 1985).

For many the experience of visiting Memphis and Graceland is defined by the myth of Elvis, a myth that is controlled and managed by the Presley estate (Alderman, 2002). Through the myth, rites and sequestered sites the tourist gleans meaning, Alderman suggesting that Graceland has become a “Pilgrimage landscape” a phenomenon that does “not simply emerge but undergo what Seaton (1999) calls sacralization – a sequential process by which tourism attractions are ‘marked’ as meaningful, quasi-religious shrines” (Alderman, 2002, p. 28).

The emergence of the Graceland tradition is a relatively new one gathering momentum after Elvis’ death in 1977 (Alderman, 2002) and arguably – like in the case of Disneyland – it becomes an “authentic manifestation of local [American] culture” (Doss, 2008) and in turn offers meaning and value to the Elvis community.

**DISCUSSION**

The two examples presented here show that the sacred is present in modern “designed” service solutions and that it offers a means for the users to experience stronger emotional attachments and more meaningful service experiences. It is unknown whether this was actively considered during the

design process or an accidental outcome. It does, however, show the potential of sacred and services when combined.

### **Operationalizing theory**

But is it possible to design the sacred? This is arguably not the case directly, but as with service design which creates the channels for experience to be had, it may be possible through the community to design and orchestrate rituals and ceremonies that are able to connect to myths that in turn create the channels for “sacred” or at the very least “special” experiences.

Hobsbawm in the introduction to *The invention of tradition* (Hobsbawm, 2012) argues quite clearly that traditions, rituals and myths can be invented and designed where none existed before. Roper (2012) underlines this by using the example of the Scottish kilt to be a relative modern innovation and indeed designed by an English Quaker for his Scottish workforce. However through a process that privileged a mundane piece of everyday cloth, not at least through myth and its ritual wearing, the kilt is now seen as an ancient cultural expression of Scottish pride and belonging. Also Kong and Yeoh (1997) argue that the strategy of creating ritual has been used by the Singaporean authority to unite the country behind a myth of nationhood and unity. On a more modest scale, but no less important, literature relating to child adoption offer practical ways to design ceremonies and rituals (Lieberman & Bufferd, 1999; Mason, 1995) to help build trust, assist with transition and to build new family traditions.

This suggests that rituals and myths can be designed and/or used to cultivate mundane artifacts, actions or customs into meaningful traditions.

### **Further work**

So further research could proffer a model for designing with the material presented in this paper. This raises questions as to what this material really offers and what it could mean for service design.

In regards to Intangibility it may offer a broadening of the definition of the term touchpoint if framed by the concept of “intangible substance.” Touchpoint chains along a service journey would acquire new significance for customers as symbolic meaning, This might mean that touchpoints should transcend their functional origins and serve an extended purpose of emotional functionality to connect to other deeply held needs and values.

But then who would decide the form of these new kinds of touchpoints and what would their form be? Currently the designer gives form to these points of contact, but in the theory presented here, the intangible substance is something that is generated out of the community, in some way collectively co-produced. This might make it difficult to find these forms or at least add a layer of complexity where the customer would need to find a way to materialize a form of the collective will. Maybe due to service design’s tradition of co-production it might have the tools to aggregate this sort of material. Maybe new tools for this might be developed too, to aggregate myths and the aesthetics and feel of these substances.

Perhaps touchpoints would need to be redefined as nonphysical; as a myth, as a complex ritual or even one as simple as a handshake.

And what of the co-producing community? Can collective effervescence be experienced remotely? Must the group always be present to create these experiences? To perform the ritual together, to express the myth, to perform for those inside to others outside?

And what of temporality? What would this material bring to our concept of time in the service journey? Currently we understand it as a linear movement, but what would a service journey look like when planned as a series of cyclical events over weeks, months, seasons, years; repeating themselves and reaffirming their meaning through repetition? Could these cycles be disrupted consciously, by rites of passage that create new dramaturgies and high points through a service life or even customer’s life? What kind of services could use these time schematics? Life Insurance? Loyalty schemes? What frameworks must we design to work with this kind of complexity?

How could we use the emotional and social transitional structures of Van Gennep to construct transformative experiences that change us? Is it the job of service design to change people? Which services would benefit from these kinds of structures? Hospitality? Tourism?

What kind of services would benefit from integrating sacred theory into service design? Would it be useful for just hedonistic services or could more functional services be lifted from their quotidian nature? Can the sacred be used in business

to business services (b2b), for example, or does it require emotional investment and desire from the customer?

Finally, what should the boundaries of a service design project be when involving the sacred? It seems clear that the sacred operationalized would require more of a company than just adapting the touch-points and the journey. It might involve a closer link to the service brand and the company identity. How then, should the service design process relate to this seemingly larger project boundary?

How could the sacred service experience be measured? How could an organization evaluate the success of the efforts used on developing sacred services? How do customers articulate this, when asked?

## CONCLUSION

The theoretical comparison that this paper presents demonstrates that there are comparable themes between service design and sacred theory, and that the study of the sacred offers rich and varied material that could expand the content and practice of service design. The examples provided demonstrate further the potential of combining the two fields as part of the service design process and delivery, and identifies the potential for further work to operationalize this theory into new service design tools. But what this work implies is that there is a whole untapped resource of material for service design for the creation of truly extraordinary experiences. "Effervescence," "joy," "ecstatic," "enchantment," terms relating to the sacred experience, here is truly the potential for new service experiences for customers given that this material could be understood and used by service design. However, as has been shown, there are multiple unknowns regarding how and in what way this can be done. The paper shows the potential, but there is still a great deal of research needed to identify the best way to combine the two areas. Hopefully this paper could motivate others to contribute to what could be an interesting area of study.

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## **Publication 2**

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## MIRACLES & MANAGEMENT: THE 3<sup>RD</sup> CONFERENCE OF MANAGEMENT, SPIRITUALITY & RELIGION.

**PAPER TITLE:** Can insights from the theory relating to ritual be operationalized to contribute to the development of New Service Development tools?

**AUTHOR:** Ted Matthews. PhD Candidate. The Oslo School of Architecture and Design; Centre for Service Innovation.

**PhD title:** Sacred Services: The sacred and the ritual as a material for service design

### **ABSTRACT**

Service design must push its current boundaries of reference to incorporate wider impulses from the social sciences and humanities to allow for higher engagement at a socio-cultural level with service customers.

Services are primarily defined by their intangibility and temporal nature where value is co-created during service delivery between customer and service provider.

Rituals offer time-based structures that allow for the intangible to be made substantive and for the anxiety of change to be alleviated through performative rites.

This paper presents the initial attempts to operationalize theory relating to ritual as a way to create new user focused innovation tools for New Service Development (NSD) teams.

It presents the findings from a NSD workshop at Norway's leading telecom company that tested newly developed tools generated through a research by design method of inquiry. The tools were applied to the development of additional services for 'Digital Wallet' technology in Norway.

The results suggest potential for ritual theory and the paper will discuss the findings and further research to be undertaken.

The research contributes to the Norwegian Centre for Service Innovation research program.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Service design is still a developing discipline (Schneider, Stickdorn et al. 2010). As a service designer there is a sense that you are sometimes designing with fresh air, not with solid materials, but with intangible concepts such as time, experiences, emotions, human behavior and relationships. Holmlid and Evenson (2008) summarize this well when they suggest that Service Designers 'visualize, express and choreograph what other people can't see, envisage solutions that do not yet exist, observe and interpret needs and behaviors and transform them into possible service futures, and express and evaluate, in the language of experiences, the quality of design' (p.341).

It seems that the literature relating to Ritual has answers to the service designers predicament. Rituals offer structures for actions to be deconstructed, actions that relate to each other on different levels. It is a potential lens for capturing complexity, complexity that can give the service designer new tools for the creation of deeply engaging experiences.

This paper combines knowledge of ritual with the work of designing services, so to create new structures and thinking in regards to New Service Development. New Service Development 'refers to the overall process of developing new service offerings' with service design specifying 'the detailed content and configuration of a service concept' (Menor, Mohan et al. 2002:p.137).

The research seeks to understand the potential of ritual theory for service design and does this by bringing together knowledge from the different fields. This is combined through the designing of tools leading to a test of these tools in a practice based setting which are then evaluated through observation and focused interviews. It contributes to practice through the delivery of new design tools and to research by bridging service design and social science by highlighting complementary themes whilst visualizing elements of ritual theory.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The methodological framework for this paper is Research by Design combined with more established methods of inquiry.

Research by Design is gaining acceptance as a mode of knowledge creation (Dunin-Woyseth and Nilsson 2011).

Sevaldson's (2010) defining work on Design as Research describes the process as follows: 'Research by Design emphasizes insider perspectives, a generative approach, operates in rich and multiple layers and relates to real life contexts. The output is new communicable knowledge that is only found within design practice.' (p.8)

Frankel & Racine (2003) use Cross' reference to Schön and his championing of a constructivist paradigm to demonstrate to illustrate how the designer through practice offers a designerly way of knowing. Schön says:

'I begin with the assumption that competent practitioners usually know more than they can say. They exhibit a kind of knowing-in-practice, most of which is tacit... Indeed, practitioners themselves often reveal a capacity for reflection on their intuitive knowing in the midst of action and sometimes use this capacity to cope with the unique, uncertain, and conflicted situations of practice.'

Through the development of new tools the design process, in this case, illuminates the potential of theory relating to ritual. It becomes a hands-on approach to understanding the material of ritual theory. It is in constructing and operationalization that the concepts become known to the designer as material and assessed as to its use within the context of service design, more specifically within the context of New Service Development.

Whilst Dunin Wyseth and Nilsson (2011) argue for the expansion and acceptance of Research by Design as a methodology for knowledge creation it is however with the caveat that this is to be supported by more established modes of enquiry. These methods used and presented here contribute to the different phases of the design process, where the reviews of literature and designing contribute to understanding. Where further design and reflection contributes to tools that can then be tested and in turn then assessed through further reflection and focused interviews.

### **Paper structure**

This paper presents a summary of the main concepts relating to service design and briefly the case study for this research. It offers a review of literature relating to the nature and mechanisms of ritual that appear to have relevance for the design of services. This is framed mainly by social science, but also through a 'bricolage' approach, which aggregates relevant and useful concepts from the humanities.

It will discuss briefly the development of tools and the insights gleaned from this process. A description of the workshop and tools will be followed by an analysis of the results followed by a discussion of these results

## **SERVICE DESIGN**

A useful definition of service design is 'Design for Experiences that reach people through touch-points, and that happen over time' (LiveWork 2008). The service designer attempts to orchestrate the channels for customers to have favorable experiences (Zomerdijsk and Voss 2010) not just once but over a period, sometimes using dramaturgy to create these contexts. (Schneider, Stickdorn et al. 2010).

The challenge of designing with time has led to the generation of tools that make the concept more substantive whilst developing new services (Koivisto 2009). The service journey for example maps out the route the customer makes through their protracted contact with the service. In the service journey 'touchpoints' allow the designer to manipulate the points of contact the customer has with the service whether it be advertising, the website, in the store or when receiving a bill. Identifying 'painpoints' on the other hand allows the designer to try and negate potentially unpleasant experiences in the service journey. (Koivisto 2009)

But orchestrating an experience around these points of contact demands the choreographing of many unseen, and when it comes to human behavior, unknowable elements as Holmlid and Evenson (2008) suggest. For them the quality of the design is expressed through the experience and it is through this that the customer evaluates the value of the service. But value cannot be simply delivered, it must be co-created in use where 'the roles of producers and consumers are not distinct, meaning that value is always co-created, jointly and reciprocally, in interactions among providers and beneficiaries through the integration of resources and application of competences.' (Voss and Zomerdijsk 2008:p.146).

The customers own input is therefore inseparable from how a service is experienced. Human behavior then is key as Mager (2009) describes, 'Service design is in many cases dealing with human behavior: behavior of employees, behavior of customers and co-customer. Due to co-production customer behavior is of greatest relevance for the success and failure of the service'. (p.41). This behavior must be taken into account, being influenced by socio-cultural background (Maffei, Mager et al. 2005: p.7), by mood (de Ruyter and Bloemer 1996) or even just by contact with other customers (Martin and Pranter 1989) for example.

All this, combined with the often non-material nature of services makes New Service Development a real challenge. For those engaged in this development, tools that can support, give structure or map out the heterogeneous complexity of potential service offerings can be a real help.

### **Research case study: A new Digital Wallet service for Norway.**

A digital wallet service for Norwegian customers has been developed.

It is envisioned that the main function for this new service will be to allow customers to make cashless payment for goods with the simple tap of their telephone on activated terminals.

The technology is developed and ready for use. Trials have already taken place and it has proven to work without any considerable technical problems.

However issues that are still unresolved are those relating to initial adoption, transition from physical wallet to mobile device, trust, maintaining service engagement, and how and when to introduce new services after adoption.

## **RITUAL THEORY**

This section will review literature relating to the nature and mechanisms of ritual. It will also proffer insights from these theories for service design.



Rituals are cultural performances that express inward emotion and values whilst strengthening these convictions through their enactment (Geertz 2000). This performance and its meaning must be agreed by society so that it can be read and understood by its audience (Cladis 2008). Rituals give structure to make the intangible in some form substantive.

But beyond what rituals do Turner gives us a useful definition of what rituals are "a stereotyped sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place" (Turner 1961:p.36). Turner's predecessor Van Gennep (1909) describes passages in both literal and metaphorical senses that allow participants to express and make tangible a change of social status. His deconstruction of Rites of Passage offer a specific sequential structure of Separation, Transition and Reincorporation. The subject is separated from their current social context, placed in a state of flux and non-belonging and then re-introduced to the world in the new social status.

Rites of Passage help us deal with 'life crisis', the anxiety of change, a route for transition from one state to the next, for example marriage, pregnancy, betrothal, puberty etc. This structure seems to offer potential for the service designer as they consider how to construct the service journey to create the right channels for an experience not at least if dealing with a potential painpoints or crisis.

Around these once-in-a-lifetime transitional rites, Erikson (1951) argues that it is the many smaller rituals, some private some shared, that work together to create the psychological sense of change for those undergoing these major public social transitions.

Rituals are also occurring within cyclical calendar structures (Eliade 1961, Rook 1985) time punctuated through seasonal highpoints, Christmas, Easter, 1<sup>st</sup> May celebrations, etc.

Rituals therefore are performed on several levels from once-in-a-lifetime to annual festivals but then right down to simple ritual actions. These simple ritual actions then support and strengthen those rituals they are a part of.

This richness of layers of ritual, as a cultural expression on several levels, where each part contributes to a whole and where a whole can be expressed and strengthened at and through micro level ritualistic action seems to offer tantalizing potential for service design. Finding structure to express meaning and to delivery the right micro level interactions for total experiences that then contribute to a comprehension of the whole is a goal for service design. Just in its simplest form rituals give structure to time.

Rook (1985) operationalizes some of these broader concepts alluded to in Turners description of ritual above, as a measure of evaluation for the current vitality of American rituals. He proposes for a ritual to be vital it must demonstrate clear scripts, roles and audiences for the ritual action and that these actions must include definable artifacts. An evaluation tool for Rook, but potentially a tool for service design, a list of ingredients for the design of rituals or perhaps a way to unpack existing services. Finally ritual is inextricably linked to myth (Segal 2004), with ritual giving to myth a performative expression. The two together a powerful combination with one giving efficacy to the other (Eliade 1961).

This author favors Campbell's (1949) account of myth, that of truth presented in metaphor combined with Roland Barthes's (1973) argument that myths are symbolic signifiers of meaning that contain whole systems of values understood and read through their communication. Whether indeed this be communicated through narrative or ritual performance. It would seem however in our modern consumerist

society that modern brands have connected deeply to people's values (Diller, Shedroff et al. 2008) but arguably only when these brands reflect the 'truth' of the company the brand represents. Some brands connect so deep, as in the case with Apple that some demonstrate a devotion that reflects almost religious fervor (Belk and Tumbat 2005) This asks the question of whether the service designer can express the mythology of the brand through an expressive ritualized service touchpoint?

### **RESEARCH BY DESIGN, THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOOLS.**

From January 2013-February 2013 twelve MA service design students, divided into 3 teams worked closely with the author of this paper to develop tools for 3 initial workshops. These tools operationalized theory from the study of ritual presented above. These tools were assessed through reflection in practice (Sevaldson 2010) with some amalgamated into a fourth iteration of the tools. This was then further developed into a 5<sup>th</sup> iteration by the author of this paper and trialed with employees from Norway's largest telecom company.

This paper focuses upon the fifth iteration of the tools, an iteration that integrates the results from the previous developments. Through these investigative iterations several clear insights arose that would be developed into tools. These were as follows:

- Theory relating to ritual offers new ways for service designers to give structure to time and the relationship society has to time.
- Van Gennep's Rites of Passage offers a break down of society's relationship to time for practical use when designing transitions
- The fact rituals have prescribed sequences give NSD teams further structure to work with.
- If ritual are to be designed they need to express the truth behind the myth being performed
- That rituals have prescribed scripts, actors, audiences and artifacts that can also function as material.
- That ritual is primarily associated with religion and can act as a barrier to it being a useful tool

These insights went on to inform the structure, content and presentation of tools as well as the format of the workshop. They are also the basis for assessment of the results and will be referred to later in this paper.

### **WORKSHOP AND TOOLS DESCRIPTION**

The workshop took place at the company's headquarters on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2013 and ran from 09:00am – 12:00pm. There were 10 participants, representing several disciplinary fields from the company. This included R&D, User Experience (UX) Designers, software developers, customer care responsible, external consultant and marketing.

This represented well the kinds of participants that would make up a NSD team. In addition to the participants there was the author of this paper as facilitator assisted by an MA service design student. Proceedings were filmed in their entirety with all presentations delivered in English.

### **Introduction**

The workshop aim was to test three tools. To do this it was necessary to give participants enough ritual theory to be able to work with the subject material.

The workshop opened with a general description of the themes relating to ritual as presented in this paper. The opening paragraph of Rooks article The Ritual Dimension of Consumer Behavior (1985) was read out, as it described a series of secular rituals that take place in an average working day in the US. This helped establish from very early on that rituals could happen outside of religion and observable within modern, developed societies. Examples of rituals were given throughout to further highlight this view.



Diagram 1: Facilitator ‘unpacking’ Norwegian Christmas tradition at workshop to demonstrate the many interrelated layers of rituals.

### **Tool 1 – Ritual Layers Tool.**

The first tool to be introduced is called the ‘Ritual Layers Tool’. It was used to illustrate how rituals can be ‘unpacked’ in layers as a way to visualize how rituals are structured, how they function and are interconnected on several levels. These layers were given the titles; Rites of Passage at the top level then Cyclical Rites, Ceremonies, Rituals and Ritual Actions at the bottom.



Truths FAMILY WHOLESOME UNIFYING	Artifacts WOODEN SPOONS RICE PORRIDGE BOWLS	ALMOND MARSIPAN PIG
	Scripts THE TRADITION. ALL KNOW ABOUT HIDDEN ALMOND.	THE FINDE WINS MARSIPAN PIG. some kids NEED TO BE EXPLAINED TO
Myths GOOD FORTUNE NORWEGIAN BARN GNOMES BRING BLESSING ON THE HOME WHEN PORRIDGE LEFT OUT FOR THEM	Roles MOTHERS MANAGE THE RITUAL KIDS CENTRAL ROLE	OTHER ADULTS PLAY ALONG
	Audiences THE ASSEMBLED FAMILY	FACEBOOK?

Diagram 3: Ritual Action Tool. Based on Rooks evaluation tool for the vitality of rituals, it also incorporates Campbell's concepts of Myths and Truth. Filled out here to deconstruct the ritual of eating Norwegian rice porridge during Christmas dinner.

The example of the consumption of Norwegian rice porridge was used to illustrate rituals happening at this level (see Diagram 3)

In 2 groups the facilitator asked participants to unpack the planned services for the new digital cashless payment service using the 'Ritual Layers Tool'. They were asked to consider on which levels the service touchpoints will occur. And map them out with post-its on the wall chart. The aim of this exercise was to see where touchpoints or painpoints might occur using this perspective of time as a structure and as to whether there were potential touchpoints missing.

The next exercise was to identify those actions that might include many of the elements suggested by Rook and operationalized in the Ritual Action Tool. These Ritual actions might be escalated to rituals if these could also be connected to mythical themes that might connect to the 'truth' of the action, service or brand.

### Tool 3 – Rites of Passage Tool.

Finally the last tool was introduced for those touchpoints that were identified as being at a rites of passage level on the Ritual Layers Tool, where customer anxiety might be argued to be high i.e. signing up to a new digital mobile payment solution where a leap of faith in new technology might be required. This tool called the 'Rites of Passage Tool', gave a simple structure for participants to write down transitional journeys for customers.

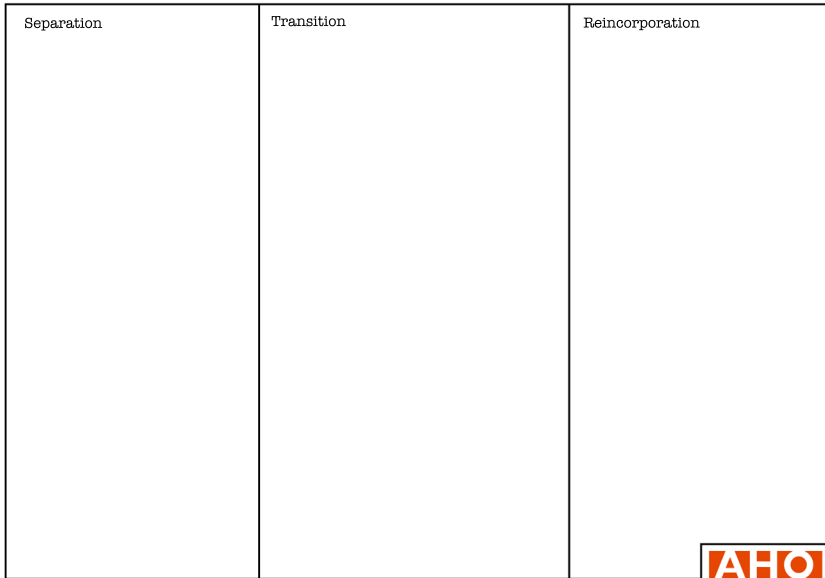


Diagram 4: Rites of Passage tool

## EVALUATION

A phenomenological approach was taken to understand how participants experienced the workshop and the tools as a way to measure the tools potential from these responses (Flick, Jenner et al. 2004). This was done through focused interviews. This was the main method of evaluation however this was combined with a ‘contemporary practitioner study’ as described by Sveraldson (2010) and a form of reflection in practice. This reflection has been described earlier in this paper as each design iteration informed the next. Within the context of the final evaluation however, this reflection in practice was done through observations from the workshop, through analyzing the film footage and by reviewing the work produced by the participants. It was chosen as a secondary evaluation method as ‘Lack of distance might bias results’ (Sevaldson 2010:p.26) For this reason, in the context of final evaluation, it was used to support or contradict participants feedback.

### Focused interviews

Focused interview are ‘designed to determine the responses of persons exposed to a situation previously analyzed by the investigator’ (Merton and Kendall 1946:p.541). The analysis should be of a reaction to a very specific situation or stimulus. This fits well with an analysis of content that the researcher has self generated through research by design and delivered through the specific stimulus of a workshop. In addition 3 hours of film was reviewed which gave additional insights to form a basis for assessment.

The interview itself is ‘focused on the subjective experiences of persons exposed to the pre-analyzed situation’ (p.541) Final analysis of the focused interview is based on ‘discrepancies between anticipated and actual effects’.

Interviews began with an unstructured question that asked broadly about the participant’s experience of the workshop this prompted further semi-structured

questions, which fluctuated between 'Response structure, stimulus free' and 'Stimulus structured, response free'.

Half the participants agreed to interviews, which were conducted in Norwegian

## **RESULTS**

### **Interviews Summary**

The majority of respondents felt that the tools offered a new way to read society, not at least in regards to how the actions of society could be broken down into different temporally based action. They felt that the theory made practical sense but said they struggled when trying to put the theory into practice. This was put down to time restraints, to being stuck with traditional disciplinary ways of thinking, to there being generally too much information and for many trying to understand what terms like truth and myth mean in relationship to each other.

The majority of respondents also felt that the tools would be more useful if introduced at the start of the innovation process not towards the end as was the case here. They felt that the technology had already set the agenda, but had this tool been introduced earlier it might have been human behavior that could have driven the development process.

It was observed after the workshop that number of participants took some of the tools with them. This was pursued during the interviews to understand what reflections participants had had since the workshop. One of the UX designers had used the sequences of Rites of Passage to design a USB connection in an attempt to lift a mundane everyday interaction into a more meaning full one.

There was no consensus on which tool appeared to be most useful. All respondents spoke about different tools and the potential for the ones they picked out. The issue of too little time came up on several occasions as they felt that the tool needed to be learnt to get the best out of it. They felt that having a facilitator who understood the material well to be a necessity.

Some respondents felt it difficult to disassociate ritual with religion and this they felt effected the way they engaged with the tools.

### **Analysis results.**

The analysis aims to highlight the discrepancies between anticipated and actual outcomes. These anticipated outcomes were based on the insights that informed the tools listed earlier in this paper.

- *Theory relating to ritual offers new ways for service designers to give structure to time and the relationship society has time.*
- *Van Gennep's Rites of Passage offers a break down of society's relationship to time for practical use when designing transitions*
- *That rituals have prescribed scripts, actors, audiences and artifacts that can also function as material.*

It seems the tools did offer some interesting new perspectives for viewing the development of new services. Respondents suggested The Ritual Action Tool to be potentially usable, not at least because they felt that it related well to existing service design tools and ways of thinking. The same with the Rites of Passage tool. Even in the reductive form it was presented it was experienced as a practical tool and the anecdotal evidence suggests that it might be usable beyond being just interesting. Where all respondents found the theory interesting and with potential as an early innovation tool, all did find it difficult to put the theory into practice. Some did state

that they felt unsure about using the tools as they did not know if they were using it in the right way, that they had no marker to measure against. This combined with the lack of time to get to know the tools properly acted as a barrier to really fully interrogate the usefulness of the tools. However in analyzing the filled out Rituals Actions Tool from one of the groups (the other group failed to fill one out and used the Rites of Passage Tool more actively instead) it seems that these participants were in fact able to use the tool in the way it had been intended, where fields apart from Myths were filled out as anticipated. These fields asked for factual analysis of the service touchpoint and were filled out appropriately. Myths however demanded a more abstract analysis of the service touchpoint and responses appear to support that this field was difficult to fill in.

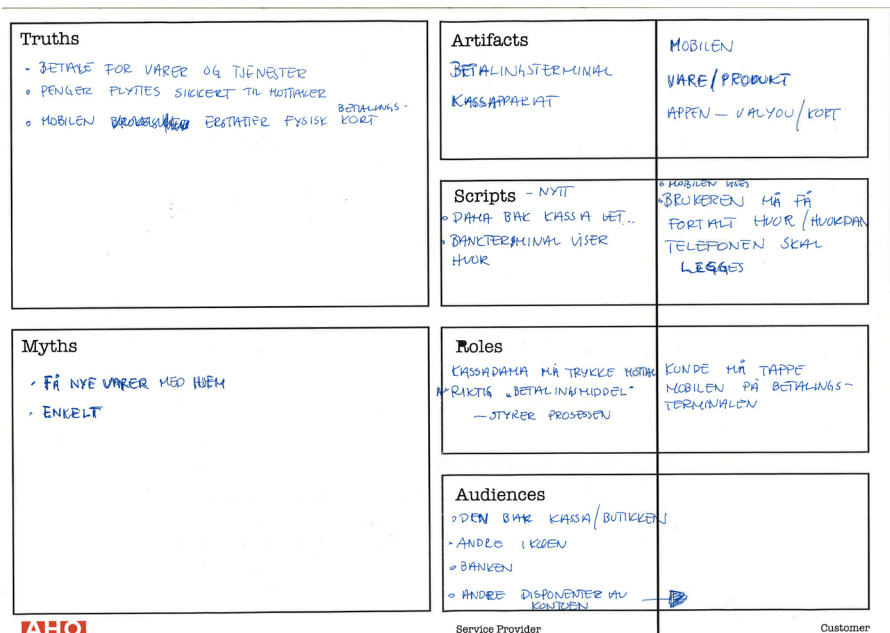


Diagram 5: A completed Ritual Actions Tool. The responses show that the fields on the right hand side were understood.

- *The fact rituals have prescribed sequences give NSD teams further structure to work with.*

Two respondents suggested that sequencing allowed for the designer to put things in the right order, especially with the Rites of Passage Tool where there was a clear beginning, middle and end to the 'journey'. During the workshop one group who chose to deconstruct a potential scenario of friends planning and going out to dinner constantly referred to what would be the right or socially acceptable sequence of events. This would suggest that during designing the concept offered the team boundaries to work within as well as offering insights in regards to what might be regarded as social norms. The filled out Rites of Passage Tool below shows it was used actively to deconstruct many touchpoints during the service journey of the dinner. Participants changed the titles from: Separation, Transition and Reincorporation to: Situation, Action, Confirmation. This shows that participants in this group appropriated the structure and added their own headings to help them with



the task. Where it is clear that these new headings do not have the same meaning as Separation, Transition and Reincorporation, it does seem however that the way the participants have filled out the fields capture in part some of the essence of how the tool might represent the theory. For example in the first row, which deconstructs one of the main discussion points had by the group, about one person deciding to pay the bill for all, we see that theory is utilized within this structure:

Situation: 'I think I will take the bill for the whole party'

Action: The mobile phone is shoved into an active payment field in the middle of the table. This was described as a new symbolic action for 'I'll take the bill'

Confirmation: A thumbs up or a nod from the waiter gives a performative communication as well as giving closure to the transaction.

*Bel. ritualer:*

Separation <b>SITUASJONEN</b>	Transition <b>HANDLING</b>	Reincorporation <b>BEKREFT- ELSEN</b>
"Jeg tar .. regningen (til selvsagt).	Skjuler mobilen til midten av bordet.	Tounden opp nikk - ok!
Hver enkelt betaler (til serveren)	Banker i bordet med mobilen på egen plass (på seg selv)	Bekreftelse fra serveren.
I butikken +++ "balg av betaling- møter"	Uvis "ringehånd" "mobilen" (sviper ---)	Bekreftelse
Universelt vel. symbol	(1) "Betalt" Tommel/ Penge-symbol. (2) 2 fingre "top i håndflaten" (transpriset).	Ok - —

**AHO**

Diagram 6: A filled out Rites of passage Tool. Participants have mapped 4 touchpoints and re-worded the heading to possibly help them understand what they mean.

- *If Rituals are to be designed they need to express the truth behind the myth being performed*

Responses did not shed any light on whether participants felt that designed rituals needed to connect to truth or myth as it would seem that participants did not fully understand the concepts or at least how to use them.

- *That ritual is primarily associated with religion and can act as a barrier for it being a useful tool*

Despite deliberate and repetitive attempts of the facilitator to discuss ritual as a secular phenomena, a number of respondents still were unable disassociate the term from religion. This appeared to make the material less easy to interact with as though it was somehow separate from the world they operated in. This may have also lead participants to rename these foreign concepts to allow them to use them.

## **DISCUSSION**

This paper introduces the concept of combining ritual theory with contemporary practice in service design with a specific focus on New Service Development. The results confirm that this is a promising direction. The tools combined with an explanation of the theory appear to offer new structures to time and perspectives on human behavior that could be rich material for service design.

Where service journeys allow service designers to plot a linear course through an experiential chain of touchpoints, ritual structures offer a multitude of layers for what might be described as an experiential mesh. These layers are the depositories of human emotions, values and behaviours accessed, expressed and then strengthened through the media of ritual. Ritual action on one level can reinforce and prompt recall of rituals on all, where one ritual action can connect the subject to a larger system of meaning. If this can be made to work within a service design setting the tools might be able to create total experiences that are able to connect human behavior to time structures. Structures within which customers can engage at any level of a service mesh and connect to the depository as a whole and in turn to the total experience. The tools do require development. At this stage they still require substantial explaining, their functionality inseparable from an individual with knowledge of ritual theory and service design to guide the process. The tools allowed for a degree of deconstruction of touchpoints, however there seems to be a missing 'next step' that guides participants to then begin a generative phase that could create new service touchpoints. What is also unknown is whether these touchpoints can be escalated to rituals that engage customers and potentially service staff more deeply. It might also be argued that the case study was not the best vehicle to test the tools. Where it did offer some concrete actions and artifacts, the service by its nature functions as a conduit for other services. Because of this its brand is not distinct and so did not offer the potential for designing ritual actions for an expression of any brand values, which was one of the perceived opportunities for this work. The other point of discussion is to whether the use of other terms of reference to the phenomena of ritual might demystify the content to make it easier to connect with for the 'uninitiated'.

## **FURTHER WORK**

This paper contributes to a larger body of work of the Norwegian Centre for Service Innovation. This is a collaboration between several research institutions and 5 of Norway's largest service providers including the partners for this paper, the postal service and 3 financial service providers. This grouping allows for further research, development and testing of the tools to take place within the context of practice. The following directions are currently being considered:

- For research to be developed in a residential setting within a New Service Development team. An immersive longitudinal study would offer the opportunity to test and further develop iterations over a protracted period of time. It would act as a way to measure the influence this work might have on service development beyond the limitations of a 3 hour workshop.
- For research to be directed toward a service within a company that has a clear connection to the company's own brand and values.
- For research to be undertaken with services that already deliver to a protracted time scale such as insurance where time perspectives can be as long as 'all-of-life'.
- A comparative study that delivers the same tools but with differing definitions to test the effect terminology has on the results.

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### **Publication 3**

Matthews, T. (2014). The experiential mesh: A new service development model for designing highly experiential services. In *Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Service Sciences Innovation* [CD-ROM]. 4-6 June. Taipei, Taiwan.

# **The Experiential Mesh: A New Service Development model for designing highly experiential services.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Rituals give structure to time, offering passageways to special experiences through contact with artifacts, shared performance and the narratives of myth. This description has resonance with definitions of Service Design, which is often referred to as the design of experiences that happen over time and across different touchpoints. The work presented here is part of an ongoing research project that aims to utilize knowledge of the sacred, ritual and myth such that it can be used in developing service experiences. Its underlying logic is that ritual structures offer new ways to design with time, the non-physical and in turn the orchestration of special experiences for customers.

The Experiential Mesh model is an operationalization of theory, mainly from social science, relating to ritual, myth and the sacred and its application to the design of services. This paper presents work still in development in the form of a second iteration of the model.

The model has been previously trialed at one of Norway's leading Telecom companies (Matthews 2013b) during which it was tested in what could be described as a purely functional setting. To develop the model further, an experiential service context was chosen. To this end, and as part of the collaboration between Oslo School of Architecture and Design and Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, a workshop was arranged over two days that would test the model in developing a new experiential service offering for the island of Si Chang in the gulf of Thailand. It is the results of this workshop that are presented here.

These results suggest that the developed model of the mesh, and its initial embodiment described, offers new structures and layers for generating coherent orchestrated tourist experiences. The implications of this for service design are discussed, and areas for further work identified.

**Keywords:** Service Design Tools, Ritual, Myth, Sacred, Operationalization

## **Paper Structure**

This paper will begin by briefly introducing Service Design with an overview of some of the more established service design tools. Here it will summarize utilized theory, mainly from social science relating to ritual, myth and the sacred and go on to exemplify this theory through the existing ritual of Christmas. At this point it will introduce the Experiential Mesh. The paper will then show how the model might be used to design an experiential service offering. From here it will introduce the workshop context and then describe briefly the workshop itself. Finally it draws conclusions from the outcomes with reflections for the model's further development and its potential implications for Service Design.

## **Contribution**

The paper contributes to practice by offering a new model that can be used in NSD which 'refers to the overall process of developing new service offerings' with service design specifying 'the detailed content and configuration of a service concept'

(Menor, Mohan et al. 2002:p.137). It contributes directly to the Norwegian Centre for Service Innovation, which this research is a part. To Service Design theory it prompts a discussion about the socio-cultural dimension of the service experience and of the broadening definition of touchpoints.

### **Introduction**

Service design is still an emerging field using much of the literature of service marketing and management as its reference point. Through this literature we see a picture of services described as intangible due to services often being unseen and non-material (Mittal 1999; Bebko 2000; Maffei, Mager et al. 2005; Tether 2008; Miettinen and Koivisto 2009), its temporality (Holmlid 2007; LiveWork 2008; Kimbell 2010), the influence of customer mood (Lovelock and Gummesson 2004; Vargo and Lusch 2004; Edvardsson, Gustafsson et al. 2005) and socio-cultural frame of reference on the outcome of the service experience (Maffei, Mager et al. 2005: p.7).

A broad social science view of the sacred, experienced, expressed and generated by and through ritual, myth and community we can see some complementary themes for service design (Matthews 2013a). The sacred is described by Durkheim (2008) as manifest in the symbolic as 'intangible substance', where time is an important factor, connected to social transition, understood through passageways (Van Gennep 1960) and reaffirmed in recurring cycles (Eliade 1961; Rook 1985; Graburn 2001). Rituals and Myth offer structures and symbolic narratives that help us to approach and to make substantive the intangible (Belk, Sherry et al. 1987) with out necessarily the need for physical evidence. The journey is not managed as such, but known through shared culturally understood structures that connect to deeply held values and meaning and can lead to extraordinary experiences (Matthews 2013). This theory will be presented in more detail below, however this theory appears to offer alternative structures and ways to construct service channels for delivering special experiences. At the core of Service Design is the 'Design for Experiences that reach people through touch-points, and that happen over time' (LiveWork 2008). At the core of the sacred are extraordinary and special experiences, where ritual is used as a 'strategy' to lift activity from the mundane (Bell 1992), offering sequential routes through time and passageways to deeply held emotion (Eliade 1961). Here, in this comparison there are themes worth exploring for the emerging field of service design

### **Service Design Tools**

Designing with time and the intangible, whilst taking account of the socio-cultural dimension, makes the task of the service designer not an easy one. Service design tools facilitate the design and orchestration of new services. Shostack's (1984) Service Blueprint is still a dominant tool for service design today (Bitner, Ostrom et al. 2008). Its structure and its concept of the touchpoint still has its focus on the efficiency of orchestration, designing, planning, performance and eventual management of service delivery and upon physical interactions. Although the definition of the term touchpoint has evolved over time, within service design it still shows this heritage and within this structure. This can be seen in Meroni and Sangiorgi's (2011) overview of other established, generative service design tools where the touchpoint is utilized: Visual service scripts, expressive service blueprints, service breakdown, system map show the same mechanisms; interaction at touchpoints in timelines. Where the expressive service blueprint concerns itself with the emotional response of the customer it does not concern itself with the orchestration of emotional response. The Multilevel Service Design (Patrício, Fisk et al. 2011) offers a model to map, manage and integrate service provision across

multiple service providers beyond the firms boundaries. It enhances the service experience by understanding the relational dimension between different service providers and in turn delivering a more coherent experience for the customer. All these tools are useful in structuring the service delivery during the design and planning phase of service development. What they don't do is consider the layers in which time is managed in our society, through cycles and meaningful passageways, they do not consider points of contact beyond the physical expressed currently in touchpoints, they do not explicitly integrate the broader socio-cultural context and many of its known, non-material yet understood expressions into the process.

Analysis tools such as the Cultural Probe or User Diary do indeed offer the service designer insights into the direct cultural context of the customer (Schneider, Stickdorn et al. 2010; Meroni and Sangiorgi 2011; Curedale 2013). Here the customer presents their worldview through both visual and/or written expression. These tools of data collection do not specifically require the user to investigate broader, culturally informed behavior or more importantly these behaviors in relationship to wider socio-cultural norms. The emotional map for example investigates the users emotional relationship to touchpoints as they move through a service experience, whether it be an existing service or a desired future (Meroni and Sangiorgi 2011; Curedale 2013). It is a useful tool to map emotional responses to a service stimulus, but does not specifically understand how this emotion may have been 'constructed' or informed by the socio-cultural meaning and values of the users. None of these tools are generative in their nature nor do they offer specific structures to utilize or orchestrate spoken, performed or other expressive culture in a systematic way, to place these forms of culture in a broader shared social context. In the design of new services, current tools for user-experience analysis do not offer systematic structures for the articulation of varied forms of cultural communication and expression. This work identifies the need to develop structures and tools that can add a social, cultural dimension to these existing terms, tools and method. There is a need for further work in this area, to develop tools and support for service design, such that it can contribute value by integrating such areas to NSD.

### **Ritual & Myth**

This section will introduce theory from mainly social science that has informed directly the development of the experiential mesh model.

Rituals are described by Turner as "a stereotyped sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place" (Turner 1961:p.36). They are social performances that both express but also reinforce deeply held emotions and meaning (Geertz 2000), whilst allowing us to connect to shared socially held values through community enactment (Durkheim 2008). They are passageways that connect us to a deeper emotional self, transcending temporality (Eliade 1961), potentially offering the opportunity to circumnavigate the fickle nature of mood to connect to deeper held values (Matthews 2013a). Shared ritual experiences have been known to move individuals to experience ecstatic, 'sacred' states, experiences described by Belk as 'Ecstatic', existential, 'joy', 'outside of self', 'peak experiences', like the 'enchantment' of 'love, hope, ambition, jealousy.' (Belk, Sherry et al. 1987: p.7-8).

On a macro level rituals act as rites of passage through the big social changes of life, such as coming of age, marriage, retirement etc. (Van Gennep 1960). Rook (1985) argues that it is the micro rituals surrounding these 'life-changing' rites that have the



most agency in terms of driving and experiencing these grander ritualized enactments. He uses the example of grooming rituals relating to girls coming of age in the US to illustrate this. Here it is the public and private micro rituals actions that connect and strengthen the overall experience of the rite.

Van Gennep suggests specific spaces that give structure to time: Separation, Transition and Reincorporation. Here the subject is disconnected and removed from their current social status, placed into a state of status ambiguity or 'liminality', then finally they are reincorporated into society with their new social identity.

But these sequences can also be observed not just within a linear time structure but also on a cyclical basis (Eliade 1961; Rook 1985; Graburn 2001). In this cyclical time seasonal highpoints come in their agreed sequence, Easter, summer solstice, Halloween, Christmas, etc. In many ways we want these cyclical rituals to be stable, to hark back and not to change, because when change does occur it can often create anxiety (Rook 1985). Indeed we dream of Christmas' just like the ones we used to know.

Finally Bell suggests that the strategy of 'ritualization' creates action that is 'designed and orchestrated to distinguish and privilege what is being done in comparison to other, usually more quotidian, activities'(1992:p.74). This is to say that the ritual action highlights certain activities to be special, to have meaning over and above the mundane.

It is difficult to talk of ritual without briefly discussing its connection to myth. One strengthens the other and vice versa (Eliade 1961). Through ritual myths are performed and given a 'physical' expression (Bell 1992). Campbell (2008) describes myths as truths that are given narratives when the truths that they express are too difficult to communicate. Meaningful truths mythologized for human consumption or even comprehension. This idea connects to Barthes (1973) interpretation of myths as metaphors for whole systems of values, understood through their communication, this finds synergy with an understanding of rituals in interconnected systems or meshes of meaning. Myths communicate forms of truth and meaning whilst rituals communicate these myths through performance. (Campbell 1995)

The power of myths in connecting to consumers values is not a foreign concept for many working in branding, where myths are actively utilized and developed (Holt 2004) and where brand devotees as in the case of some loyal Apple customer perform their devotion in rituals on many levels (Belk and Tumbat 2005; Matthews 2013a).

Ritual gives a performative expression to emotion, meaning, experiences, culture and myth. It gives structure to time, sequences to actions and structure to our year. This forms a mesh of related actions happening on macro and micro levels that we 'design and orchestrate' as Bell suggests, differentiating space, time and the artifact from the mundane. Rituals offer conduits to emotionally charged experiences. This paper introduces an early iteration of the Experiential Mesh. If this theory is transferable and operationalized into models for service design it offers exciting new structures and material for delivering special service experiences.

### **The interlinking of experiences in a ritual framework**

As a way to express and exemplify this theory in an existing socio-cultural construction, I will use it as a lens to deconstruct the Christmas ritual in Norway. This cyclical rite works in a sequential structure where each part can be broken down into

rites, ceremonies and ritual and where each part connects the participant to a central and culturally understood myth.

At the top cyclical level Christmas happens in a sequential relationship to other annual events. Christmas cannot happen at any other time, it cannot come after New Year celebrations so therefore we understand it in its relationship to other seasonal highpoints. From here we can break Christmas down into several rites (this is not an exhaustive list but meant as an example), Advent, Little Christmas Eve, Christmas Eve, 1<sup>st</sup> Christmas Day, Boxing Day, Yuletide Ram celebration between Christmas and New Year. Advent opening a passageway to the central Christmas celebration.

Each of these 'rites' can now be broken into a series of ceremonies. Christmas Eve is used as an example, which begins with performances relating to welcoming of guests. This is followed by Christmas dinner, then by singing and walking around the Christmas tree. Some gifts, which are placed below the tree, will then be opened. After this a family member or neighbour will dress as Santa and walk through the snow to deliver gifts to the children. These ceremonies can be broken down into their sequential ritual elements. If we take Christmas dinner, it starts with a toast followed by roast pork, this is usually followed by a roar of complements and another toast to the cook. The pork will be sent round one more time followed by rice pudding, after rice pudding there will be further toasting and perhaps another kind of cake is served. Further breakdown can be undertaken, in this case the rice pudding. Hidden in the rice pudding is an almond with the skin removed. The person who finds the almond 'wins' a marzipan pig. On finding the almond there is great cheering.

As at every level described the pervading mythology of Christmas can be accessed even at the lowest ritual level. It is these many smaller ritualistic elements and artifacts that connect us to the whole of the ritual as Rook describes and as Barthes suggests, it is through the myth we can connect to a whole system or mesh of meaning and value.

Due to a shared cultural understanding when a Norwegian sees a marzipan pig they understand and experience it in connection to the whole Christmas myth and through this 'tiny' touchpoint connect to the whole.

The Experiential Mesh operationalizes the theory and utilizes the structures described above to offer the service designer culturally understood, sequences of emotionally transforming zones to orchestrate service experiences. Using ritual structures, the mesh orchestrates and groups activity and touchpoints sequentially into ceremonial spaces which in turn are sequentially grouped into rites or zones, with the aim of constructing segues through an emotionally engaging and transformative service experience. This can be within a transformative, rite of passage structure or within a cyclical structure for orchestrating repeated service experiences. Touchpoints are understood not just as physical points of contact with the service but also as non-physical material points. The use of myth is applied as a thematic landscape or guide for the service experience. The myth could be a narrative or symbolic extension of the service brand or an embellishment of the service functionality. The myth is core to melding the parts into a coherent experience and giving cues to the action where the intention is to lift the whole experience from 'quotidian' activities to deliver extraordinary or special experiences.

To follow is an example of how it might be used to construct a new service for a purely experiential service offering in this case Virgin Galactic.

### The Experiential mesh in an NSD setting

This exercise was undertaken quickly to use as an example for participants in the workshop in Sichang and as such does not describe the detail and richness that the mesh potentially offers. This service experience was considered to be somewhat as a ‘rite of passage’ for the customer, where they would be transformed from ‘civilian’ to ‘astronaut’ rather than the cyclical ritual described above. Therefore the sequential passageway through this particular experiential mesh follows Van Gennep’s model of Separation, Liminality and Reincorporation, here described as Training, Mission and Debrief. The binding myth for the experience is ‘Journey into Space: from civilian to astronaut’ and what that means on a social transformation level to becoming an astronaut. It is structured in such a way to deliver the possibility of this experience to the customer. For this example ‘Training’ is broken down into sequenced ceremonies like inauguration, medical, training, graduation.

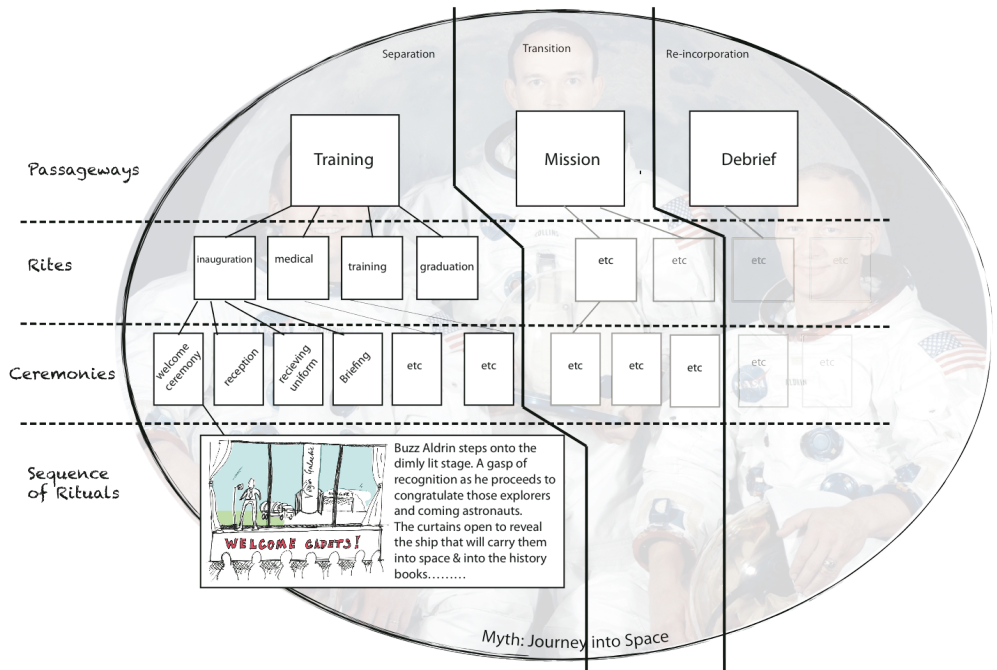


Figure 1: To boldly go where no service journey has gone before

To take ‘Inauguration’ this is broken down into the ceremonies; welcome, reception, receiving uniform to first briefing. The inauguration ceremony is then described with its actors, artifacts and the general dramaturgy of the event. All parts are informed by the myth.

The mesh gives the service designer a structure for constructing a customer journey that relates movement through time to necessary emotional transitions. It offers hierarchies and groupings that makes sequencing possible for this movement, creating a dramaturgy that relates to the reason of the rite of passage which is understood through the myth. In the example the myth is journey into space: from civilian to astronaut, Buzz Aldrin welcomes the customers not Darth Vader as this wouldn't fit with this myth though it might with another. All cues at each touchpoint in the mesh

whether they be physical or non-material should stay on myth and connect the customer to the whole experience.

### **Testing the Mesh for generating an Authentic Experiential Tourist Offering for the island of SiChang.**

Together with Chulalongkorn University a three-day service design workshop was organized. The aim of the workshop was to design an experiential tourist offering that would orchestrate existing physical and non-physical cultural material combined with newly designed cultural products into a service that expressed a sense of the 'authentic' of the island. This would be constructed within a myth that related to the narratives of the island. Bundit (2005) describes one of the narratives about SiChang is the myth of longevity and good health for those living on and visiting the island. This was therefore chosen as the encompassing myth of a new tourist offering.

In examining authenticity and commodification in tourism Cohen (1988) cites Hobsbawn (1983) to suggest 'authentic' cultural experiences can be invented stating:

'New cultural developments may also acquire the patina of authenticity over time - a process designated at "emergent authenticity." It is also argued that commoditization does not necessarily destroy the meaning of cultural products, although it may change it or add new meanings to old ones.' (Cohen 1988:p371)

Here the authentic is negotiable and relative to the cultural perspective of the tourist distinctive to their perception of what is locally traditional. Cohen also argues that the commodification of culture through tourism does not necessarily diminish its meaning and value to the local population and refers to cultural product as both the physical as in souvenirs but also the non-physical as in staged performances. However relating this to theory presented earlier in this paper it could be argued that the authentic is a relative understanding of the perceived truth of the local culture and within the mesh a truth that is expressed through the metaphor of myth.

### **Workshop description**

The workshop was made up of predominantly 4<sup>th</sup> Year BA industrial design students, but joined by landscape and architecture students; around 40 students divided into 6 groups. The workshop took place between Friday 6<sup>th</sup> Sept and Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> Sept 2013.

It began with contextual presentations, which introduced service design and the theory relating to sacred, ritual and myth. The experiential mesh tool was described using Virgin Galactic as an example. The design brief was introduced: Students would develop a new experiential tourist offering for the island. They must use the Mesh model as the structure for orchestrating the service to be presented on the last day.

The workshop began with an exercise in mapping shared Thai rituals that were perceived to assist good health and long life. From here the rest of the workshop consisted mainly of gaining insights through fact-finding excursions, lectures from academic and local experts, along with interviews with locals. This was interspersed with blocks where students were obliged to return to the workshop venue to develop concepts to test further. Students were directed to make note of unique, perceived authentic and traditional touchpoints on the island. These touchpoints were to be understood not just as physical points but also as non-physical such as stories, rituals, myths or other cultural expressions. The students used the Experiential Mesh model structure to compose the service experience by considering how all the elements

related to the myth and by orchestrating touchpoints into sequences like ceremonies and then these ceremonies further into sequences of rites.

### **Assessing the Experiential Mesh in this context**

An analytical framework was devised to evaluate the designed solutions. It was used to assess whether the concepts developed by the students demonstrated the elements listed below and in doing so enabled the orchestration of a coherent, multilayered tourist offering for the experiential tourist. In this way it assess the results of using the tool not the tool directly.

Did the tool appear to enable participants to:

1. Connect the orchestrated touchpoints to the core myth of Longevity & Good Health, as described earlier in the case of Christmas?
2. Make special or sacralize elements of interaction whether this be through non-physical or physical touchpoints?
3. Express some form of authenticity in relationship to the perceived truth of the island, whether this be 'emergent authenticity' or an older 'cultural product'?
4. Are the smaller touchpoints orchestrated such that they contribute to the larger transitional movement such as ceremonies to offer segues through the service experience?

### **Results and evaluation**

It was clear from the final presentation of the work the students produced that not all the groups connected to the theory or to the structure of the model. This was especially apparent for those groups that had a predominance of non-design students. However half of the concepts demonstrated the promise of the model as a framework for the development of a coherent multilayered service experience. All three managed to orchestrate physical and non-physical touchpoints in relationship to the myth of the island, creating an overall experience that carried a sense of the authentic of the island. All three created zones to enable a breakdown of the service experience.

Arguably the best concept to be presented was the 'Fisherman's Village' which demonstrated the promise of the Experiential Mesh in this context. The Fisherman's village used the metaphor of a simple fisherman's life as a narrative to carry the myth of longevity and good health. The concept orchestrated a holistic service offering for newly weds as part of a honeymoon, but also for older married couples who wanted to renew their relationship. Through a series of subtle service ceremonies the couples expressed their feelings through a strong metaphorical narratives that connected strongly to the myth throughout the service experience. The concept demonstrated well all four criteria presented in the analytical framework. Through the fisherman metaphor and the carefully orchestrated touchpoints the service offered a sense of the myth through the whole service experience. Again the metaphor created a whole narrative that the service manages to stay within offering physical touchpoints, such as a special local coconut drink and non-physical such as a binding love ceremony. Also through the constructed metaphor and the connection to specific local cultural expressions such as food and local massage techniques the service had a sense of the authentic. The service offered many ceremonial zones and ritual spaces that offered coherent segues through the customer experience. From welcome ceremonies to the island with its many smaller rituals of special drinks and flowers through to diving to

leave messages of love on the seabed, to finally ‘A happy ending’ ceremonies where names are carved on rocks for posterity.

### **Conclusion**

Using the Experiential mesh, inexperienced students were able to orchestrate a service offering that created the potential for layered and ‘zonal’ journey through a rich customer experience. As to whether these concepts could have been developed by existing NSD tools cannot be known, however the results suggest that the model has potential for NSD in an experiential tourist setting.

### **Discussion for further work**

This work raises several questions both in regards to the further development of the Experiential Mesh model but also for service design in general.

The tool works well in the purely experiential setting of tourism and further work is currently pursuing this potential. However it is in the context of functional services that the mesh could be argueably most exciting. Introducing myths, rituals and the sacred to service design could promote functional services to becoming more experiential, where the ritualised element might somehow ‘embellish’ the functionality to lift these services from their ‘quotidian’ function. This potential was seen in earlier trials (Matthews 2013b) but this needs to be further developed with far more robust testing and over a longer period of time.

As such the model was used by inexperienced designers and further research must investigate to what extent the tool is simple to understand and easy to apply so as to support co-design processes in NSD.

In this workshop the core myth was decided by the author, albeit based on information and narratives from the island. Further work should investigate how one can more systematically aggregate such a myth and how this could be done in an open process.

Much of current service design is based upon blueprints, customer journeys, and the orchestration of touchpoints within, but these concepts focus greatly on the tangible functionality of the service. In the service blueprint described by Bitner, Ostrom et al. (2008) the customer and employee actions are considered, but these still address the functional element of, in this case, booking into a hotel. What it doesn’t do however, is speak of those actions that are non-functional, communications of inner emotional needs, maybe rituals or interactions that have an everyday ritualized form. Many have micro rituals on arriving in hotel rooms that offer transitional passageways that allow us to take ownership of the room, these forms of needs are not addressed in the current blueprint model. Nor does the Blueprint offer a dramaturgy that can enable a sense of emotional movement through the service experience.

If we are to design emotionally engaging services, even if at their heart they are functional in their nature, the basic foundations of how we orchestrate and what we orchestrate might need revising. Further work will investigate whether the mesh could offer a whole new structure to replace the blueprint or customer journey approach, or does it, as suspected by this author offer additional layers during service development? These layers potentially offering the service designer sequential zones as segues through a service experience, within which touchpoints can in turn be managed in appropriate sequential patterns, where the emphasis is not on the management for ease of delivery, but orchestration for emotional engagement.

Bitner et al (2008) describe touchpoints as 'Physical evidence'. This work raises questions about whether we need to expand the definition of the term touchpoint term to include the non-physical, yet tangible such as stories, traditions or indeed rituals. These are the kinds of elements that Durkheim refers to in part as 'Intangible substance' (2008). This non-physical cultural material is currently not being explicitly utilized as design material in services development. This workshop showed that these kinds of touchpoints can be utilized as materials to great affect, building a coherent experiential offering. Therefore further work will investigate the usefulness of expanding the term 'touchpoint' or whether it is in fact more practical for the service designer to introduce a further term, that considers the non-physical as a separate design component.

Finally further work is currently being undertaken to develop appropriate tools that allow the mesh structure to be 'filled out' more systematically with appropriate content beyond it being the guide that it is in its current form. These tools will look towards ways to map, aggregate and understand the broader cultural setting in which the service is being designed, incorporating myths and ritual into this process.

If we accept that culture is an essential element in the design of services, can the mesh offer ways for service designers to capture and orchestrate more culturally engaging services for consumers that connect to emotion, meaning and value?

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#### **Publication 4**

Matthews, T. (2016) *Introducing graphic experiential evidencing (GEE)*.  
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# Introducing Graphic Experiential Evidencing (GEE).

How can the use of graphic novel fill a gap in the service design toolkit for communicating experience and emotion?

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## Abstract

With an increasing focus on experience-centric services, where deeper customer connection is to be achieved by heightened dramaturgy and emotional engagement, service design must ensure it has tools that can model and communicate these experiences during service development.

Existing methods of visualizing services such as the Service Blueprint, whilst good for modeling the structure of experience delivery, do not convey the richness of the experiences itself.

Graphic Experiential Evidencing (GEE) has been developed through a process of research by design during a design intervention for the improvement of stadium football experience, when existing service design visualization tools were found lacking for the communicating of the designed experience to stakeholders.

This paper describes work in progress that adapts the graphic novel as a way to aid in the conveying of desired 'on brand' experience and desired emotional response in context.

Interviews with those involved in the project as well as other service designers suggest that using GEE in combination with existing service design tools offers great promise. Results show that the technique gives the service designer new ways to deliver an experience sample and communicate projected experiences and emotion to clients during the development of new services.

**Keywords:** *Service Design, Visualization, Graphic Novel, Experience, Evidencing.*

## Introduction

Suri (2004) quotes Moggeridge's well-known tautology 'The only way to experience an experience is by experiencing it'. She uses it as a way to underline the need for designers to use their visual skills and design tools not just as a way to convey insights and findings but in a fuller more experiential way for 'Developing common vision.....Creating richer representation.' (Suri, 2004, p. 16)

If Service Design is the design of experience (LiveWork, 2008) then we need to ensure that we have tools that can develop a common vision of the desired experience rather than just that of the system of delivery. Whilst companies are increasingly putting customer experience at the core of their service offerings (Haeckel, Carbone, & Berry, 2003; Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Voss, Roth, & Chase, 2008), the real power of design is making the experience more tangible during the design process itself (Suri, 2004).

Service designers use visualization during all stages of the service design process. This paper focuses on the generative phase. This paper is authored by the service designer who developed the technique.

## Paper Structure

The paper opens with an overview of service design visualization, showing a gap in the disciplines 'toolkit' and briefly introduces the use of cartoons and the emotional response to the drawn image. It describes the context of GEE's introduction, insight into the technique and some examples. Then described is the method and the framework of analysis. The paper closes with a discussion and further work followed a conclusion.

## Background

Service designers use visualization to make services more tangible (Kimbell, 2009; Segelström & Holmlid, 2011) and easier to communicate (Segelström, 2009), using such tools at the start of the process to visualize the existing service and to quickly sketch potential improvements and new artifacts.

The two main visualization tools for service modeling; Customer Journey Map and the Service Blueprint does not express detailed experiential outcome from interaction with the service (Won, Ko, Im, & Park, 2013), rather visualizing the structure of the service. The Service Experience Blueprint attempts to manage the experience across multi-interfaces (Patrício, Fisk, & e Cunha, 2008) but again is not intended to detail the experience itself. More recent work by Halvorsrud, Lee, Haugstveit & Følstad (2014) attempts to find a common language for communicating touchpoints within the customer journey modeling tradition.

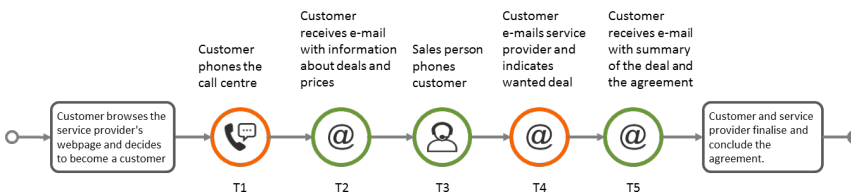


Figure 1: (Halvorsrud et al., 2014)

Where this offers a standardized language of communication it does not address any deep contextual or emotional experience of the service moment.

Clatworthy, Fjuk, Kvale, & Matthews (2015) bring more expression to customers emotional response to touchpoints in the customer journey, beyond the happy-sad dichotomy to introduce precise mood words to describe the experience. What this work lacks however is the experiential detail of the service moment alluded to by Won et al (2013).

The use of storyboard is common across many fields of design (Curedale, 2013; Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011). Adapted from the film industry (Curedale, 2013; Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011; Segelström, 2010) the storyboard acts as a script and like the customer journey shows the flow of the action over time, however in a pictorial fashion. It puts focus on the interactions and touch points. The storyboard can express more detail than the customer journey, communicating the style of the service as well as bring focus to specific touchpoints and elements in context (Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011). The storyboard can be constructed in many media from simple sketches, to photomontage to other realistic visual representations (Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011; Tassi, 2009). This may offer a glimpse of the experience, however it can be argued that the storyboard in many of its manifestations does not have the primary aim to affect the viewer emotionally.

Evidencing as a service design technique can also offer some contextual detailing that can deliver to an extent a richer representation of a proposed service experience than the tools discussed so far. The technique warrants further attention from the academic community, though it is briefly alluded to by Kimbel (2009) and Suri (2004) if not mentioned directly. With much of the discussion taking place in the design blogosphere it is often

used as Kimbell (2009) suggest as a way to describe the reaction to the introduction to a new service. However as Clatworthy (2008) shows when discussing his work with LiveWork, evidencing is used to give a sense of the experience of touchpoints in use. It does this by mocking up touchpoints and placing them in context. In this way it is able to include 'branding elements, design elements, interaction elements and behavioural elements' (Clatworthy, 2008). What evidencing in general doesn't expand on is the dramaturgy of the experience or a projected emotional response.

Though not visualization, other forms of service prototyping include service run-throughs and re-enactment. But as Blomkvist and Holmlid (2010) suggest that these forms techniques can lack authenticity. Furthermore due to the performative nature of service enactments, like the services they represent, they 'cannot be stored' (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1985, p. 34) which makes them difficult to convey to those not present during the actual role-play.

Table 1. Summary of Service Design visualisation and modelling tools

Tool	What it is	Technique employed
Customer Journey	A modeling tool that visualizes time and the points of contact the customer has with the service provider at different touchpoints plotted chronologically along a line. Used for mapping existing services and for developing and communicating new ones.	Visualized as a two dimensional piece. Predominantly using symbols to denote touchpoints. Can include a customer emotion curve.
Service Blueprint	A modeling tool that visualizes the management of the service experience over time. It incorporates elements such as touchpoints but also front and back office staff roles. Used for orchestrating elements of new services.	Visualized as a two dimensional piece showing the layers of people, space and technology management
Emotion Cards	A pack of 12 double sided cards with positive emotional states on one side and the opposite emotion on the back. Used for understanding existing and projected customer emotions.	Printed on cards they are placed on the customer journey at specific touchpoints to express emotional responses.
Story Board	A modeling tool that shows the flow of the action over time in a pictorial fashion. It puts focus on the interactions and touchpoints in context	A two dimensional piece using photomontage and drawings
Evidencing	A tool that visualizes how the service might be or the response to the service if delivered.	Often a photograph incorporating elements or responses to the service, it might also be a mock up of a digital touchpoint
Service enactment	Not strictly visualization but an enactment of the proposed service to give a direct experience even if it is as such a sketch	Acting using makeshift props for touchpoints.

## Using Cartoons

Clatworthy (2013) blogs that cartoons are currently being used as part of the visualization tool kit of service design to communicate service concepts as a way to communicate usage and to give guidance. He goes on to raise the point that the way product designers have drawn prototypes, especially concept cars, do it in such a way to caricature products to make them look more desirable. What the renderer does is 'simplify the reality of the object and turn up on the desire of the object itself' (Clatworthy, 2013).

The definitive description of the use, construction and power of the cartoon media can be found in McCloud's book 'Understanding comics' from 1993. McCloud highlights the difficulty of a definitive definition of the nature of the comic or graphic novel but lands for ease of use on 'Sequential Art' after Will Eisner. However what McCloud points out, is that one of the skill of the graphic artist is to communicate with minimum elements and through the power of the drawings. This moves the technique beyond a reliance on a storyboard approach to communicate the narrative but to expressing the same through as few panels as possible. McCloud also argues that the graphic novel form achieves amplification of meaning through the simplification of the image. Here the medium allows us to focus our attention on the idea and through stripping down, deliver a form of intensity in a similar argument to Clatworthy. As part of the same argument McCloud then shows that this visual stripping down in expressing the experience of the protagonist in any story actually 'allows the reader to mask themselves in a character and safely enter a sensually stimulating world' (McCloud, 1993, p. 43). In this way the

viewer can 'be' more than just 'see'.

This leads to the question of how a similar or relatedly appropriate technique might offer renderings of service moments that 'turn up' a sense of the experience and emotional, for the viewer to 'feel' the experience more. This is reinforced when we consider the neuroesthetics based argument of Freedberg and Gallese (2007), that suggests that the 'power of images' generate feelings of emotion and empathy that deliver 'a sense of inward imitation' (Freedberg & Gallese, 2007, p. 197) from the viewer, a mirroring of the emotion expressed in the image.

## Context

Graphic Experiential Evidencing (GEE) was developed as a way to express experiences, in some cases the emotional response, the atmosphere of the service moment and when appropriate including touchpoints, as part of the project 'Alt for Norge'. A collaboration between the Oslo School of Architecture and Design and the Norwegian Football Association. As part of the process it utilized many of the standard service design visualization tools mentioned above as ways to capture customer journeys and to convey insights from fans, stakeholders and designers. However when it came to the conveying the experience of meaningful service moments to decision makers, stakeholders and staff who were not directly involved in the project development, current visualization tools seemed lacking in representing the richness of the experience. To this end experiments using graphic novel were done to help in this communication where they were used in combination with these tools.

## The Technique

The technique became a negotiation between the vision of the service designer and that of the cartoonist. The style of the work was additionally informed by the organizations new brand values and esthetic.

This negotiation followed the following structure:

1. Understanding the service landscape and experiential goals
2. Sketching with the brand esthetics
3. Scripting by the service designer for the cartoonist
4. Preliminary sketching
5. Adjustment with further scripting
6. Final detailing and finished drawing

### 1. Understanding the service landscape and experiential goals

Time was taken at the start of the process between the service designer and the cartoonist to understand the goals of the project, the dramaturgy of the service journey and the experience that was being designed for. Comparative experiences were used to give a sense of the tone that was being looked for. These were things such as National day celebrations, being called up to serve your country, emotive scenes in films.

The service journey was divided into a series of situated meaningful service moments. The cartoonist's task was to visualize these moments. There was some discussion about whether they would be individual panels or multiple panels for story telling also whether there should be speech bubbles or discourse boxes. However these issues were solved as the process went along, responding to the need of the visualization.

### 2. Sketching with the brand esthetics

Test visualizations were created to interpret the brand style into that of a graphic novel style. The brand values are Ferocity, Solidarity and Pride. Within the graphic novel genre the ferocity value was easiest to portray eventually settling on a style with a Frank Miller feel, which could be described as dark, robust and moody.

Pride and solidarity values could be expressed more easily through that which was being visualized.

### 3. Scripting by the service designer for the cartoonist

Service moments descriptions were sent to the cartoonist, including their purpose, the type of experience being designed for, touchpoints being shown. It was discovered that this was best achieved when written as a short piece of dramatized fiction.

### 4. Preliminary sketching

From here the cartoonist offered a sketch of the service moment. Here a negotiation took place between the service designer and the cartoonist about which elements functioned in regards to the service designer's vision, what needed to be conveyed and which elements should be adjusted.

### 5. Final detailing and finish

Agreed adjustments were then made and final cartoon delivered in digital form.

## The Images

In all 13 visualization panels were created. Some were loosely sequential while others were single panels. Some drawings included several panels that are not sequential, but attempted to show several elements of the same moment.

To follow are four examples of the artwork produced. These were shown to the informants, whose response forms the basis of evaluation later.

Figure 2. Call to adventure. This image intends to express the emotion and experience of the re-designed pre-match press conference. It shows the team manager in action where the focus is more on 'a call to adventure' rather than game facts and statistics. This is a non-sequential single panel.

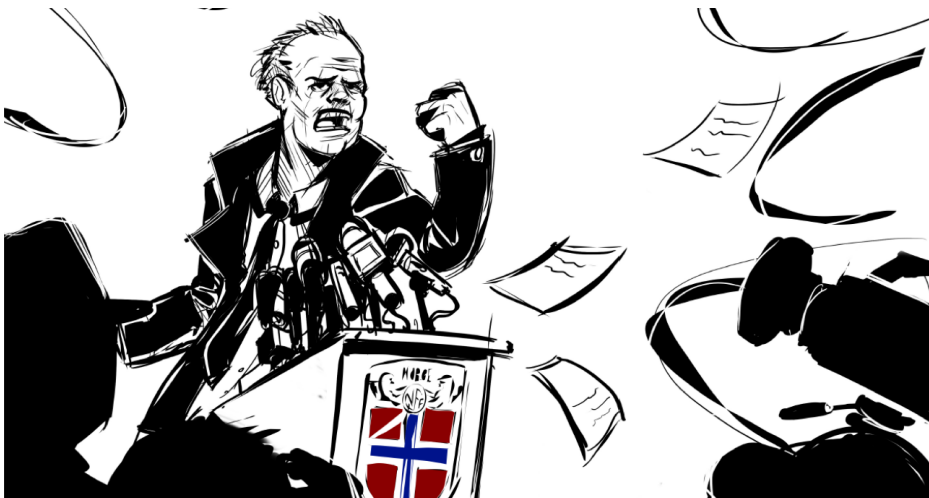


Figure 2: The call to Adventure. Illustration Syver Lauritzen.

Figure 3. Call up of players. This image focuses on the experience and emotion generated in a redesign of player call-up. Previously players were contacted through phone or email and the service designer envisaged a scenario where the experience for the player could be heightened by the inclusion of a 'call-up ritual'. This would include a befittingly solemn correspondence, a box and a shirt that would carry the message 'ja vi elsker' ('Yes we love' which is the first line of the Norwegian national anthem) hidden on the inside of the shirt. Here

there is no chronological sequence, but 3 panels that show different aspects of the moment at once. It shows the touchpoints of the box and letter opened and players determined look as he understands his destiny.



Figure 3: The call up. Illustration Syver Lauritzen.

Figure 4: The Arrival, is chronologically sequential. It shows fans arriving at the national stadium train station, approaching and then arriving at the corner of the stadium. These panels try to express the celebratory and inclusive feel of arriving to watch a national game. It attempts to convey the sense of spectacle and occasion



Figure 4: The Arrival. Illustration Syver Lauritzen.



Figure 5. Music Together. This image visualizes 3 moments happening simultaneously at different places. It tries to depict the sense of 'solidarity' when all are listening to the same uplifting music wherever they might be.



Figure 5: Music Together. Note: Both the cartoonist (holding 'ja' glass) and this papers author (holding 'elsker' glass) are visualized in the bottom panel. Illustration Syver Lauritzen.

# Method

Data for this paper was collected through semi-structured interviews from 9 informants:

- 2 informants had been involved with the broader project of football. As designers they were engaged in the branding exercise though not directly involved in the service design part of the project and therefore had no input in the process described here.
- 1 informant was directly involved in the project and represents the football association. Though not directly involved in the development of GEE, they did have input into the forming of some of the images
- 4 informants are practicing service designers.
- 1 informant comes from practice but currently works as a lecturer within the institution where the writer of this paper is associated.
- 1 informant currently works as a lecturer but also as a researcher within service design and practice. Both positioned within the institution where the writer of this paper is associated.

This mix of informants were chosen as they offered:

- An internal design view without being directly involved
- A stakeholder view that could offer insights into how the drawings were used
- An external view from service designers in practice
- An educators view
- A researchers view

Interviews were undertaken face-to-face with one performed via skype. All interviews were conducted by the author. Most interviews were conducted with a single interviewee, however in one case two persons were interviewed at the same time. 5 interviews took place in English the others in Norwegian.

The interviews were conducted between 18<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> January 2016, with the majority taking place at the interviewees' workplaces.

The interviews for the informants who had no prior knowledge of the process opened with a presentation of the GEE images represented in this paper. They were presented together with the customer journey, with some images of how the service was before and with some standard photographic mock-ups/evidencing. This was done to give context and this also represented how the images had been used during the project when communicating concepts to stakeholders.

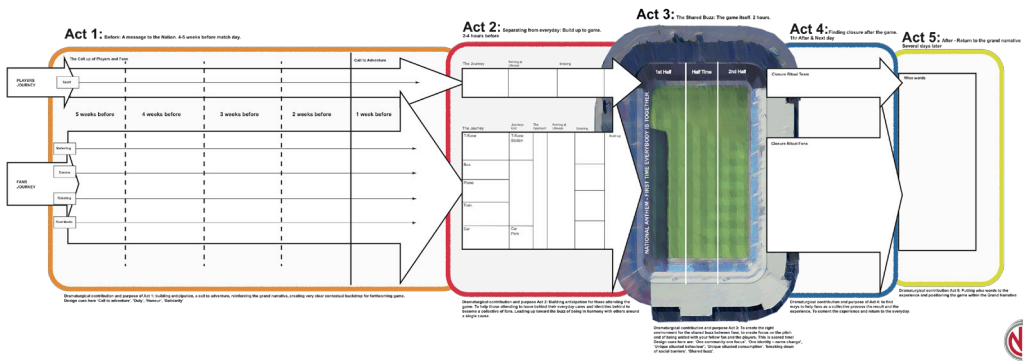


Figure 6: Customer journey also presented to informants. Visualization: Ted Matthews



Figure 7: Stadium mock up also presented to informants. Visualization: Ted Matthews

Interviews began with an open question that asked the informants their thoughts on the technique through viewing the images, in the context of service design and its current toolkit. Further questions related to the processes usefulness, usability and originality

When this information was not forthcoming further questions probed what they felt the images tried to express.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

These transcriptions were analyzed through a framework based on the theory presented above. This is represented by 2 statements, each with a pair of related research questions that put focus on the GEE model and its relationship to the theory

1. The graphic novel form has the power to affect the viewer emotionally and to project the experience of the scene represented.
  - a. To what extent does GEE fulfill its intention of expressing and communicating more richly the experience and emotion to viewers?
  - b. To what extent did the images managed to project the brand values and could the projected experience be experienced through experiencing the images?
2. There is a gap in the service design toolkit for more expressive visual techniques for communicating the projected experience and emotion of designed service moments.
  - a. To what extent is GEE an innovation in process? (Given that the need of the project and the perceived lack of an appropriate tool in service design lead to its development)
  - b. How useful does GEE seem for service design practice?

## Results

1.a To what extent does GEE fulfill its intention of expressing and communicating more richly the experience and emotion to viewers.

All informants' felt GEE was a good way to show both experience and emotion. This was expressed on general terms. However some went into detail, suggesting that the images managed to project an attitude, with others describing the images as powerful and with the potential to put across meaningful situations. It was uncovered that the images had been used by all the informants involved in the project for communicating the service experience to stakeholders to explain the experience being designed for. This was primarily for decision makers but the images were also used as experiential references for actors involved in delivering the service. For example the team manager was shown Figure 2, Call to adventure, to explain the perceived new experience tonality. These informants described an 'Aha!' moment when the images were viewed, suggesting that they revealed something to the viewer. The cartoons however had been used in combination with other service

design visualizations, such as customer journeys and mock-ups. They were also used with images from how the service currently is delivered and the contrast with these images they suggested have an additional effect. This was confirmed when informants from outside the project having been presented the drawings in this same way, felt they were more efficacious when used in combination with other contextualizing images and visualizations.

Where it was felt that the drawings communicated both experience and emotion, a couple of informants reported that some of the images themselves didn't hit the mark, either in terms of not conveying the desired feeling exactly of the scene portrayed or that the images had 'gone too far' and were over-the-top. In regards to the last point the informant suggested that this might be down to personal taste, however they did feel that image might be too aggressive pushing the brand values to the limit.

'Call to adventure', however seemed to 'work' for most of the informants and often was referred back to as most successful in conveying the experience. This could be down to the image having a single impact instead of having several panels that have to be 'read' to get the meaning; therefore the experience could be gleaned at once. But referencing back to McCloud it is in stripping down, that the cartoonist delivers the desired intensity and the 'Call to Adventure' is the most stripped down image in terms of number of panels and content.

1.b To what extent did the images managed to project the brand and could the projected experience be experienced through experiencing the images.

A number of informants expressed that they felt the experience from looking at the images (this specifically differing from feeling that the images communicated the desired emotion and experience well). Some of these perceived experiences were mixed with a sense of the brand values expressed through the aesthetics. The brand values were not revealed to the informants who were outside the project, however several suggested they felt the images were macho, edgy, tough and 'angry'. These descriptions match with the brand element 'Ferocity'. Others then suggested that images such as 'The Arrival', instilled feelings of 'patriotism' and in another case 'pride' and 'togetherness'. This matched with the brand elements "Solidarity" and 'pride'.

The informant working with football felt that the sport had a long association with comic strips making the media ideal for this context. In addition to this point another informant felt that the current popularity of comics made the images more readable for a larger audience.

Insight: This feedback shows that the graphic novel form operationalized for service design through GEE does convey experience and emotion whilst communicating the brand. For some viewing the images did give them an experience of the experience. The single image appears to be the most successful in conveying these elements but to what extent this is due to its style and execution rather than its non-chronological nature isn't known.

2.a To what extent is GEE an innovation in process?

Using OECD's definition we understand innovation in process to mean:

'The implementation of a new or significantly improved production or delivery method. This includes significant changes in techniques, equipment and/or software.'

Most of the informants had seen the use of cartoons as part of the service design process. This has been mainly observed in the simple communication of the service flow and interaction sometimes in customer journeys, sometimes in storyboards. These cartoons were often little more than stick figures describing interactions. Cartoons are also used by service designers as a way to facilitate conversation with clients. These images then often remain in the process after this point as the customer gets to know them. None of the informants had seen cartoons used in this particular way or so 'expressive'. One informant felt that GEE represented an 'upgraded component' of the service design toolkit, where service design outsourced elements of the process to better skilled individuals. Others expressed that the technique had an advantage over media that convey the experience over time, like film or storyboarding, as it could communicate things happening simultaneously. It therefore allowed the viewer to take great leaps of context, that through a single panel it was

possible to get the feel, meaning and experience of a key moment or meaningful situation. For a number of informants the image that used a single panel was the greatest departure from what they had seen before. Where a single composition through the expressive construction of the graphic artist was able to put across 'big ideas' and that through the cartoon form could take away elements that could distract the viewer from the 'meaning' of the designed moment.

## 2.b How useful does GEE seem for service design practice?

Beyond many of the respondents expressing loosely that they could imagine using the technique in their work others expanded on this theme. The informant who worked within the football association explained how the images took, the at times complex and near academic concepts and made them accessible for others. That they made less 'dangerous' and approachable. This informant went on to say they would need more as part of the on going work. Some expressed that getting the feeling and focus right using photos and mock ups would be very difficult and that such techniques can sometime feel fake and inauthentic. For these informants GEE as executed in this project gave focus to the elements that mattered, to the meaning, to the experience and emotion as you are allowed yourself to fill in the blanks.

Several informants said that they would start using the technique in their own work and that others who had seen the work were looking to source cartoonists who could carry out similar assignments.

Some informants were concerned that the technique might represent increased costs that would be difficult to justify to clients. This view is tempered however by one informant who felt the technique could be used instead of and more effectively than expensive mock-ups.

Insight: As GEE does represent an innovation in process for service design it shows that there is a gap in the field for such a technique. The level of this innovation is not fully know and where it might not be revolutionary it appears to offer a fine tuning of existing techniques for generating experience samples. Adoption shows perceived usefulness. GEE also offers a real alternative to other tools such as the mockup for conveying experience and has an advantage over time base media, where the graphic novel can show simultaneous events in different contexts.

## Discussion and Further Work

In general this data reveals a level of agreement between those who experienced GEE in use and those who were presented the outcomes, relating to the usefulness of the technique, its ability to communicate experience and emotion, its originality and as a useful tool in combination with others.

For a further insight it would be useful to collect data from those who received the presentation within the football association so getting a sense of how the images made the intended audience feel, rather than relying on designers who through their profession might have heightened susceptibility to 'feel' the projected experience.

Those outside the project were presented the drawings in the same way they were used in the project to replicate how they were used in practice. It would be interesting in further research to use two groups, one that viewed the drawings in context and the other that just viewed the images alone. This would help conclude if the drawings really do need the other tools to support their understanding.

Much of the feedback suggested that the single panel illustration worked best in conveying the 'feel', 'meaning', 'tone', 'emotion', 'big story' of the service moment. As has been mentioned this could be down to being able to understand the meaning and experience in a single panel. But as it was raised by one informant that their response to the actual execution of the image affected their evaluation, it could be the case with the single panel that this one just happened to be 'well drawn' for purpose. Here more research should be done where different styles and single or a series of panels could communicate the same service moment. With a test group this could give more insight into what works best.

Several of the designers picked up on the brand values experienced through the images. In addition it was suggested that the graphic novel style lends itself to football due to a tradition of cartoons and soccer in children's comics, i.e. Roy of the Rovers. Therefore further work is currently underway to try the technique in the service context of banking and whilst trying to reflect the brands values.

Cost was raised as an issue and the author can confirm that some images took up to eight hours to produce. However dependent on the client, type service and the potential of saving on producing other types of mock-ups the cost might be justifiable given that the technique shows advantage over other forms of experience communication.

Reflecting on the collaboration with the cartoonist, it was key to use enough time at the start to go through as much of the context as possible so they could really understand what the project was about. Also it became clear that trusting in the cartoonists own vision and skill lead to unexpected, yet superior solutions than the service designer could have envisaged. These aleatory responses in turn informed the further development of the final service design solution.

This study suggests originality and a level of innovation for GEE as a new tool within the context of Service Design. One informant used the word 'Upgrade' to describe the technique, but this was when comparing it to storyboarding. However the image that moved furthest away from sequential communication seemed to have the greatest impact and seen as the greatest innovation in conveying many elements of the service moment in a new way. The further tests mentioned above should uncover the level of 'significant change' that OECD alludes to.

## **Conclusion**

Introducing tools of this nature has implication for the way that service design now develops over the next few years. This study shows that there are gaps in the current service design toolkit and there is much potential for the field to find more expressive ways to deliver an experience sample to others.

Graphic Experiential Evidencing does offer an expansion of the current visualization methods to detail the dramaturgy of the experience and desired emotional response for designed service moments. How radical an expansion is still not known.

In combination with existing service design visualization techniques, GEE communicates well the desired experience to audiences of stakeholders. Referencing to Suri, the technique does indeed create a common vision and richer representation, making the experience more tangible during the design process itself.

GEE also has great potential as a replacement or supplement to service scripts, where actors get to 'feel' their role rather than be told it.

More research needs to be undertaken to understand further how the process might be developed and improved for repeatable, on target results across different kinds of services and in different brand styles. This research might show to what extent an experience might be experienced through this form of visual media.

It is hoped that this paper could encourage further research on how service design might expand its toolkit to encourage the design of increasingly experiential service offerings.

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## **Publication 5**

Matthews, T. (2017). Sacred service: The use of “sacred theory” in service design. *Journal of Design, Business & Society*, 3(1), 67-97.



**TED MATTHEWS**

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# Sacred Service: The Use of ‘Sacred Theory’ in Service Design

## ABSTRACT

*Whilst attention has been given to the sacred in consumer behaviour, often highlighting its potential for meaningful experiences and customer loyalty, little research has been undertaken which investigates how such experiences might be designed for.*

*This article describes a new service design approach that marries material from sacred theory and the tools of service design with the aim of designing for sacred service experiences.*

*The method was developed through a research by design approach during three service design projects.*

*Although not fully implemented and limited to a Norwegian context, the solutions show innovation in process and outcome, particularly when it comes to designing for meaningful experiences, incorporating central elements of the sacred experience. It can be concluded that the method operationalizes the sacred and was considered a useful and usable addition to existing service design approaches.*

*The method is one of the first approaches that specifically incorporate cultural material into the service design process, raising the importance of meaning and values alongside that of the functional. It shows that service designers can act as cultural intermediaries and that service design lacks a cultural orientation in its existing practice. Based upon this, the article encourages the rethinking of several service design terms and suggests how the approach that has been developed could form part of a ‘semantic turn’ in service design.*

## KEYWORDS

service design  
design method  
innovation  
cultural material  
sacred

*The article contributes to the research and practice in service design by introducing an approach for the design for sacred experiences and for incorporating cultural influences into service design. Further, it introduces cultural theory in the form of sacred theory as material for service design and establishes a discourse regarding the service designer as cultural intermediary. It introduces a discussion about exploring culture as a design material in service design.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

There has been a growing focus on the importance of heightened customer experience as part of service development (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Haeckel, Carbone and Berry, 2003; Voss, Roth and Chase, 2008; Zomerdiijk and Voss, 2010).

At the same time, a growing body of research developed since the mid-80s from Rook (1985) and Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry (1989) shows that consumers are engaged in extraordinary and meaningful experiences through a form of 'sacralisation' of consumption.

The relationship between these two areas of research is interesting for the development of services and deserves further attention.

To date, no research has been undertaken within service design that looks to actively design for the sacred consumer experience. This article therefore presents a method for service design that operationalizes 'sacred theory' (which is used here as a blanket term for theory, from across several fields, that deals with the issue of sacred).

This article has the following structure. First, it will present literature to give an overview of service design and then introduce sacred consumer behaviour theory, followed by a description of how the two fields have relevance for each other. After a presentation of the research methodology and research questions, the sacred service experiences' method is described, showing how sacred theory is embedded within it. The method is illustrated using examples from the real-life projects where it was developed.

The evaluation of the method is then described, using empirical data gained from the project examples, and the results are discussed in relation to their innovation potential in moving towards the sacred service experience. Finally, the article offers reflections upon the method and a discussion of its implications for the field of service design.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### ***Designing for service experience***

Service design applies the tools and methods of design to the design of services (Holmlid and Evenson, 2008; Kimbell, 2009; Meroni and Sangiorgi, 2011) employing 'a set of modelling techniques for service experiences' (Holmlid, 2009, p. 2). An emerging set of service-specific design tools (Maffei, Mager and Sangiorgi, 2005; Clatworthy, 2011; Alves and Nunes, 2013) that help the designer gain insights, generate, model and make concrete and controllable (Koivisto, 2009) the temporal and intangible nature of services (Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry, 1985). Service designers do not design the experience but the platforms and channels for the customer to have the experience designed for (Zomerdiijk and Voss, 2010).

Service design, whilst aggregating personal sociocultural experiences through tools such as the cultural probe, has yet to systematically take into account, identify, collect and utilize the broader meaning and value of customer communities expressed through their symbols, myths and rituals (Matthews, 2014a). Other tools of service design still show their origins from that of service management, for example Shostack's (1984) service blueprint which is still very much a central tool for practice today (Bitner, Ostrom and Morgan, 2008). Its management of time and elements such as touchpoint still has its focus on the efficiency of orchestration, designing, planning, performance and eventual management of service delivery and upon physical interactions. The customer journey is no different, also managing for experience over a before, during and after timeline (Stickdorn 2010). Whilst the definition of the term touchpoint has evolved over time, within service design, it still shows this heritage and within this structure (Clatworthy, 2011). None of these tools highlight or in turn orchestrate the symbolic meaning of touchpoints or of time itself.

Whilst the relevance of sociocultural reference points on customer experience in the service encounter has been recognized (Bitner, Booms and Tetreault, 1990; Bitner, 1992; Rosenbaum and Montoya, 2007; Tombs and McColl-Kennedy, 2010; Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011), no guidelines for the designer are proffered. There is therefore a need within research and practice to explore how sociocultural symbols can be used within service design.

### ***The sacred experience in consumer culture***

Research demonstrates that consumers are engaged in meaningful and at times extraordinary experiences through a form of 'sacralisation' of consumption (Rook, 1985; Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry, 1989; Otnes and Lowrey, 2004). These experiences are being had through connection with other customers in a brand community (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Muniz Jr and O'guinn, 2001), in their relationship to brands and products (Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry, 1989; Belk and Tumbat, 2005; Campbell and La Pastina, 2010), in relationship to service providers and services (Arnould and Price, 1993; Belk and Costa, 1998; Huggins, 2008).

However, it is Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry's much-cited article *Theodicy on the odyssey* (1989) that offered the first in-depth study of the sacred manifest in consumer behaviour. To do this, they drew from a broad cross section of theory relating to the 'Properties of Sacredness' to make parallels from social science and humanities, to the behaviour they observed in consumers, showing that such consumer behaviour delivered heightened customer experiences.

Using Durkheim's (1912) understanding of the sacred in its opposition to the profane, Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry (1989) suggest that sacred consumer experiences can be defined in their opposition to mundane experiences. These are meaningful and highly emotional experiences that have elevated consumption to something much more than the quotidian. Such experiences can lead to fleeting and ecstatic episodes for customers.

Through these forms of consumption, consumers celebrate their connection to society and that this meaning is not purely personal but something shared, drawn from 'the cultural matrix from which the process ultimately emanates' (Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry, 1989, p. 31).

The following section will explore this 'cultural matrix' to identify the sources of material that can be used for the design for sacred experiences in services. It uses some of the same theoretical sources as Belk, Wallendorf,

and Sherry (1989), but as they drew on this theory with the aim of explaining observable phenomena, rather than designing for it, this research needed to draw from further sources. What follows is therefore a summary of existing research that is considered appropriate as a material for the design for sacred experiences in service.

### **Sacred theory: the elements of the sacred experience**

Theory about the sacred suggests that it is from four main elements that the sacred experiences are drawn: community, symbols, myth and ritual.

Community is not just about shared physical location. Indeed, anything larger than a village can only be one that is imagined (Anderson, 2006) as mass communication has allowed us to find community far beyond the reaches of place (Muniz Jr and O'guinn, 2001). Community is about sharing some forms of value; it is what we have in common (Nancy, 1991), where the myth of the self forms us through its telling, as there can be no community without this myth.

For many theorists, ritual is the performance of myth (Bell, 1997, pp. 3–12) and as such the performance of the collective self and its values (Douglas, 2004). From the interplay between these elements, through the community coming together, emerges what Durkheim (1912) refers to as 'collective effervescence', and as such the sacred experience. Where in a religious context there is the feeling of the other worldly in fact the group is experiencing the sacred of themselves (Durkheim, 1912). Here emerges the symbols or totems that come to represent the community and its values (Durkheim, 1912), becoming the cultural capital of the group (Turner and Stets, 2005) and sacred in themselves.

These symbols form a mesh of meaning that can be read and understood as myths of the community/society itself (Barthes, 1957). Combinations of these symbols brought into play in staged combinations are readable by the communities from which they draw (Barthes, 1957; Lévi-Strauss, 1955), prompting strong emotions in the viewer (Turner and Stets, 2005). But myth as rituals not only tell of the communities identity, they also tell of, resolve and alleviate larger existential tensions to make sense of life's paradoxes (Lévi-Strauss, 1955).

Myths are not falsities as many understand them to be (Campbell, 1949; Segal, 2004) but 'a story about something significant' (Segal, 2004, p. 5). Booker (2004) drawing from Freud and Jung's approach to myth suggests that there are seven great narratives that are universally known, often with universal structures (Campbell, 1949; Lévi-Strauss, 1955), reflecting group identity but also telling deep fundamental truths about our existence (Campbell, 1949).

But whilst rituals are performances of the myth of the community, they also act as passageways creating emotional transformations. The 'rite of passage' (Figure 1) observed by Van Gennep (1909) is a tripartite structure that carries the subject through three steps of emotional and social transition. *Separation* allows the subject to performativity and emotionally leaves a state of mind and status behind. *Transition*, the core of the ritual is an in-between stage and the core of the experience, often euphoric and associated with 'communitas' (Turner, 1969), where all come together in equal status. *Reincorporation* allows the subject to process the experience and to relate internally and externally the change that has occurred. These rituals occur at life crisis points of change, like weddings or baptisms; however, it

has been noted that all rituals whether as small as a greeting (Firth, 1972) follow this structure (Bell, 1997).

But this structure can be broken down further. Transition through these phases is experienced and processed through smaller interaction ritual chains through which subjects truly comprehend the change that is taking place (Rook, 1985) and through which energy is carried and charged up to emotional entrainment (Collins, 2004) at the core of the experience. But these smaller interactions can also be with just the self (Rook, 1985; Collins, 2004), but understood to be part of a bigger whole through their connection to the larger structure (Rook, 1985). Over time, these transient emotions turn into deeply held values (Collins, 2004) (Figure 1).

The ritual space, either physical or virtual (Turner and Stets, 2005), becomes an important arena to bring together the elements of community, myths and the symbols. The other ingredients as part of these main elements are stereotyped sequences, symbolic gestures, words, artefacts and 'sequestered place' (Turner, 1961, p. 36).

Rook (1985) argues that an audience, clear scripts, clear roles and symbolic artefacts to assist in the action are important. Collins (2004) suggests that where ritual might need an audience in some cases, the audiences are indeed self. He lists ritual ingredients as assembly, barriers to outsiders, mutual focus of attention, a shared mood, stereotyped formalities and common actions.

Myth, the other important element, gives context to the ritual, it is what is performed, it is what the ritual is about and the myth is the community's values and anxieties expressed and resolved through narrative.

And where it is known that sensorial stimulation can generate heightened experiences, it is only when this is connected to that which is deemed meaningful (rituals, symbols and myths) that the sacred experience occurs (Newberg and d'Aquili, 2008).

Where the elements of community, symbol, myth and ritual can generate sacred experiences, it has also been shown that such settings can be designed. Bell (1997, pp. 231–34) suggests that the invention of the Olympic ritual resulted in new communities being formed. Here, a community and its sense of self are formed through ritual. The same has been attempted by new

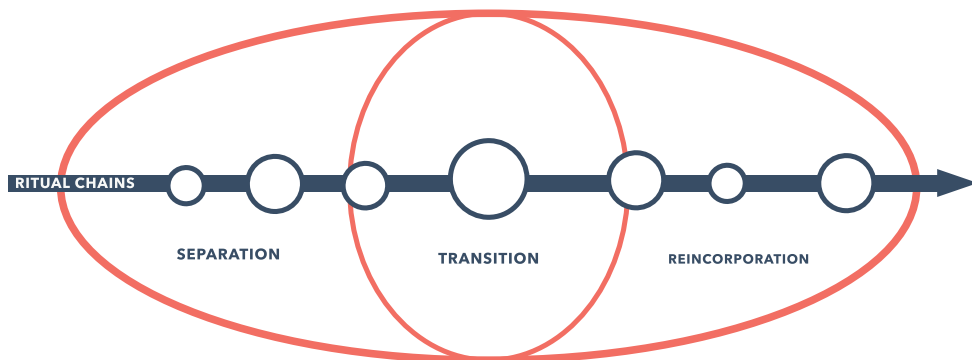


Figure 1: Visualization of rites of passage combined with chains of smaller rituals (visualization by Renata Mikal and author).

and old nations as a way to build identity and connection between its citizens (Hobsbawm, 1983; Kong and Yeoh, 1997) often invoking tradition as a powerful device to validate and make authentic new ritual (Bell, 1997; Pleck, 2004). The past as much as lend authority can also contextualize the present and give new meaning to current concerns.

However, the invention of tradition whether it uses a strategy of traditionalization must appear authentic or it will not succeed (Pleck, 2004) and the mechanism of their introduction must remain invisible or they lose their power (Myerhoff, 1984 cited in Bell, 1997, p. 224).

### ***Definition of sacred experience***

I too will use Durkheim's (1912) understanding of the sacred in its opposition to the mundane as a way to define the sacred experience. In this article, the sacred experience is defined in the following way: Non-mundane experiences that are meaningful and highly emotional, born out of the values and relationships within a community, *generated* and expressed through ritual, myth and the symbolic. Over time values and a sense of group identity are strengthened, through sensorial stimulation, assembly and contact with meaningful symbols, from which can emerge fleeting, ecstatic episodes.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION AND METHODOLOGY**

This research has explored:

Can theory about the sacred be operationalized into a service design method to innovate in customer experience?

To answer this, a research by design approach (Sevaldson, 2010) was taken, in which a method was developed and evaluated through three 'real-life' service design projects, each carried out together with a project team comprising of relevant stakeholders. This generative approach is as Swann (2002) suggests, akin to action research where real world scenarios and participation are core elements (Stringer, 2007). The approach is abductive, where possibilities are seen in the material (Crouch and Pearce, 2012) and where the designer acts as bricoleur (Louridas, 1999). In this way, the designer structures and forms the material into an 'inventory' for designing and from which emerged the final method presented here.

In practice, this has meant reviewing sacred theory and service design theory to find synergies and integrating them through the development of new operative methods and tools. These methods and tools have been developed through their use in several projects, using a typical iterative, action research approach of planning, acting, evaluating, reflecting (Swann, 2002).

A triangulation of evaluation methods (Jick, 1979; Yin, 2011) was used to understand how sacred theory, embodied in the method, might offer innovation for service design. This was done through semi-structured interviews and participation observation with additional insights gained from questionnaires.

### ***Development and description of the sacred service experience method***

To follow is a description of the fourth iteration of the method, presented with examples from the service design projects. It was developed between 2012 and 2016 through several iterations of development through practice (Matthews,

2013; 2014a; 2016) An initial iteration within the context of telecoms showed mixed results (Matthews, 2013) yet suggested potential for sacred theory as material for service design. To develop and test the method further, projects from highly experiential services from tourism and professional football were chosen. Finally, to evaluate its relevance for more utilitarian services, it was tested in banking services.

Projects used for the development of the method:

- National collection: Meaningful tourist experiences. Initially a 4-month project in the town of Røros together with eight Masters' students, the project has been expanded to develop meaningful tourist experience across Norway, with continued involvement from the author. The project included working with the tourist authority, field trip and studio work.
- 'Alt for Norge': Meaningful national football events. Eight-month project, where the author as researcher/designer worked 'in residence' at the football associations headquarters, collaborating closely with one particular team member but also with the broader cross-functional team.
- Privilege banking: Elevation to Royal Gold status (the original name of the service has been changed for this article) in a large bank. A 2-month project where the author did most of the research and designing, yet in collaboration with the head of the Royal Gold team.

The method was used in combination with standard service design tools to map current customer journeys, touchpoints and actors, etc. to get an overview of the existing service.

## THE SACRED SERVICE EXPERIENCE METHOD

### Overview

The method is shown in Figure 2. Although shown as distinct steps, this process is not linear and moves back and forward, particularly during the first stages. It consists of five main steps as described below.

1. A series of cultural mapping activities to create the broad understanding of the cultural matrix (Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry, 1989) from which there could be formed boundaries around culturally relevant possibilities for further design
2. The development of a service myth and a repository of symbolic material supporting the myth
3. The identification and development of a structured mesh of contextually relevant symbols
4. The application of the myth and the mesh to the service design process to develop a ritual journey
5. Visualization of the suggested service concept using graphical experience evidencing (GEE).

The method occurs as a spiralling process that oscillates back and forth between the steps in which the service myth and mesh are activated through the design of chains of meaningful service encounters (MSEs), managed and given dramaturgical purpose within a larger ritual journey structure.

Service experiences are communicated within the project team in an experiential way, to focus upon the experiential outcome of the work. This focuses



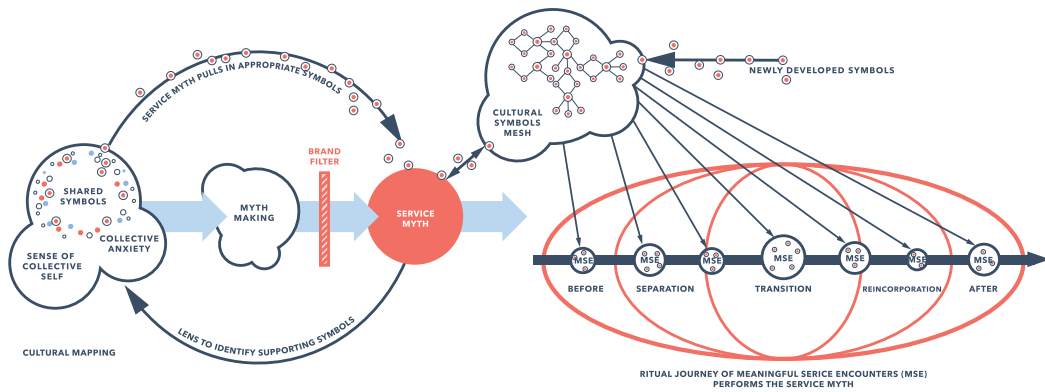


Figure 2: Visualization of phases and process flow of method (visualization by Renata Mikal and author).

upon the use of symbols and meaning through emotional representations in the form of GEE.

*Cultural mapping:* Operationalizing Barthes (1957), this phase explores the broader societal and community sense of identity expressed in the cultural symbols, not at least those that appear to carry meaning. This is also an investigation of the ‘totems’ that Durkheim (1912) suggests exemplify a group’s identity and unity. These might be artefacts, legendary people, legendary stories, rituals, myths, the meaning of places and nature, calendric rites.

During his phase and drawing from Levi-Straus (1955), there is also an unearthing of shared anxieties expressed through cultural channels such as literature and media but also through interviews and observation.

*Myth making:* This brings together elements uncovered during the cultural mapping to find a myth that expresses in a narrative that which has been unearthed. Using Booker’s seven plot lines (2004) allows for universally readable narratives with which to build the myths around, making them accessible to a broad audience. In addition, the brand is taken into account to make sure there is a fit with its values and aesthetics. What is important however is that as Campbell suggests (1949) the myth, a metaphor of some truth, fits with the reality of the situation so as to feel authentic. Finally, it should be considered, as suggested by Levi-Straus (1955), whether the myth appears expressed forms of social anxiety or unresolved paradox.

This activity considers the following:

- What do these cultural symbols and channels of this group express about its sense of self and its current concerns and anxieties?
- Which universally known narrative could a myth be built around that expresses the sense of self and find resolution to these anxieties?
- How can this myth be told in the style of the brand, integrating its values with that of the groups?
- Does the narrative fit with the reality of the situation? Does it feel authentic?

From these elements emerges the service myth that creates context and a narrative for the service experience and what is to be performed in the ritual journey. This can be in the form of a written background ‘story’ or reduced to a series of words that characterize the narratives main points, somewhat like a caricature.



### **Project example: football**

Cultural mapping workshops and interviews were undertaken with fans, the Norwegian supporters alliance, staff and stakeholders at the stadium. This would endeavour to understand a sense of self for the team, the fans and for Norwegian football as a whole through aggregating legends, stories, symbols, artefacts, songs and other cultural expressions of the community. The Football Associations archive was also investigated to locate artefacts that had meaning, privileged through their association to moments in history or to players.

As this was about the national team, there was also work done to investigate further the 'state of the nation' in terms of Norway's sense of self.

By reviewing all the possible narratives presented by Booker, it was felt that the myth of the 'quest of the underdog' fit a perceived reality of the Norwegian context:

- A team who are young, enthusiastic players but who are not necessarily the favourites to win
- Reflected in the legends that are told as the great stories of Norway's football past often related to when 'Little Norway' beats the great international teams
- A narrative fits with a national sense of self-exemplified through national stories (heros of Telemark, Amundsen, Nansen, etc.). Also the anxieties of a nation of what will happen to the small country due to economic downturn.

The chosen myth could also fit with the national football team's brand values of Solidarity, Ferocity and Pride which would be used as a stylistic guide in its telling.

*Further cultural mapping exercises:* Returning to the material aggregated in the first cultural mapping exercise, the emerging service myth is used to create greater focus on what elements should be used to assemble a mesh of material to be used in the eventual service design. With this being a spiralling process, it might be necessary to then refocus the service myth and then in turn reappraise the mesh.

### **Project example: tourism**

After a service myth was developed, the project team returned to the cultural material that had been mapped to draw out material that supported the service myth and brand identity of Visit Norway. To this end, a series of workshops brought focus on aesthetics, sensorial responses and appropriate symbolic and cultural material that would carry the myth. It also allowed for a focus on which existing tourist experiences might fit with the new narrative.

**Case study: football.**

This exercise lifted some material that could support the myth but also grounded the experience in history. This was a form of traditionalization with an aim to validate the chosen myth through its connection to the past. This strategy also gave broader context to the service experience.

*Symbols Mesh:* Operationalizing Barthes concept (1957) of a mesh of related symbols that express our mythologies, in the method, these symbols are evaluated on two scales of readability (Figure 3):

1. Universal to local
2. Meaning embodied to meaning through association.

Scale 1 regards to what extent the cultural symbol can be universally read or how specific it might be. For example national flags can be broadly read and understood whilst football flags might only be understood by supporters.

Scale 2 considers to what extent the symbol embodies the meaning it denotes. For example where Santa Claus symbolizes Christmas on his own whilst a reindeer can only be read as a symbol of Christmas if associated with other yuletide symbols or aesthetics. Without these additional symbols, it could, for example, be read as a symbol of the Sami people or of nature generally.

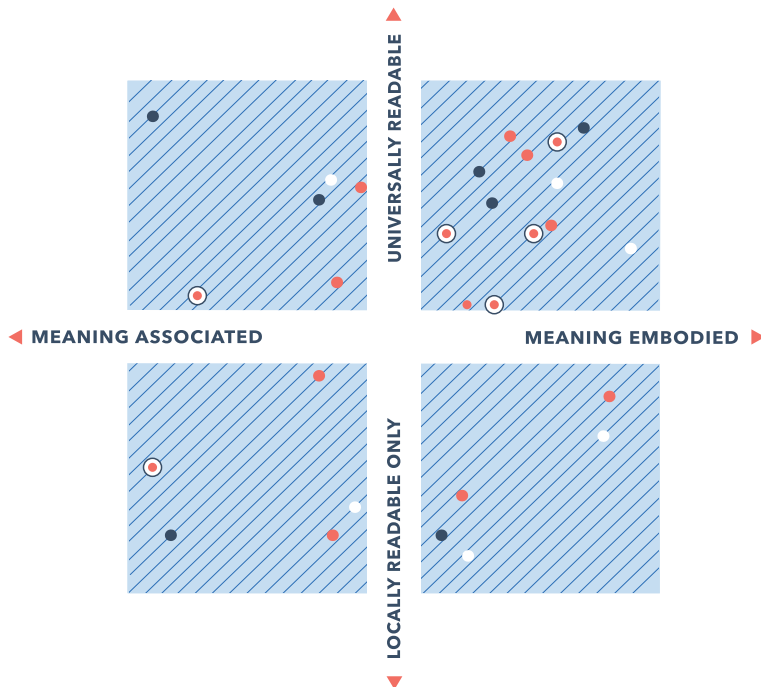


Figure 3: Visualization of symbols appraisal tool (visualization by Renata Mikal and author).

### Project example: banking

This method was used to appraise the embodied meaning related to forms of communication in relationship to promotion or privilege. After assessing many modes of communication, it was decided that banking did not currently have a clear universally readable and meaning embodied symbol of privilege that fit with a Norwegian myth of self. To this end, symbols were appropriated from broader society, so a letter was privileged through its design, association to other symbols, and through a long-term strategy to communicate its embodied meaning.

Another way to arrange elements of the symbols mesh to understand symbols in relationship to each other in place and time is exemplified below. The visualization creates a symbols mesh for Norwegian Christmas. This example was used with participants in all the projects to explain the importance of the symbols mesh as a way to understand our culture as a matrix of known meaning.

A marzipan pig symbolically embodies Norwegian Christmas in its own right yet is still situated in a mesh of other associations. Its appearance in the ritual has a situational relationship to events happening over time before, during and after, whilst having a relationship to other symbols. The almond and the rice pudding, another Scandinavian tradition, only embody Norwegian Christmas through its relationship to the rest of the mesh and directly to the marzipan pig (Figure 4).

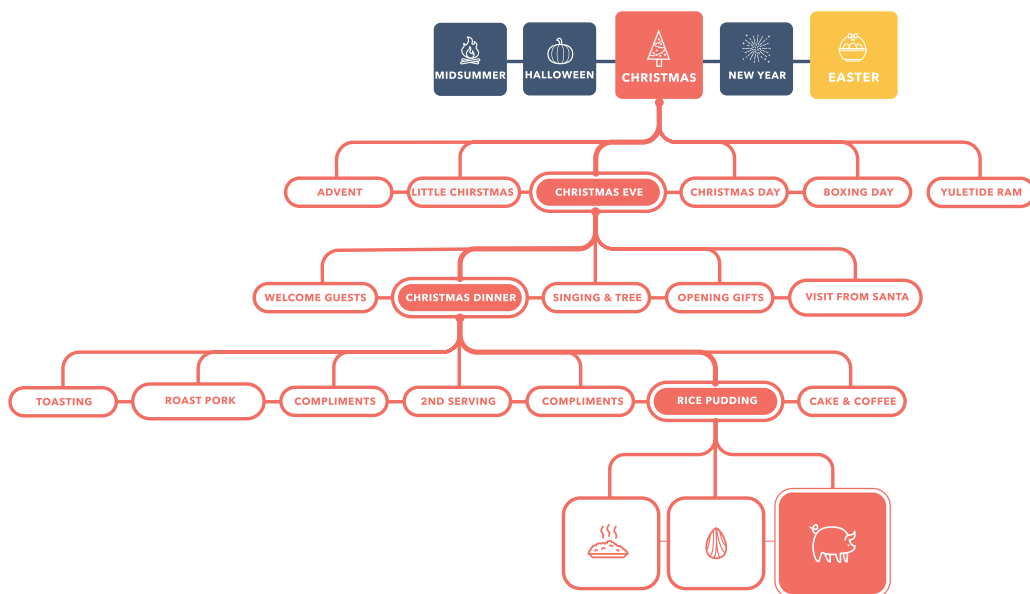


Figure 4: Visualization of a symbols mesh of Norwegian Christmas with a particular focus on time and ritual. It hones in on some artefacts. Relationships are shown on several levels from bigger movements in the calendar to the microrituals (visualisation by Renata Mikal and author).

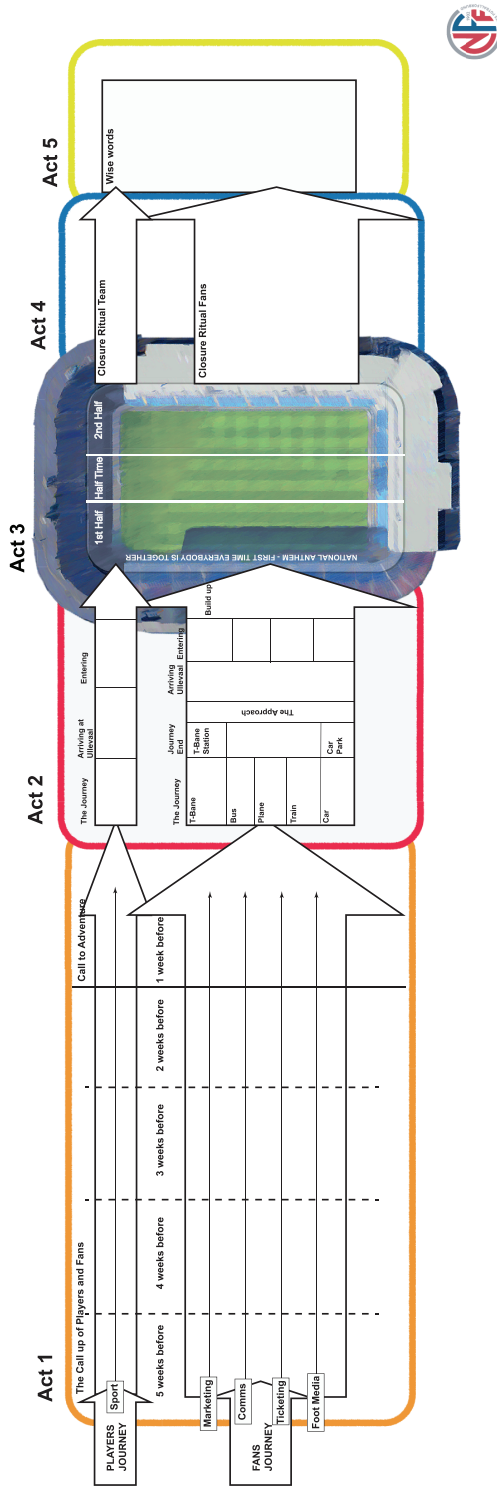


Figure 5: Visualization of ritual journey for football. Step stages were renamed 'Acts' for easy use. The journey was designed for both the players and the fans, hence two lines. Each box within each act is MSE (visualization by author).

*The Ritual Journey:* The ritual journey links the sacred, ritual and myth to the customer journey concept (Stickdorn, 2010) that is commonly used in service design. It takes a different view to the journey and adapts it to the specifics of the symbolic approach. This five-step ritual journey marries a standard service design customer journey of 'before', 'during', 'after' to Van Gennep's (1909) ritual structure of 'separation', 'transition', 'reincorporation', resulting in:

*BEFORE–SEPARATION–TRANSITION–REINCORPORATION–AFTER*

Where rituals can be performances of myths (Bell, 1997), the ritual journey is contextualized by the service myth and allows for dividing the experience into five clear steps that have each a distinctive tonality and purpose. These are described as acts, to invoke a storytelling metaphor and are shown in Figure 5, when applied to a football match.

The transition step/act is the core of the service experience. The designer must decide the appropriate amount of time for each step. Through these five steps, using chains of connected MSEs, the service is orchestrated. The conceptualization of MSE is again a marriage between the service encounter and interaction ritual chains (Collins, 2004). The tone of the act informs the tone of the MSEs included. The need to design a single touchpoint can open up for the design of the whole encounter or starting with the MSE can open to the design of the many elements including the individual touchpoint. It allows the designer to ask the question beyond that of what is the function of a touchpoint, but also to ask: what does it mean, what it means in relation to other touchpoints, what does it contribute to the MSE it finds itself in, what role does it have to tell the story of the narrative, can it deliver on the purpose of the 'Step' it is in, in say separating from the everyday to create focus on the core of the experience?

### **Project example: football**

Five step ritual journey populated with a chain of fourteen MSEs for both players and fans, with the intention of building emotional entrainment between fans and players to a sense of 'communitas' (Turner, 1995) and 'collective effervescence' (Durkheim, 1912) during the heart of the experience in step 3, transition; the game itself.

This would be done by stimulating the senses (music, drum rhythms, stadium dressing, etc.) at different phases of the ritual journey but also factor in other ritual ingredients and symbols to connect the experience to community values.

Individual touchpoints (tickets, scarves, player bus, posters, supporter areas, etc.) were not designed as stand-alone elements but as part of a whole MSE conscious of the step it was in. A constant focus on the potential 'value' and 'role' on a meaningful level the touchpoint had in time and space was maintained.

Marketing too was integrated into the overall building of the experience and not just for the selling of tickets. Many channels communicated service myth of the 'quest of the underdog' giving context to games. Radio, player communications, press conferences stayed on message and part of the whole experience.

<b>Ingredient</b>	<b>To consider</b>
Customer audience	Who is the audience? The customer themselves or those outside the interaction? A broader community (physical or virtual)
Clear scripts	Are there standards of behaviour expected or known by the customer, potentially regulated by the community at large? These behaviours can be built over time through example and interaction with other customers and service staff
Symbolic artefacts	Does a symbol or several symbols need to be brought into play from the symbols mesh. If so how should they be used together and in what combinations? Can some be easier read in combination with others. Is it the right time/phase to bring them into play?
Assembly	Can other customers be brought together in this MSE to stimulate interaction?
Mutual focus of attention	Can the symbols or syncopated actions create focus for those assembled (crowd or between staff and customer)?
Barriers to outsiders	Can physical barriers, space denotation, other customers, symbols of belonging clearly delineate a sense of inside and of outside the space?
Sensorial stimulation	Can the senses be positively stimulated? This should be connected to meaningful symbols of the group

*Table 1: Ritual ingredients for designing MSEs.*

The following 'ritual ingredients' which draw from Durkheim (1912), Turner (1961), Rook (1985) and Collins (2004) are considered in the design of a MSE but need not include them all (Table 1).

*Graphic Experiential Evidencing* allows for expressive communication of MSEs. Through the graphic novel form, it is possible to communicate to those involved in the delivery of the service: the brand, service myth and the desired experiential outcome. It is a new form of experience prototyping and offers a means to deliver storable, expressive, experiential sampling for internal communication (Matthews, 2016) (Figure 6).

### **Evaluation**

The research seeks to answer whether theory about the sacred can be operationalized into a service design method to innovate in customer experience?

The method itself demonstrates that sacred theory can be operationalized, since the theory is visibly embedded and referenced in the description of the method presented here.

What follows therefore is an evaluation of what this method offers in innovation in process and customer experience.

Several service concepts have been designed as part of this research, together with project teams in commercial service providers. However, at this stage, only parts of the service concepts have been implemented so in-depth end user analysis has not been possible.

The evaluation has therefore focussed at this stage upon innovation indicators as defined by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2005), combined with indicators of sacred experiences as defined earlier in this article.



*Figure 6: Graphic experiential evidencing. This example describes the MSE of a footballer being called up to play for their country. It uses the culturally readable action of gifting to denote privileging and other symbolic cues such as a wax-sealed letter and first three words of national anthem. These combine to become a ritual for self that provide a motivational experience and which could be shared on social media (illustration by Syver Lauritzsen).*

The evaluation has used a triangulation of methods (Jick, 1979; Yin, 2011) combining semi-structured interviews (Fontana and Frey, 2003), questionnaires (Neuman, 2014) and participation observation (DeWalt, DeWalt and Wayland, 2010).

The OECD's Oslo Manual of innovation (2005) shows that there is a close 'interrelationship between the development of new services and the process to produce them' (OECD, 2005, p. 30).

Innovation in development therefore has a direct relationship to the outcome. This is what OECD refers to as on-going innovation 'activities which are in progress but have not reached implementation' (OECD, 2005, p. 10).

Innovation is assessed across four areas identified by OECD:

1. Product (service) innovation: the introduction of a good or service that is new or significantly improved with respect to its characteristics or intended uses
2. Process innovation: the implementation of a new or significantly improved production or delivery method
3. Marketing innovation: the implementation of a new marketing method involving significant changes in product design or packaging, product placement, product promotion or pricing
4. Organizational innovation: the implementation of a new organizational method in the firm's business practices, workplace organization or external relations.

These four areas are evaluated against two frameworks: innovation in terms of novelty and indications of movement towards sacred experience:

- **Novelty:** When the Oslo Manual (OECD, 2005) refers to novelty, it is understood as newness to the firm, the market or the world, whilst being relevant and offering process and/or service improvement. Therefore, the four categories were evaluated in terms of their perceived newness, relevance and improvement in development, not on the service effect in the market place.
- **Indications of movement towards sacred experience:** This is framed by the definition given earlier in the article. Therefore, the four categories were evaluated against indications of a move away from the mundane, to expressions of the meaningful and the emotional experiences and of affirmations of group identity.

The category that deals with service innovation will also include an overview of design solutions that show how elements of the sacred, such as myth, ritual and symbol, are raised in the final designs in crafting for sacred experiences.

### **Data collection**

The main body of data was collected through semi-structured interviews from nine informants:

- Informant 1: Upper management in media and digital, directly involved in the development of the football project
- Informant 2: Upper management in marketing and communication, took use of the method, delivering elements as part of football project
- Informants 3 and 4: Designers involved with the broader project of football. They were mainly engaged in the branding exercise though not directly involved in the service design part of the project
- Informant 5: Designer and project manager from the Norwegian Centre for Design and Architecture and was involved in both football and tourism projects
- Informant 6: National football player and recipient of the new service; had no process insight
- Informant 7: Project development and management at Innovation Norway and directly involved in the tourism project and is developing the method further as part of a national strategy
- Informant 8: Upper management from bank was directly involved in developing the bank project
- Informant 9: Middle management from a large football sponsor and involved in the use of the process at specific touchpoints as part of legacy projects.

Interviews were undertaken by the author, face-to-face with one telephone interview between 11 January and 24 March 2016. Each lasted on average 40 minutes. Four interviews were undertaken in English and five in Norwegian. All interviews were recorded apart from one where permission was not granted. Transcripts were made and analysed.



In addition to allow for supplementary data, two separate questionnaires were designed and used at the end of 2014. The first following a lecture describing the tourism service concepts presented to tourist service providers from across Norway. Fifty-three questionnaires were completed from a total of 108 participants. The second questionnaire was completed by designers predominantly from service design but also from product, who had been presented the method. Here, 21 respondents completed forms from 32 total.

Questions predominantly used a Likert scale (Neuman, 2014) to understand to what extent respondents agreed or disagreed with statements relating to their perception of novelty/newness of the process and of the outcomes. Respondents in both situations had been presented with the concepts designed, the background for them and partial insight into the process itself.

Because of long-term residency and fieldwork, participation observation (DeWalt, DeWalt and Wayland, 2010) offered a flexible approach to data collection. The key was to find the balance between participation and observation. My role could be described as 'Active Participation' (DeWalt, DeWalt and Wayland, 2010) where the concentration was on the evolving method, co-designing with the method and on the outcomes. Visualizations of design conversations were predominantly used for data collection along with photographs of workshops and outcomes (football games where some elements had been delivered) and the use of written logs. They offered insight into all phases. Using participation observation gave insights beyond that which informants might be aware of themselves.

Triangulation was used towards a 'convergent validation' (Jick, 1979, p. 603) of results offering three perspectives on the same phenomena (though questionnaires only offered limited support for this validation). Observation and interview data are presented together. Questionnaire data are highlighted separately.

## FINDINGS

### **Product (service) innovation**

*The introduction of a good or service that is new or significantly improved with respect to its characteristics or intended uses.*  
(OECD, 2005)

The results show that the final services designed were novel, integrating sacred elements into the designs, with results building pride, lifting meaning beyond the functional and in turn lifting experiences above the everyday towards the sacred and 'heroic'.

The final design in banking shifted the focus of the services away from the function:

We have this focus on time, priority, exclusivity and expertise as our guiding principles for Royal Gold. But you kind of translated, reformulated them to meet the emotional part of the brain. It was important [...] connecting to life goals

Informant 8

## Building pride and honour for the football player:

I think everybody [rest of team] felt that you have become more important and perhaps feel even more pride, that one puts more pride in it [performance] and it's like more honour and it feels like more people, care, which makes you feel like you must perform better.

Informant 6

Not just building pride in players, but in fans, employees and trainers (informant 2). An observation confirmed by informant 1 was that crowd numbers and atmosphere had improved before improved sporting results and that new interventions resulting from the method delivered greater meaning for fans, recalibrating the focus less on the results but to the experience as a whole.

Also demonstrating adoption of sacred terms and concepts, informant 2 felt that final design would make the experience far more meaningful at the stadium: 'for those who have been here many times this (the games) will have extra meaning, because now one is on the journey which we are telling, published and through how we dress up the stadium. So that the 2×45 minutes, becomes the sacred moment, it becomes the holy part of it. It's like the priests sermon as it were. Its because of the (ritual) journey that we have a basis for it (the game) to mean even more to both players and fans'.

For tourism, it was felt the service outcomes allowed for natural phenomena to become more culturally specific and in so doing raising its attractiveness and uniqueness and a 'completely new way to bring people to something meaningful' (informant 7). Where the outcomes were believable, authentic and grounded in 'what is', rather than invented. But by connecting local culture and traditions to universally understood myths, it was possible to get access to the local experience being designed for.

Services developed took the everyday and made them appear 'more heroic' (informant 7). Leading to an observable effect on the community through privileging existing cultural material:

When we presented the findings, stories and myths we had found in Lofoten you saw that they [service providers and locals] were lifted, and felt an entirely different kind of pride.

Informant 7

### ***Sacred elements embedded in final designs***

All projects resulted in 'ritual journeys' that integrated Van Gennep's (1909) tripartite ritual structure. For example in the 'transition' stage for tourism, MSEs were ritualized to relate to the purpose of this step. Ritual consumption, privileging artefacts, wish-making together with symbolic action in sequestered places were designed into the experience. In banking, special tools were privileged through their design for the specific purpose of ritual cutting of old cards; transition from 'old-status' webpage to 'new-status' webpage was staged as part of this dramaturgy with ritual gifting also included.

All projects used a service mythology to be performed in the service journey, with each one presenting a larger metaphorical narrative for the alleviating of anxieties and as a way to represent the customer community sense of self. In banking, anxieties relating to Norway's cultural discomfort in regards to privilege were alleviated through a service myth of 'rags to riches' (Booker,



Figure 7: *Evidencing image. Creating iconic places by dressing the national stadium. Use of first three words of national anthem and 'portals' into sacred space by placing of banners (visualization by author).*

2004) that focussed not on financial privilege but on the understanding of the values gained through working hard.

Some elements of the final designs included elements such as ritual gifting, ritual eating, lifting of symbolic objects and legends and refocusing touch-points to raise value of meaning rather than function. An example of this was the use of new designs for dressing the stadium, using legends and quotes that related to service myth to create; 'an iconic piece that will be a landmark in football and also in sporting, that people can automatically see it and associate very strong emotions with Ullevaal (National stadium)' informant 1 (Figure 7).

To conclude the method offered newness in the services developed. Indications of movement towards sacred experience are apparent in expressions of heightened emotional and the meaningful but also in the heroic transcending the mundane. There appears to be some expressions of group identity through expression of pride in shared experiences and cultural symbols and myths. There is a suggestion that this had an effect on the atmosphere at the stadium, an observable change from the start of the project. Finally, the formation of the final designs used the elements of the sacred, by way of utilizing material from the Norwegian cultural matrix.

### **Process innovation**

*The implementation of a new or significantly improved production or delivery method. (OECD, 2005)*

All informants who participated in projects stated that they had never seen a process of this nature before. Whilst concrete, it enabled focus on the meaningful through activating culture, creating single direction for communications and design for experience. It is a departure from current service design.

It's completely new, there's no books about this in the business of footy or marketing or anything so it's very new.

Informant 1

Where myth and ritual in tourist offerings and marketing are used, such material had not been seen in a 'joined-up' method before.

The method allowed one to move quickly from the functional and rational to the emotional and meaningful, with the process 'activating immaterial culture' (informant 7) drawing out 'meaningful assets' (informant 5). However, it was felt the process managed to maintain the functional element as part of the service delivery.

Informants talked about the usability of the method 'giving clear guidance for external designers' (informant 2), made tangible in the step-by-step structure (informant 4) resulting in 'concrete facilitation tools' (informant 7). Concerns were raised that the success of method was down to the in-depth knowledge of 'sacred theory' in the lead designer and that results might not be as successful with another designer.

The method, especially the service myth combined with the ritual journey, allowed for new form of appraisal on the appropriateness and contribution each touchpoint has in the overall experience.

Become much more emotive then because with the touchpoint thing, it's just a physical, the outset is very physical but where your approach is much, [pause] it's getting to the emotion straight away.

Informant 4

The process gives 'access to meaningful moments that without the process you don't see' (informant 5), highlighting 'critical moments' (informant 1) for customers whilst identifying individual's dramatic and emotional roles in the journey. The method 'brings together experiences in more than just a collage but in a single direction' (informant 7).

The process also seemed to 'identify those things that embody the experience and point people in the right direction' (informant 7), utilizing much of what was already there where 'solutions are fine tuning and reframing existing elements' (informant 8).

Confirmed by three informants, it was clear from using the method that it was a departure from or an extension of current service design, offering a new structure to talk about experience and ways for greater differentiation in service experience. The same informants also felt the process started to bridge the gap between service design and branding. This will be expanded on in the next section.

Data provided from questionnaires completed by tourist service providers support these findings, specifically to the use of myths and rituals in existing tourism services. 91% of respondents felt that using myth and ritual in this particular way did offer new innovation for the development of tourist experiences.

Data provided from questionnaires completed by designers also reflect this. 17% felt that they had seen ritual myth used in design before; however, 90% felt that using myth and ritual in this particular way did offer new innovation with the other 10% not knowing.

From the same questionnaire, 95% felt that the method offered useful structures on a strategic level for the design of experiential services, with 85% feeling the method would be useful in their own practice and all respondents responding that the method did offer something new to their practice.

Only 16% felt the design solutions could have been reached with conventional design tools in current use.

To conclude the method offers newness in process not at least in its ability to mine the cultural matrix for material, lifting elements that move towards the sacred service experience such as the meaningful and emotional.

The method itself is new and previously unseen offering a new way to integrate branding and marketing activities into the service designing, creating a single direction for development teams to follow. It moves services to the meaningful and emotional, helping identify the potentially meaningful and reframe existing elements within this lens. It is unlikely that the same results would be achieved through existing service design tools alone.

### **Marketing innovation**

*The implementation of a new marketing method involving significant changes in product design or packaging, product placement, product promotion or pricing. (OECD, 2005)*

The method offered a process for bringing branding and service design closer together, resulting in more credible solutions for both elements.

Three informants with backgrounds from branding felt that using the dramaturgical structure and the service myth integrated the marketing strategies into that of the service design strategy, allowing for these elements to be developed together as part of the same experience.

Service design operates in its own sphere. And then we have branding, communication and identity building, also advertising, there is another realm. And the two spheres have not had a common reference point. One relates to brand strategies. While the other relates essentially only to user needs. And there is no link between the two then. But you make it here, finding a way to reach the meaningful stuff, ...it makes both the service and branding much more powerful and credible

Informant 5

The service myth was also singled out as a useful strategy offering a 'story palate' (informant 9) that could keep much of the communication from across the organization on the same page, allowing for the reframing of brand values for the service.

The method made the brand guidelines less abstract for the client, as it offered further guidance on when, how and what you could do with the brand itself. The use of universal narratives allowed the brand to resonate with a larger audience.

Working in this way, integrating marketing as part of development and to the 'what is' that the cultural mapping uncovered prevented outcomes that were clichéd as has been experienced in many tourism-marketing campaigns.

To conclude the method offers some innovation in marketing by overlapping the service myth with the brand, towards consistency between the brand, the service experience and 'what is'. There is no indication that the method contributes to lifting meaning and values, where marketing as a field is active already in deploying these elements towards brand engagement (Holt, 2004; Diller, Shedroff and Rhea, 2005).

### **Organizational innovation**

*The implementation of a new organizational method in the firm's business practices, workplace organization or external relations. (OECD, 2005)*

It was observed within football and confirmed by informants that the service myth allowed the organization to rally around a believable story that infused belief giving a singular direction. This singular direction also expanded beyond the organization itself but also to sponsors in contributing to the experience. In tourism, the service myth allowed differing service providers to talk around the single experience across their businesses, instead of competing with each other.

In football, it was felt the process had allowed people from across different silos within the organization to sit together and focus for the first time on the experience rather than just the practicalities. This is the first time the organization had used the language of experience and lifted awareness from those involved. Furthermore, the method was then used by other departments in developing new VIP (Premium) services.

Finally, it was noted during the course of the projects and during interviews that participants used specialist language found in sacred theory, suggesting that the material had been integrated into their everyday repertoires.

We can conclude that the method contributes to organizational innovation. What appears to happen is that when the service myth is propagated, it builds on a collective sense of identity within the organization. This reflects Nancy's view of the myth and community that one builds the other (1991); it is also reflected by some organizational literature that highlights the power of company mythologies (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Trice and Beyer, 1984). However, the innovation here is the blurring of lines between customer and provider belief in the brand and service. This is seen in brands such as Apple (Kahney, 2006; Matthews, 2014b) and Patagonia (Ind, 2007). In the design for service experience, the company is the experience (Berry, 2000) so building this commitment and belief within the company is important to the success of the service.

Furthermore, adoption of process and terminology shows integration of the method into the organizations' way of working.

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The method itself shows that it is possible to operationalize sacred theory as material for service design. The structures and theory lifted in the literature review are clearly visible and referenced in the method described. In turn, the final designs also embody this material, assembling the elements of the sacred experience drawn from a Norwegian cultural matrix into new designs for services.

The findings demonstrate that the method offers potential in designing for sacred service experiences, adding to existing service design approaches and considered a useful and usable approach, by both clients and designers. It shows innovation in process and outcome, offering novelty for the firm and the market demonstrating relevant improvement, by moving towards the sacred service experience. This being indicated by the following factors:

- Lifting the service above the quotidian
- Lifting the meaningful and emotional in the service experience
- Demonstrations of pride in identity
- Integration of sacred cultural elements such as ritual, myth and the symbolic drawn from specific customer communities.

This active use of cultural material to form a service design method, which in turn deploys this material in the services that are designed, has previously not been seen before and therefore offers novelty/newness to firm and market.

Marketing already deploys the meaningful but the method ensures the brand and service experiences are integrated towards more powerful and convincing solutions for customers, furthering the work of Clatworthy (2012) and Motta Filho (2012) on bridging this gap.

The service myth offers a way of bringing the service provider closer to what Ind (2007) calls 'living the brand' values within the organization.

Results, however, must be approached with a degree of caution as solutions have yet to be fully implemented and appraised with customers. At this stage, the research can only measure innovation in terms of novelty and a perceived movement towards the sacred experience, not innovation in the market or ecstatic experiences generated through the implementation of designs. In addition, the project was only developed within a Norwegian context that might make the results more difficult to generalize.

## DISCUSSION

The previous section focuses upon the innovations that the method has initiated in the projects and shows how it innovates in both process and solution. However, the method differs from existing service design approaches, by adding a cultural element, and this challenges both existing practices and focus of service design, whilst offering new directions for service design research and practice. To follow is a discussion of the implications this approach may have for service design. The discussion is divided into five main points, each with a research and practice component considered relevant for the further development of the field.

### ***From user-centred design to users-centred design design***

User-centred design has long been a distinct characteristic of the design approach (Norman and Draper, 1986). This is still understood in service design; however, because of the complexity of service delivery, designing for service must also be centred around value in context, the systemic and supporting mechanisms (Kimbell, 2009). In social innovation services, Meroni (2007) introduces the idea of community-centred design, where community speaks predominantly of physical location and on what users bring in terms of skills to the formation of the service. However, when thinking sacred service experiences, the method developed in this research applies meaningful, culturally specific stimulus to those who sense their commonality. This demands a collective focus moving us from user-centred to the plural users-centred design. Users-centred design focuses not upon the individual, or the sum total of insights from several individuals, but specifically upon the collective behaviours, symbols and norms of the group. What this means for service design is that insight cannot just come from working with individual users towards insight, but through 'reading' users' groups through the cultural matrix which expresses their anxieties, sense of identity and group needs. It also means that in designing for sacred service experience, the individual interaction with the customer should be superseded by users' interactions constructed with material from this cultural matrix. This has important implications for the future development of service design approaches.



### ***The service designer as top-down experience director***

This work questions the role of the service designer as facilitator of co-design (King and Mager, 2009; Miettinen, 2009; Steen, Manschot and De Koning, 2011) and identifies an additional role as a cultural translator. Much of the material used in the method was aggregated through a top-down, broader observation and analysis of the community's culture that was carried out by the designer. From observation of the method in use, it is not given that individuals from within a project team can undertake an interpretive, symbolic self-analysis and a cultural translation role. Furthermore, what Myerhoff (1984 cited in Bell, 1997, p. 224) suggests is that the construction of tradition must remain hidden so as not to show the mechanisms of its invention. The designer then must design the channels for the sacred service experience hidden from view. This implies that this process cannot happen through co-design. It requires a vision and orchestration to a desired experience where the designer is guided by their interpretation of the material. For service designers, this is an expansion of the role that looks more like a film director than a co-designing facilitator, and this has consequences for how service design projects should be organized and run. Within a multidisciplinary group, the service designer then takes a much clearer leading role as they orchestrate others around them to an 'experiential vision', challenging management structures within such teams.

### ***The semantic turn in service design***

The method offers a broadening of focus for service design beyond that of service process but also to what the service can mean, introducing symbolic meaning as a core part of the service offering. This encourages a semantic turn for service design in the same way that Krippendorff encouraged in product design in 2005. Where the 90-minute football game was previously seen as the core service offering of the match-day experience, now the value-based long-term collective quest is lifted as an equal element. In banking, the service already had status and to which emotion might be derived; however, this was not lifted in the design for the service experience itself and lost in the functional descriptions in the communication of the service. The process therefore elevated this existential meaning of the service, reconfigured it in an acceptably Norwegian myth of privilege and performed it through a designed rite of passage. For service design, this means broadening an understanding of its remit to include not just function but meaning. This will require new methods such as the one presented here and whilst adding another layer in the service design process might be more labour intensive, this research shows the potential for meaningful experiences for both customers and staff.

### ***Expansion of definition of materials for service design***

This leads us to broaden our understanding of the material of touchpoints. Symbolic actions, songs, legends, rituals, etc. feel very different from Shostack's description of the touchpoint that focuses very much on their physical materiality (Shostack, 1984). With the method presented here, touchpoints can be non-material, more concerned with the tonality of intended emotion and meaning and not just their physical and functional forms.

Furthermore, the symbolic aspects of use are not currently an integrated part of service design. This method actively utilizes this as part of the designed



service, systematically opening awareness and a useable process for cross-functional teams, which as yet have not had the tools to do this.

The heritage of the customer journey is inherently process and delivery based and as such gives a predominantly functional process framing to the development of services. If service design is to make the move towards highly experiential and meaningful services, then it needs tools that encourage a customer journey form that comes not only out of service management and the functional but additionally draws from other disciplines that are more concerned with understanding what drives certain experiences. This research draws from one area, namely the highly experiential space of sacred theory, and suggests a cultural mesh, myth aggregation and a journey of transition rather than a customer journey. This semantic turn (Krippendorff, 2005) when applied to service design could result in new modelling tools for service design that draw on the traditional strength of the designer as cultural intermediary (Press and Cooper, 2003; Julier, 2013), a strength that seems to be underutilized by much of service design today.

For service design, this re-conceptualization of time as something that embodies meaning rather than a schedule to arrange touchpoints on gives another dimension to the use of time in the orchestration of the customer journey. In addition, strategies of traditionalization as part of the service experience can create a broader context for the service experience whilst offering authentication for new services.

### ***From products and brands as symbols to services as expressions of self***

Meroni and Sangiorgi discuss the potential of services to offer a 'revolution in efficiency' (Meroni and Sangiorgi, 2011, p. 17) where products might be replaced by services and as a consequence use 'less stuff' whilst still offering the same level of performance as products. What is not discussed however is how services might attain the same level of meaning as products for the consumer, where the physical elements of products and brands are our modern-day totems of self and belonging (Sheffield, 2006). Therefore, processes like the one described here might offer ways to integrate this meaning into the service experience.

Meroni and Sangiorgi go on to say that this shift will demand a change in lifestyles and also in values. Collins (2004) suggests that values change slowly but this is driven through collective 'sacred' experiences, turning emotional experiences into longer held values. This has twofold implications: one that the outcomes of using this method could nurture the values needed to accept the new service economy or alternatively that this method might draw on existing values that could reframe the consumption of services as far more symbolic of customers sense of self to assist in replacing products.

### ***An extension of current practice not a replacement***

Finally, the method is still dependent on support from existing service design tools that act as a foundation for understanding the functional landscape of the service being designed for. As such, there is no suggestion that the method should replace existing service design tools, but act to extend the field beyond

efficiency–centricity to include the meaningful and cultural as equal partners in delivering sacred service experiences.

### **FURTHER WORK**

This work presents a new method for service design that raises the importance of the culturally shared towards new kinds of service experiences. It shows that material from sacred theory can be operationalized within service design, offering innovation towards sacred experiences in services.

However, the research raises multiple questions, worthy of further investigation.

Firstly, the question should be addressed as where and when such methods should be applied. Whether the method has relevance in utilitarian services or public services such as health, or public transport for example? To suggest that it does not have relevance here would be to suggest that these services do not have meaning for their users, and this method does not artificially create meaning but identifies, combines and magnifies that which is already there. So how could the method offer an improvement to such services? Early research within telecommunications (Matthews, 2013) using a primitive version of the method offered only limited results, and it would be useful to revisit this in further work to see if more favourable results could be generated with the final method when applied to more mundane services, and further testing is planned.

Rituals are used in psychiatry to help with life crisis (Van der Hart, 1983) as well as in adoption services (Mason and Parks, 1995; Lieberman and Bufferd, 1999) to help children and their new families with change. For health services, planned rituals already have a relevance; however, further research might uncover whether this method can offer a formula for their generation.

With this in mind, it raises questions of what ‘volume’ this method should be applied. On full volume and with the right stimuli, it can lead to collective effervescence and great experiences, can low volume offer a gentler setting to assist with anxieties for those entering hospital or moving into sheltered care.

Whilst findings are conclusive, they come from a limited number of cases mainly with strong experiential service offerings. Furthermore, the majority of the work developed concepts that were prototyped and have only been partly launched and evaluated. When fully rolled out, it will be possible to design research to gather data on whether the more ecstatic responses to sacred consumption are demonstrated in the customers of these services. Further work, including qualitative longitudinal studies (Holland, Thomson and Henderson, 2006), needs to be carried out to evaluate value in use and delivery to understand better the response to services designed with the method.

Finally, a concern was raised that results from using the method might have been influenced by the in-depth knowledge of the material of the lead designer (and author of this article) on all the cases. Further tests must be undertaken with other service designers using the method to evaluate result replicability to evaluate the tool itself, rather than its application by a specialist in the field.

### **CONCLUSION**

This article describes a method that was developed using a research by design approach through three projects with the aim of operationalizing sacred theory towards the design of sacred service experiences. Evaluation of the method shows that cultural theory can be operationalized for service design and that

it offers innovation in service design process and customer experience, where a move to the sacred experience was demonstrated in the results. The research contributes to the field of service design by offering a concrete process for identifying, activating, fine-tuning and orchestrating existing cultural material towards the design of sacred service experiences.

As such, the approach is an expansion of the field of service design. It challenges the existing focus that essentially has its heritage from functional, efficiency and quality improvement. This method concerns itself with the meaningful, emotional and culturally expressive, whilst maintaining the usability of the service. It therefore finds its roots far more in the tradition of designer as cultural intermediary rather than that of service management. Further research will reveal the applicability of the method across the whole sector whilst encouraging further exploration of other fields that can only enrich the practice of service design.

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