

USING A BRICOLAGE STRATEGY TO AUGMENT THE HUMAN TOUCH AND DELIVER DIGITALLY ENHANCED ADVANCED SERVICES IN THE CHARITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR: A RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Amir Raki, Ilma Nur Chowdhury, Marzena Nieroda & Judith Zolkiewski

Alliance Manchester Business School, UK

amir.raki@manchester.ac.uk

Background

- The COVID-induced digitalisation of charity and voluntary services demonstrates that the adoption of technology is an important way for the sector to stay relevant and functional.
- The digitalisation of charity and voluntary services poses a threat to the social integration and social wellbeing of their service users, often vulnerable groups, who rely not only on a charity's core service (e.g. education and training, money matters, etc.) but also on complementary peripheral services in form of meaningful and sympathetic human interactions (i.e. human touch).
- The principles of servitization and particularly the concept of advanced services with its focus on the delivery and value of outcomes can assist charity and voluntary sector to offer digital services those are person-centric and holistic.

Knowledge Gap

- How do service users experience human touch in digital charity and voluntary services?
- How to augment human touch in digital charity and voluntary services to maintain the wholesome support, address social needs and foster social wellbeing of service users?

Methods

- A three-stage study:
 1. Inquiry: 25 interviews and 2 focus groups
 2. Solution development: following a bricolage strategy and through a participatory approach
 3. Usability study: evaluating the devised solution in 10 iterations with 5 follow-up interviews

Findings

- Service users' poor appraisal of their social integration and a sense of being socially disadvantaged are the main barriers for digital charity and voluntary services to deliver wellbeing outcomes.
- The value of digitally enhanced advanced services in charity and voluntary sector is contingent on the extent to which a service is socially enhanced and allows the flow of social resources.

Conclusions

- For advanced charity and voluntary services, users value is centred on the multiplex wellbeing outcomes and not merely the use of core services.
- Social integration and social wellbeing could be considered as performance measures in digital transformation of the charity and voluntary sector.

This research was supported by a DEAS Network Plus Charity/Voluntary Projects research grant
Exhibited at The Spring Servitization Conference 2021, 10-12 May 2021. Birmingham, UK.