



VIEWPOINT

Stepping aside and moving on: a rejoinder to a rejoinder

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Stephen L. Vargo

*Shidler College of Business, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu,
USA, and*

Robert F. Lusch

Department of Marketing, University of Arizona, Tuscon, Arizona, USA

Abstract

Purpose – This paper proposes a rejoinder to the O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy rejoinder to “Service dominant logic: a necessary step”, the commentary on their previous criticism of service-dominant logic.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper is a critical analysis of O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy’s comments.

Findings – The paper finds that O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy’s comments are, according to their own admission, contrived, without regard to or familiarity with the body of work they criticise. The work they disparage includes not only its own but, by implication, that contributed by a large and growing number of scholars worldwide who find service-dominant logic a useful, informed and informing orientation to the market and marketing.

Research limitations/implications – Scholars are encouraged to continue to collaborate and contribute to the development and advancement of service-dominant logic as an ongoing, open-source endeavour.

Originality/value – This paper suggests that, whereas serious debate and dialogue about service-dominant logic, including that which is critical, are encouraged and are essential to meaningful advancement, it is probably best to disregard the less useful criticism contained in O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy’s rejoinder, and move on to more serious work.

Keywords Service delivery, Logic, Perspective

Paper type Viewpoint

We have authored approximately three dozen service-dominant (S-D) logic publications, which have received almost 2,500 total citations (Google Scholar), and have made several dozen keynote, and over 100 total, S-D logic presentations on five continents. There have also been a half dozen S-D logic-focused conferences, a dozen S-D-logic-focused special issues (or sections) in journals and countless S-D-logic-grounded articles and presentations by other scholars, all within a six-year period. Yet, O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy (2011) summarily dismiss all of this work, while acknowledging, as we (Lusch and Vargo, 2011) suggested, that they have never actually read any of it, except (apparently quite cursorily) one article (Vargo and Lusch, 2004) that we wrote about seven years ago. Is there really any need to comment much further? Clearly, O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy have just confirmed our (Lusch and Vargo, 2011) most critical, previous comments on their original critique (O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy, 2009).



It does, however, beg the question: why would two scholars (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy) spend the substantial time required to write, even with inadequate study, a critique and rejoinder on a single article, Vargo and Lusch, 2004) written by a pair of scholars whom they consider to be revolutionaries (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2011, p. 1316) and hucksters of ideas (p. 1318) with radical claims (p. 1317); using erudite language and assertive language (p. 1317), for which they present an illusion of progress and primordial originality (p. 1318), that is regressive (p. 1314)? We will not create a similar conundrum by responding further; rather, we choose to sidestep O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy's invective and to move on, to further engage the many, serious-minded, competent and constructive scholars who find usefulness in S-D logic, in whole or in part, and are contributing to its development.

By implication, O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy's comments are not just critical of our work; they could be construed as disparaging of the vast numbers of scholars, conference organizers, and editors who have written about, invited/accepted for presentation, and published S-D-logic-focused work. It is to this group, as well as to any other parties who find, now or in the future, S-D logic to be credible and useful, in whole or part, that we will direct an additional comment.

As we have said repeatedly (e.g., Lusch and Vargo, 2006; Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008a), we neither invented S-D logic nor do we own it. What we did, and continue to do, is try to identify, elaborate, and extend what we see as a potential convergence in disparate thinking that suggests an evolutionary (rather than revolutionary) shift, one that points toward an understanding that economic (and social) exchange is primarily concerned with service provision – that is, service is exchanged for service – rather than with goods. In “Why service . . .” (Vargo and Lusch, 2008b) we explained why we thought that “service” was the correct term to capture this convergence and, once again, made it clear that service thinking did not originate with us. Rather, it has implicit roots in the foundational work of Smith (1776) and explicit roots at least as far back as Bastiat (1848/1964) – “services are exchanged for services”. Furthermore, Delaunay and Gadrey (1992, pp. 64-5) indicate that at the end of the nineteenth century, various scholars were claiming “society is a ‘society of exchange of services’”. As we have detailed elsewhere (Vargo *et al.*, 2006; see also Vargo and Morgan, 2005), it is also explicit in the work of various contemporary scholars, perhaps most notably Grönroos (e.g. 2000), Gummesson (e.g. 1995), and Normann (e.g. 2001), and additional, foundational and elaborative thinking is provided by whole host of scholars associated with various research traditions, from within and outside of marketing, past and present.

Many scholars seem to have found S-D logic useful, if not foundational, for their own work (as partially evidenced by the previously-cited activity). Some agree with the service orientation but prefer other labels; we have no particular issue with this preference. We have maintained something of a proprietary interest in the “S-D Logic” label, partly to distinguish the orientation as we understand it from similar nuanced orientations and, hopefully, to provide some sense of focus and reference.

However, as we have always maintained, the S-D logic orientation is evolving, collaborative and “open-source” and thus represents collective thought, rather than just our views. More importantly, the existence, specific form, and usefulness of a service-centered orientation, by any name, will not be determined by us or by any single scholar (or pair – O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy or otherwise) but,

collectively, by the scholars of the related disciplines and, ultimately, by the practitioners who apply the related, normative insights. We encourage the active participation and collaboration of all interested parties. As we always have, we welcome the critical assessment; however, we request that those so inclined actually read and study S-D logic before criticizing it. This will allow meaningful debate and dialogue, with the potential to advance marketing theory and practice.

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Corresponding author

Stephen L. Vargo can be contacted at: svargo@hawaii.edu