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Enacting personal wellbeing by controlling customers

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Foreword

During the fall semester of 2016, I have written my one-year master thesis at Karlstad University. The thesis is a part of the project “The interactions role for wellbeing among travellers and drivers – a transformative perspective” led by researchers Per Echeverri and Nicklas Salomonson.

I would sincerely like to thank my brilliant supervisor, Per Echeverri, for letting me be a part of this exciting project. From start to finish in this writing process, I have had his full support and commitment to my work and for that I am truly grateful. Because of Per, this has turned into a great experience for me, one that has changed my perception of my own ability as a person.

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Abstract

Purpose – The aim of this thesis is to describe and explain how service employees create personal wellbeing through improving the customer's experience of the service by being proactive in their work, continuously running the service interaction and stimulating the customer.

Design/methodology/approach – The study takes on a qualitative approach and data was collected through a primary analysis of 9 extensive interviews performed on service providers within the mobility service-business in Gothenburg.

Findings – The findings of this study show how service employees' can create personal wellbeing for themselves in different ways and to varying extent using different tactics, judgement procedures and implicit knowledge resources.

Research limitations/implications for future research – The service setting in this study is not comparable to all other organisations, something must be taken into account. Future research should focus on further analysing the findings of this thesis by performing similar studies in other service contexts and a more detailed examination of the different components.

Practical implications – The findings of this thesis provide valuable insights for managers within similar service organisations where there is need for improved employee wellbeing and performance. This could lead to significantly enhanced service experiences that would benefit, not only the employees', but also customers' and the organisation as a whole.

Keywords – Employee Wellbeing, Service Employees, Service Interaction, Transformative Service Research, Service Dominant Logic, Employee Tactics

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The research area concerning value co-creation within service settings is one that has been in focus during most of the 21st century. Vargo and Lusch (2004) stated that value is actually created through interactions between service provider and its customers and not something that is exchanged through tangible goods. This is sometimes called the service-centred view. Because of this shift of how to view and manage value, the concept of service interactions has become a central area of study.

Also related to the interaction process between customers and employees', is the research field of Transformative Service Research (TSR). This research field investigates why and how services can promote or create positive changes and improvements, especially in the wellbeing vulnerable customer segments, but also for employees' working with vulnerable customers' or in vulnerable work situations. Service scholars have called for research providing insight into how services transform individual or collective lives (Ostrom et al., 2010). Here, the focus lies on how the wellbeing of customers and employees can be affected by services (Anderson et al. 2011). In service interactions and encounters, many outcomes of wellbeing is possible, but the TSR framework only includes those that are most relevant to service research and focus is limited to the wellbeing of service employees and customers. Two types of wellbeing are mainly used within the framework, eudemonic wellbeing and hedonic wellbeing (Anderson et al. 2013). Eudemonic wellbeing refers to when people live in accordance with their true self (Waterman 1993) while hedonic wellbeing focus more on pleasure, life satisfaction and happiness (Diener & Lucas 1999). When wellbeing is a result of interactions between service customers and employees', outcomes such as health, happiness, harmony and satisfaction are possible (Anderson et al. 2013). Previous researchers have tried, by taking the perspective of the employee, to see what it is that affects and drives their wellbeing in their work. In a study from Nasr et al. (2014), the transformative service research perspective is adopted to investigate how positive customer feedback affect the overall wellbeing of frontline service employees, companies and society. They conclude that positive customer feedback offers potential improvement on the wellbeing of service entities.

1.2 Problem

The more recently emerged area of transformative service research and wellbeing outcomes of customer and employees' within service is in need of further investigation. Previous research concerning wellbeing outcomes from

service interactions between customer and employees' has often focused on e.g. how positive and negative feedback from customers, dysfunctional customer behaviour, and service recovery on front-line employees' affect employee wellbeing. More specifically, the impact customer feedback and behaviour, as well as the different outcomes of a service have on service employees' and how their wellbeing is affected. For example, one of the limitations stated in Nasr et al. (2014) is that they assume that positive customer feedback is the only thing within the interaction between customers and employees' that generates employee wellbeing. The creation of employee wellbeing has therefore been interpreted as something that depend on what other people feel or think, just as the case of customer feedback. In other words, one could say that employees' does not have full control over their own wellbeing. However, one can suggest that service employees' could in some way be able to influence their own wellbeing and not just rely on feedback from customers'. Due to the limited knowledge on this matter and potential importance for practice, further investigation is needed.

1.3 Purpose

The aim of this thesis is to describe and explain how service employees create personal wellbeing through improving the customer's experience of the service by being proactive in their work, continuously running the service interaction and stimulating the customer. To further develop the research area of TSR and specifically employee wellbeing and to address the question above, an empirical study was performed. The study and theoretical orientation enabled me to look more closely into the creation of wellbeing during service encounters. Drawing on Nasr et al. (2014), where the creation of employee wellbeing is seen as a bi-product of customer feedback. This thesis will instead, by using a framework from Echeverri et al. (2012) containing three levels of tactics, practical judgement and implicit knowledge resources, strive to identify patterns and specific work processes used by employees' within service encounters. Through this, the thesis suggests that service employees' are not only creating wellbeing for their served customers', but also creation their own personal wellbeing for themselves. The findings and contributions of this study could potentially give valuable insights for managers and employees within service organisations.

2. Literature review

In this next section, an overall review concerning research on employee wellbeing, tactics and methods on handling vulnerable customers and Transformative Service Research is presented. Service employees' face countless of customers, each one somewhat different from the other which, makes their work difficult to various extent. Using tactics, practical judgements and implicit knowledge resources within service processes to handle customers with different behaviours is an area that has been up for study in e.g. Echeverri et al. (2012). However, a new perspective is taken in this thesis by combining these three concepts in a framework similar to the one used in Echeverri et al. (2012) with the wellbeing of employees'. This is done to be able to investigate them together and thereby get new insights on the matter.

2.1 Employee wellbeing

The life of consumers is today dominated by services and research on the area is primarily directed towards the wellbeing of the consumers. However, the amount of research on how services can affect the wellbeing of employees' is rather scarce. According to Nasr et al. (2014) the behaviour of customers has some kind of connection to the wellbeing of employees'. In the conclusion of their study they focus on how positive customer feedback can lead to positive wellbeing outcomes for the employee. Kraft and Martin (2001) argue that the positive feedback is delivered in form of compliments directed as gratitude or thankfulness towards the employee. However, one important thing to take into account is the suggestion from Nasr et al. (2014) that positive feedback do not have to be something that the customer delivers verbally or write down because of the fact that the employee can recognize and in a way sense this in the behavioural pattern of the customer. The fact that employees' can experience wellbeing from several different aspects of the customers' behaviour is an interesting implication that is a relevant notion to the study in this thesis.

In an article from Bitner et al. (2010, p. 9), they identified ten research priorities for the future and one of them was "improving wellbeing through transformative service". These research priorities were identified to point out certain research topics that were of greatest value to shed more light upon. The area of Transformative Service Research (TSR) is one that has emerged in more recent years, which focuses on wellbeing outcomes related to service and services. Anderson et al. (2011, p. 3) define TSR as "the integration of consumer and service research that centres on creating uplifting changes and improvements in the well-being of consumer entities: Individuals (consumers and employees), communities and the ecosystem". TSR advocates concern for the wellbeing of consumers and employees' and therefore seeks to improve quality of life, in other words wellbeing, through services (Anderson et al.

2013). Earlier in the introduction of the thesis, two kinds of wellbeing were described. Eudaimonic wellbeing, which according to Ryff (1989), can be applied to individuals, collectives and ecosystems where the dimensions of outcomes can be e.g. better decision making, respect and power. The other kind and the one most relevant for this thesis is hedonic wellbeing. Just as the previous one, hedonic wellbeing can be applied to both individuals and collectives but instead refers to emotional outcomes such as happiness and satisfaction (Diener & Lucas 1999).

2.2 Tactics

The concept of tactics is often referred to as intentional behaviours that are practised to handle situations with deviant customer behaviour. For example, in an article from Echeverri et al. (2012), the concept of employee tactics is discussed. They however, refer to tactics as employee coping strategies. This because it is discussed within the context of how employees' use tactics to handle, or cope, with vulnerable and misbehaving customers during service encounter processes. This thesis complements previous research concerning employee tactics but takes on another perspective. Here, the focus on tactics is directed on how employees' approach different situations when handling vulnerable customers' using various tactics within service encounter processes. The focus is not as much on how tactics can be used to handle different customer behaviours as in Echeverri et al. (2012). Instead it is more focused on how employees' use different tactics when serving customers' to shape and improve the overall service encounter. This, to be able to improve their own wellbeing and although differences between these customer segments, both need to be dealt with by different kinds of tactics.

2.3 Implicit knowledge

The term implicit knowledge, also partly discussed in terms of tacit knowledge (Nonaka et al. 2000), and the role that it plays, is often discussed in relation to crisis management, learning from failure and practice-based studies (Echeverri et al. 2012). Polanyi (1958) was the first to separate knowledge into two parts, explicit and tacit. Explicit is more common and refers to knowledge that is transferrable through systematic, formal language. Tacit, or implicit knowledge as it will be referred as in this paper is more personal, harder to communicate and rooted in action, commitment in a certain context (Polanyi 1966). Within the discourse of knowledge management, implicit knowledge is, according to Argote and Ingram (2000), embedded within e.g. individuals, roles and structures, organisational practices and physical structure of the workplace. Also, as mentioned earlier, this kind of knowledge is rooted in the actions and experiences of all individuals as well as in the values, ideals and emotions they embrace (Echeverri et al. 2012). Boisot (1998) suggests that there are three

variants of tacit knowledge that highlights the ‘implicitness’ of knowledge like this: (1) “Things that are not said because while some people can understand them, they cannot costlessly articulate them”; (2) “Things that are not said because everybody understands them and takes them for granted”; and (3) “Things that are not said because nobody fully understands them. They remain elusive and inarticulate” (Boisot, 1998 p. 57). As with many other research areas, the understandings and interpretations, in this case concerning tacit knowledge, has many times been subject to debate and varies among researchers and their studies. One aspect is the characteristics of the concept and the discussion concerning it being rather immeasurable and hard to grasp (Echeverri et al. 2012). This is discussed in an article from Armstrong and Mahmud (2008), where tacit knowledge is said to derive from denotative characteristics such as knowledge that people are unaware that they have.

2.4 Practical judgement

The recently described concept of implicit knowledge is a rather complex one and need a clear explanation to be understood correctly. To gain the necessary information and be able to understand the structures of employees’ implicit knowledge requires an overall understanding of their on-going practices (Gourley 2006). Some authors within this research area argue that implicit knowledge is divided into several different dimensions. In Baumard (1999), two dimensions are discussed. The first one is a cognitive dimension, which refers to e.g. paradigms, mental models; and the second one is a technical dimension, which instead refers to e.g. the expertise used in a certain context and general know-how. Continuing in the same track as Baumard (1999), Inch et al. (2008) propose a third dimension of implicit knowledge, a social dimension that includes e.g. knowledge of self, tasks and other people. The classification of implicit, or tacit knowledge as something unclear, complex and hard or even impossible to measure actually seems to be the professional exercise of judgement and overall problem solving in new circumstances (Hager 2000).

2.5 The linkage between tactics, practical judgement and implicit knowledge

Intuitive knowledge resources, more specifically implicit knowledge that is possible to communicate, should according to Echeverri et al. (2012) be separated from practical judgement procedures such as decision making or interpretations. Instead, implicit knowledge is something that influence and shape practical judgements, which in turn drives and leads to different actions or as in this case tactics. When faced with a certain customer situation, employees’ enact different practical judgements and to understand them,

different implicit knowledge resources are in use to decide what tactic or strategy to use. In other words, the actions made and tactics used by employees' depend on implicit knowledge (Echeverri et al. 2012). The connection between the three concepts is of high relevance for this thesis due to the fact that it is through these linkages that employees' decide upon how to manage a specific service customer or situation.

3. Method

3.1 Methodological approach

When deciding which methodological approach to choose, the aim of the study – i.e. to describe and explain how employees' create personal wellbeing for themselves through continuous stimulation of the customer – should guide the decision. Due to the rather unclear and exploratory nature of this study, a qualitative approach has been used. By using a qualitative approach with more focus on words, a more subjective and open assessment of the findings is possible (Bryman 2008). Also associated with qualitative methods is the method of induction, where the study is focusing on grounded theories. In grounded theory researchers go from empiric to theory, in other words, the use empiric materials to develop and/or create theories (Jacobsen 2002).

3.2 Data collection

This thesis is part of the project “The interaction role of wellbeing among travellers and drivers – a transformative perspective” lead by Per Echeverri and Nicklas Salomonson. The project looks to bring further insights on the interactions between service employees' and service customers and is performed together with Göteborgs Färdtjänst, a Swedish public transport company for disabled individuals. Through collaboration with them in this project, I have been handed the transcription of nine extensive interviews performed on service providers within the mobility service-business in Gothenburg, Sweden. The 1,5-2 hour long interviews were conducted with service providers (drivers) while they were working. By accompanying them at work, more contextual information could therefore be grasped. During the interviews the drivers were asked to describe their own work processes and give some specific examples of good or bad customer interactions. This interview material is further analysed to extract the necessary data. (To see the interview guide used in the initial data collection, See Appendix 3).

3.3 Data analysis

The analysis of these nine interviews was performed in several steps, which all included reading the texts multiple times but each time using different perspectives. I started out by thoroughly reading through the transcribed interviews from start to finish. This gave a general idea of the content and I could also distinguish some patterns within the work procedures of the respondents. The second time reading the material, I looked to find any actions, behaviours, words or phrases in the processes described that could be seen as something that inflicts employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction or wellbeing in general. The findings were individually highlighted in a different colour so that they would be easy to locate in the continuing analysis. The third time reading, I focused on the previously marked findings in the texts and aimed to find similarities or patterns linking them together. Each time similarities or patterns were found I wrote separate comments below the highlighted finding, reflecting upon them and provided a more detailed explanation. I also wrote certain words such as wellbeing or customer and employee satisfaction, representing what it was so that I could be able to see if they would reoccur in the material and identify any patterns. During the fourth and final read of the transcribed interviews, and the most important one, I used the framework from Echeverri et al. (2012). In this framework, where they show what kind of tactics, practical judgements and implicit knowledge service employees' use to handle misbehaving customers and how practical judgement, informed by implicit knowledge, guides these tactics. By creating a matrix containing the concepts derived from Echeverri et al. (2012), I could sort the gathered findings in the sections that seemed most appropriate (See Appendix 2). Due to the fact that the transcribed interviews were in Swedish, I also had to translate the findings into English, this without changing the meaning of them and thus risking misinterpretation. Some of the findings reoccurred several times through the material, Therefore, I had to make a note each time to see if any of the findings stood out more than other. Even if the focus of this thesis is not about how to handle misbehaving customers, the categories and concepts presented in their framework are rather easily applicable to other contexts and phenomena. Therefore, I could use the concepts to try to identify tactics, practical judgements and implicit knowledge that were used by employees' in creation of wellbeing, not only for customers', but also for them. (For a more detailed illustration of the data analysis procedure, see Appendix 1).

3.4 Credibility

3.4.1 Reliability

The term reliability concerns the matter if the results of the study can be trusted and also if the data collection method have been resistant to influential factors (Bryman & Bell 2013). When performing qualitative studies, it is often

difficult to avoid the fact that respondents could be influenced by the specific situation. Especially when individuals are aware that their answers will be observed, there is a risk that they might be inhibited and that different factors have influenced the reliability of the respondents' answers (Jacobsen 2002).

Another factor that might have affect the reliability is when I had to translate the transcribed answers from Swedish into English when performing the data analysis and no corresponding word could be found.

3.4.2 Validity

The term validity means that to be able to make the research relevant and valid, it is very important that the performed study actually examines the given problem. The term can be divided into the two types, internal and external validity. The internal validity concerns whether the data provided by the respondents is consistent with the purpose of the study (Jacobsen 2002). Jacobsen (2002) further states that whether the included respondents are most suited to provide the correct information and have a genuine relation to the subject is also a factor that might affect the internal validity. Since every interviewed respondent is an employee at Göteborgs Färdtjänst and all of them are interacting with customers' of the company, one can assume that they have provided relevant information.

External validity refers to which degree the findings of the study can be generalized to different situations and social environments (Bryman & Bell 2013). According to Jacobsen (2002), there are some difficulties concerning generalizability when performing a qualitative research method. The primary intention with qualitative methods is not to generalize the results to a bigger population but to observe a specific phenomenon or analyse certain behaviours in a specific context, something that have been the focus of this study (Jacobsen 2002). Due to the originality of the service settings, the findings of this study may not be generalizable to all service organisations. However, I argue that, given the same organisational structure is used, the findings are generalizable to similar service settings. Therefore, I consider the external validity of the study to be more than satisfying.

4. Findings

In the following section, the empirical material from the primary analysis of the nine interviews is presented. The chapter is divided into 3 different sections, describing three levels of tactics, practical judgements and implicit knowledge resources, which stems from a framework used in Echeverri et al. (2012) and is described earlier in this thesis (See 2.5). The findings of this study show how service employees' can create personal wellbeing for themselves in different ways and to varying extent within these three levels.

Each level will be presented separately, starting with *Routine - Rules - Norms*, followed by the somewhat deeper level of *Situational - Balanced evaluation - Personal experience* and then finally ascending towards the more complex level of *Contextual - Reflection - Multi-perspective*.

Table 2: The linkage between tactics, practical judgement and implicit knowledge

Tactics	Practical Judgement	Implicit Knowledge
Routine	Rules	Norms
Situational	Balanced evaluation	Personal experience
Contextual	Reflection	Multi-perspective

4.1 Routine – Rules – Norms

On this first level, where the tactics used does not demand any high level of reflective responses and is therefore referred to as *routine* actions or procedures. Here, the identified tactics used by employees’ are not really creating any significant wellbeing for the employees’ themselves but focus more on the wellbeing of the customer. Tactics such as how to act or dress as a service provider, how to drive safely and execution of general safety procedures when handling the customer is here prominent. Several of the respondents explained the importance of behaving in a good manner towards the customers and making sure that the journey itself was safe through calm and sensible driving. In the quotation below, a driver shortly describes his view on how to behave as a service provider.

When we approach a customer...we have to behave, we introduce ourselves with a smile and tell them our name.

Basic tactics like these are, even if not creating any significant amount of wellbeing for either party, important for the overall service quality and more linked to performing a “good job”.

The practical judgement guiding these routine tactics is referred to as *rules*. Examples of this kind of rules are organisational standards and values that direct the drivers concerning how to behave and present themselves towards the customers’, general traffic rules with clear instructions on e.g. where to stop when picking up a customer or how fast you are allowed to drive. An example of the latter one is shown in the following quotation.

...It is important to drive calm and stay within the speed limits, keep your distance to the vehicle in front and drive gently over speed bumps.

Breaking rules and standards like these will not only affect the service experience and the customer, it could also affect the employees' through monetary fines for speeding and negative sanctions from the organisation.

As mentioned earlier, practical judgments are informed by implicit knowledge. Due to the fact that the routine tactics and judgements based on rules can be seen as habitual behaviour from the employees', the implicit knowledge derives through *norms*. The ability to be service minded using basic manners and ethic principles is norms that drivers have picked up partly through their life experiences but also from their work place by observing and taking after other co-workers. These competences are similar to the routine-based tactics described above but differ in the sense that the drivers use them without thinking about it. These implicit resources, together with the rule based practical judgements, will guide the routine tactics which drivers use when creating wellbeing. Although employees' are not creating any large amount of wellbeing for themselves, the wellbeing of customers and organisational leaders may be improved in some way.

4.2 Situational – Balanced evaluation – Personal experience

Continuing to the second level, which involves more complex tactics than at the first level, these are referred to as *situational* tactics. Here, the customer becomes more directly involved in the service process and therefore, the level of interaction between the service provider and customer increases. The tactics used on this level mainly consists of basic interaction that is needed to perform the service but also to keep the customer happy throughout the service process. Several interviewed drivers talked about how they had to “maintain” the customers travelling with them. This could be simple, but yet important things, such as using humour to lighten up the mood or checking so that they are “OK” to reduce any possible stress. Tactics like these could be shaped or formed differently depending on what was needed in a specific situation. In the following quotation, one driver describes how he does to “maintain” the customer. Here, compliments are used to create a joyful environment within the service.

You can always get them in a good mood, there is always something...tell them how good their hair looks...joke a little bit to make them laugh, they love it.

The interviewed drivers frequently use humoristic comments and compliments such as these to positively influence their customers during the service process.

Moving on to the practical judgements is used to guide these tactics at this level. Echeverri et al. (2012) describes them as *balanced adjustment* but here referred to as *balanced evaluation* where service providers have to reflect and decide how far they are willing to go in order to satisfy the customer's needs without breaking organisational rules and having to face the following

consequences. For example, within the business of mobility service, drivers often get clear instructions on e.g. where to pick up and drop off customers, if and how they are disabled in some way and how much time they have for each part of the process. In the transcribed interviews, many instances occur when customers have expressed needs that differ from the stated information that the driver received in the initial order. Some customers need extra help to carry all their bags up the stairs; others just want help to get into their home. Some customers want to be dropped off at different location than initially ordered to be able to make an errand. As seen in the following quotation, drivers must here evaluate both the customer and situation and then decide what to do. Do I have time to give this customer extra help to carry his or her bags? Will the loss of time affect other customers? Or, is the customer able to get home from another location than the one stated in the instructions, without assistance?

Sometimes customers want to be dropped of at another address than stated in the order. I can see that he is OK, he understands, but I may still call the company and ask them whether I can drop him at another location.

These are all incidents where the needs and wants of customers' and the service providers overall willingness to help can clash with the employees' work schedule or organisational standards and rules.

In order to be flexible and be able to make these decisions, implicit knowledge resources in form of *personal experience* is needed. The resources at this level is previously referred to as "habitual schemes" but here substituted to *personal experience*, to further simplify the understanding of the term. When drivers faced situations like those described above, experience and knowledge concerning what to do and how to handle them is crucial for the service provider, customer and organisation. One example described in the quotation below, is when drivers work and plan their procedures one step ahead of schedule to be able to handle each situation or customer in the best possible way.

I usually try to work that way so that I have a certain margin, some extra time on my hands...time that allows me to give the customer a bit more than what I would have given if I was more stressed

Drivers are able to make time for these situations and assist the customer in the best way possible by trying to think ahead and plan their work throughout the day, knowing how things work and how everything is done and also practice good communication with the control centre of the organisation.

Most of the wellbeing that is created in these situations is, just as on the first level, created for the customers'. When receiving the extra assistance and help in certain situations customers' express their gratitude and appreciation towards the service provider, in other words, their wellbeing has increased. However, the employees' also achieve some form of increased wellbeing

through their actions, even if it is not to any larger extent. By using time and effort to give some customers' the extra help they need, time they do not actually have and effort that is not demanded of them and then getting the warm appreciation from customers' will in some ways make them feel good about themselves. One can say that the drivers create wellbeing for themselves but their main objective, and their focus, is on delivering the service and creating wellbeing for the customers'.

4.3 Contextual – Reflection – Multi-perspective

Finally, on the third and final level of tactics, practical judgements and implicit knowledge the complexity is at a significantly higher level of complexity. Here, service providers use *contextual* tactics when performing the service and handling the customers'. This means that they handle customers' in different ways depending on, not only the present conditions of the service encounter, but they also look beyond these present conditions. Concerning the tactics used, the focus on initiating a stimulating interaction with the customers' and through that be able to establish a healthy customer relationship is evident in the findings from the transcribed interviews. These interactions and relationships are key to be able to understand what the customer want and need during the service encounter. However, it also helps the service provider to figure out how a specific customer feel and then take his or her perspective into account. Just as the following quotation illustrates, drivers often try to initiate interactions with travelling customers' by trying to “trigger” a conversation.

I am not the kind of guy that just force people to start talking, usually we drive away and then you can see if someone wants to start talking and then they just start themselves. That is what's most common. Or you can start by asking some question about something and just like that, the conversation has started...Usually the journey becomes more rewarding if you form a certain relationship.

The decision to try and “trigger” a conversation, which the driver does here, is a good start to form a possible relationship with the customer. During service encounters, the job of the service provider is first of all to perform the basis of the service according to organisational standards and expectations of the customers'. However, the overall experience of a service is affected by so much more than just the end result of the performed basis of the service. Forming a relationship with the customer is one of the key ingredients to improving the service experience. Other tactics that drivers used is e.g. to improve the service by making the basic journey more special. This is done, in several instances by taking the customers' on a bit of sightseeing while transporting them to their decided destination.

When performing mobility services, the customer base mainly consists of older men and women who no longer can travel on their own without assistance and sometimes also people with certain functional disabilities and handicaps. Thus, when they are using mobility services, they are somewhat in the hands of the service provider. One can say that the customer depends on the driver during the journey and cannot do much more than to verbally communicate what he or she wants, if not less. Therefore, drivers cannot always be sure that these kinds of tactics and actions to enhance the service are something that the customer want, or even appreciate. They may actually just want to go from A to B. This means that service providers must apply certain practical judgement in form of *reflection* meaning that they need to try to read the customer, the situation and then reflect on what they are like and from that figure out what they need. Illustrated in the following quotation, drivers often go through this process both in the first part of the service encounter but also continuing throughout.

It all depends on the situation; how you experience the traveller...We have to see them as human beings regardless of what type of person they are. It all depends what kind of situation it is.

Through this process of reflection service providers can decide how to approach each customer, then consequently be able to, not only improve the service experience and wellbeing of the customer, but also affect his or her own wellbeing.

This process of reflection that the service provider goes through is of course different for each customer and situation. Within this reflection, the service provider does not only look at the situation from one single perspective, but from several. First, the perspective of the service provider is important to decide how to execute the service. Second, the perspective of the organisation is just as important, where the provider must follow the instructions and standards that are set. However, the final perspective, the one of the customer, is very important. By taking both the customers' life situation and present situation into account, service providers can shape the service encounter in a way that enhances and improves, not only the customers' experience, but gives them something more that enriches their life, even if it is just for the day. Here, illustrated in the following quotations, a driver takes a customer for some sightseeing during the ordered journey and expresses his feelings after a succeeded service encounter process.

I was driving on this road and Järntorget is right there (customer's destination) so the detour was nothing...then I thought, "nice, now I can show her this" (flowers of the cherry trees) and she was so happy for it.

...And then I felt, "damn, now I really made someone happy"

When service employees' creates moments like these, one can say that the implicit resources used by the service provider, when taking the customers' life situation into account, directs them in their process of reflection on how they

should approach different customers'. This way the provider can improve the wellbeing of themselves at the same time as the customers'.

5. Discussion

The concept of wellbeing and the recently emerged area of transformative service research (TSR) have been frequently studied and discussed during many years. This section contains a discussion on how this thesis contributes to the area of TSR and specifically the formation of employee wellbeing. The type of wellbeing identified in the findings can be interpreted as hedonic wellbeing, which according to Diener and Lucas (1999) refers to the emotional outcomes such as happiness and satisfaction and can be applied on both individuals and collectives. In an article from Nasr et al. (2014) they suggests that there is a clear connection between the wellbeing of employees and customers'. However, most part of the previous research made has focused on how consumer and societal wellbeing can be improved through service (Ostrom et al. 2010); or how positive wellbeing outcomes for employees' occur when receiving different forms of positive feedback from customers e.g. when they receive a well-executed service performance (Manes and Wolfson 1981; Nasr et al. 2014). One can see a clear pattern that research on creation of wellbeing, whether for employees' or customers', is mostly focused around the customer. The findings from this thesis takes the perspective of the employee and reveal that employees' can create their own personal wellbeing through using tactics, guided by practical judgement informed by implicit knowledge resources. This is done to improve the customer's experiences of the service by continuously running the service interaction and stimulating the customer.

In the findings section of this thesis, three levels of tactics with different levels of complexity are described which, service employees' use to create, not only customer wellbeing, but also more importantly personal wellbeing for themselves. The findings show that the level of complexity and reflective thinking within the interactions affect the possibility for employees' to create their own wellbeing. This process of personal wellbeing-creation is mainly found at the third level but I find it necessary to go through the two preceding levels to be able to explain the differences in complexity. At the first two levels the findings differ somewhat from each other concerning the complexity of both the interactions and the tactics used, but seen from wellbeing perspective and who or what it affected, they are quite similar.

At the first level, *Routine - Rules - Norms*, the complexity is at its lowest. Here, most of the procedures and actions executed are almost necessities for the service quality to be at an adequate standard. It can be tactics such as, overall appearance, basic manner, driving skills and safety procedures that are

delivered by the service employee. To know what to do and be able to implement these tactics, judgment procedures such as organisational and personal rules and implicit knowledge resources in form of norms guides the employees'. Some customers experiencing a service encounter expect that it includes necessary ingredients like these and are therefore not affected by this. However, some customers' do value these basic things in service encounters and even if their wellbeing were not affected, their satisfaction was improved. By showing their appreciation for this to the service provider, his or her wellbeing can be improved through the positive feedback. This further confirms the approach from Nasr et al. (2014) on how positive customer feedback can improve the wellbeing of employees'. This approach, together with the customer-focused approach in Anderson et al. (2013) and transformative service research, is what is said in most research concerning the field on wellbeing. From the empirical study of this thesis, support for both these approaches can be found multiple times throughout the findings.

Moving on to the second level called *Situational - Balanced evaluation - Personal experience*. As mentioned earlier, the process of wellbeing creation is similar to the first level. The focus is on the wellbeing of customers' and that employees' can experience improved wellbeing through positive feedback from happy customers (Nasr et al. 2014). However, one important difference here is the increased direct involvement of customers' and thus, an increase in interaction complexity. The drivers, worked continuously throughout the service encounter using tactics trying to, as they put it, "maintain" the customers' travelling with them. Everything from simply checking if they are "OK" during the journey to more complex matters such as deciding if they can manage to safely get home after being dropped off or if they should give extra assistance to get inside with the risk of affecting the next customer and the possibility to go against company orders. On this level, the somewhat increased complexity in the decision-making and thought processes of employees' is evident. Here, practical judgement is central for them to be able to evaluate different situations and make their decisions on how to handle them. Every journey that these drivers make involves different customers and this means that every journey is different and overall includes entirely different situations that will affect the decisions that the employee has to make. Therefore, drivers must evaluate each customer and situation, identify what they want or need to make decisions. They also have to take the perspective of the organisation into account and obey their orders and standards. Consequently, drivers must balance customers' needs against the orders of the company.

The possible wellbeing outcomes from this are still directed at customers but it is very much depending on the decision from the employee. However, regardless of the outcome of the decision, if wellbeing is generated it will be through improved wellbeing for the customer due to the efforts of the employees and improved wellbeing for the employee due to the positive

feedback from the customer. Something that once again further confirms the suggestions in Nasr et al. (2014) concerning wellbeing outcomes from customer feedback.

Now after reviewing the first two levels and the findings within them, it is confirmed that they align with previous research concerning creation of partly customer but especially employee wellbeing. Moving on to the third and final level, *Contextual - Reflection - Multi-perspective*, that is the most interesting level concerning this thesis and its overall purpose. On this last and significantly more complex level employees', similarly to the previous level, handle customers differently depending on the context. The difference here is that the employees' do not just simply take the current situation and the surrounding environment into account. The employees' takes on an even wider context by including the overall life situation of the customer and shape the service accordingly. To do this, employees' puts a large amount of effort in working proactively with the customers', which means trying to anticipate the situation and use self-initiated actions to change the outcome of the situation (Bindl & Parker 2010). This proactive style of work is something that reoccurs in different ways several times throughout the empirical material. Drivers emphasized the importance of the first impression experienced with the customers'. In these first moments, they use complex judgement procedures where they tried to read the situation and feel what the customers' are like. Through this, they are able to reflect upon the specific customers' situation and then be able to e.g. figure out how he or she is feeling at the moment and how to proceed. This process of anticipating the situation and "scanning" the customer is most prominent in the start of the interactions but reoccurs throughout the entire service encounter. This continuous proactive process also contributes to forming a healthy relationship with the customers', something that is equally important.

After going through the first part described above and reflecting upon the life situation of the customer, the employee shapes the service in a unique way for this specific customer. As described in the findings, special treatment in form of some pleasant sightseeing on the way to the customers' ordered end station is a great example. Moments like that not only enhance the experience or improve the service quality but also enrich the life of the customers'. This will certainly generate wellbeing outcomes for the customers' that they will communicate to the employees' through both verbal and non-verbal feedback, just as suggested by Nasr et al. (2014). However, adding to the research of Nasr et al. (2014), I argue that employees' take control and generate this customer wellbeing, and thereby receive positive feedback, by first implementing this proactive style of work, scanning customers to include their life situation and form a healthy relationship. After that, they can shape the service experience uniquely to each customer to create special moments of joy that makes the customer feel happy and great. It is when employees' see or hear the cheer joy and happiness of the customer, a direct result of their

delivered service, that their wellbeing is improved. To conclude, this thesis add to previous research by illustrating that generating employee wellbeing is not a something that is only achieved through receiving various kinds of positive customer feedback but also a process that the employees' themselves can control and influence and thereby be able to create their own personal wellbeing. According to Harter et al. (2002), high levels of employee wellbeing is beneficial for both employees' and customers' and could result in a form of trickle-down effect in organisations.

6. Conclusion and contributions

The research concerning the wellbeing of employee and customer entities within the area of transformative service research have been frequently studied and discussed during recent years. As mentioned above, one of the limitations in Nasr et al. (2014) was their assumption that positive feedback from customers are the only factor within the interaction between customers' and employees' that could generate employee wellbeing. This study confirms the notion that positive feedback from customers does have an influence on employee wellbeing but addresses the mentioned limitation by providing new insights regarding the creation wellbeing for employees'.

The empirical study in this thesis shows that service employees' can create their own personal wellbeing during service interactions with customers'. Employees' do not only adapt to the current service situation when shaping the service process. They also expand their perspective on the situation and context by taking the customers life into account. By doing this, together with implementing a proactive style of work and forming a positive relationship with the customers', they can shape the service process uniquely to each customer. Also, instead of only focusing on performing the basic service procedure and delivering an expected service experience, employees' tries to control the service procedure and the way it is delivered. They do these procedures to create unique and special moments that will make them more than just satisfied with the service, it would enrich their life. The cheer happiness and joy that is expressed in different ways by the served customers' has a significant impact on the wellbeing of employees'.

6.1 Managerial implications

The wellbeing of employees is an important issue within the research area of transformative service research. Previous research have focused a great deal on customers and discussed how they can affect employee wellbeing. This thesis instead focuses more on the employees' and provides valuable insight for managers in similar service businesses where the interactions between

employees and customers' are a key part of the service process. The contribution that service employees' can influence their own personal wellbeing can be useful for managers when educating and training new employees in how to approach each service situation. Managers should try to inform employees' to view the service process with a broader perspective, encourage them to look beyond the basic service and implement a proactive style of work to uniquely shape the service experience to each customer.

7. Limitations and further research

Although the results, contributions and managerial implications discussed above provide new insights, it has some limitations that could be addressed through further research. First, the data material received by Per Echeverri and Nicklas Salomonson was to be used for a different purpose than this thesis. Therefore, some of the questions asked in the performed interviews could be a bit of topic and irrelevant. Future research could be to perform new interview-studies where the questions are formed in line with the purpose of the study. Second, it is important to note that the service setting in this study is not comparable to all other service organisations and therefore future research could be to perform similar studies in different service settings to be able to elevate the generalizability of the findings. A third and final limitation is the fact that while this thesis is written in English, the interviews used as data material were performed in Swedish. Therefore, when translating the findings used in the thesis, there is a risk of misinterpretation of what the respondents said and meant in the answers due to the different languages. Another suggestion for future research is to study how the generated wellbeing of employees' is expressed on a more detailed level. This could be done through performing e.g. observational studies or in-depth interviews to gather relevant data.

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Appendix 1

1.1 Excerpts from the transcripts – Method of analysis

Illustrated below is an example of the data analysis procedure used in this study. As described in the methodology section of the thesis, the second step in the procedure were to highlight the relevant findings from the transcribed interviews with a red colour, this to make them easy to locate throughout the rest of the analysis. During the third step, blue coloured comments were written below each of the highlighted findings to further explain and reflect upon them. Examples of both these procedures are illustrated here below.

INTERVJUARE: Det är inga resenärer som klagar då ...

JANNE: Jo, det är det.

INTERVJUARE: Säger att du är sen, och så?

JANNE: **Jo, ibland kan det vara ... man kan ju bli sen ibland, och det kan ju bero på trafik och det kan vara att någon är sen innan och man inte kommer iväg. Och ibland så är ju inte folk klara när man kommer, och så där. Då kan det ju bli ... men för det mesta går det ju bra, för på de här ordena jag har kört så tror jag jag har haft två stycken som var griniga. Tre.**

INTERVJUARE: Tre? Ja, det är inte mycket du.

JANNE: Nej. Och det var ... okej att någon har varit lite så där när man hämtar dem, men under resans gång så kan man alltid få dem på gott humör på något sätt.

- JOKING AND USING HUMOUR TO MAKE "UNHAPPY" OR "CRANKY" CUSTOMERS MORE HAPPY DURING THE SERVICE
 - CUSTOMERS BECOMES HAPPY
 - EASIER FOR THE DRIVER TO PERFORM HIS OR HER WORK
- **WELLBEING – IMPLICIT IN THE TRANSCRIPT BUT SAILENT IN OTHER TRANSCRIPTS**

Appendix 2

2.1 Matrix – Structured compilation of findings

<p>1.1 - <u>Routines</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How to fasten, how to release. (IIII) - How to act/dress (IIII) - How to drive (IIII) - Safety procedures (III) - Follow firm schedule/orders (III) - Excuse (IIII) 	<p>1.2 – <u>Rules</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safety (IIII) - Org. standards on how to do/act. (II) - Speed limit, calm driving (II) - Traffic rules (II) - Certain time waiting for customer. - How NOT to act/do/behave (II) 	<p>1.3 – <u>Norm</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be service minded, take care of customer (IIII) - Basic manners, ethics (III) - Stay healthy (II) - Ergonomic work environment (I)
<p>2.1- <u>Situational</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Humour to cheer up, to convince, to calm down (IIIII) - Try to calm down the customer (IIIII) - Try to explain the reason of being late (III) - Reduce possible stress (III) - Handle customer by Silence (III) - Assist the customer (IIIII) 	<p>2.2 - <u>Balanced evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Try to put customer in the front, easier to interact. (IIII) - Drop-off at “wrong” location if customer wants. (IIII) - Help customer to carry extra bags - Customer needs more help, help to get in? (II) - Drop one person before another, against schedule. (II) - Flexibility (II) 	<p>2.3 – <u>Personal experience</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good interaction with the “control centre” (IIIII) - Planning to avoid stress (IIIII) - Knowledge about the work process and how to act. (II) - Experience of process, “in the spine” (II) - Avoid certain routes due to traffic. (III)
<p>3.1 – <u>Contextual</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Customer relationship (IIIIIIII) - Good customer interaction (IIIIIIIIII) - Initiate the interaction to “trigger” conversation (IIIIIIII) - Customer should feel in good hands (IIIII) - Improved service → Giving extra, sightseeing, a nice time, extra help, clear info (IIIIIIII) - Personalized service (III) - Recognizing customer (III) - Give compliments (II) - Create joyful moments during service (III) - Extra personal assistance (IIIII) 	<p>3.2 – <u>Reflection</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proactive work (IIIIIIIIIIII) - Continuous check-ups (IIIIIIII) - Improved service, long-term effect. (III) - First impression importance (IIIIII) - Try to “feel” what the customer are like and what they need (IIIIII) - “Read” the customer (IIIIIIII) - Read the situation (IIIIIIII) - How to improve the situation → hot/cold, comfort, help (IIIIII) - Reflect on why customer is in a bad mood/sad (II) - Not judge by appearance (II) 	<p>3.3 - <u>Multi-perspective</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take customer Life situation into account. (IIIIII) - Take the customers’ present situation into account (IIII) - Ignore lack of time, focus on care for customer (IIII) - Enable customer independence (IIIII)

Appendix 3 – Interview guide (translated into English)

Trigger questions:

How do you feel about being a mobility service driver?

What is a good journey for you?

How do you know that you are doing a good job?

Wellbeing:

What factors in your job makes you feel good?

What do you do to achieve high levels of wellbeing at work?

What factors in your job reduce your wellbeing?

Describe a “good” day

Describe a “bad” day

The interaction:

How do you handle situations such as...

- When you get frustrated...
- Feel anger...
- Feel joy...

How do you handle different travellers...

- different handicaps
- different ages
- different personalities

How do you do to have a good interaction with the traveller?

Special situations:

- Carpooling versus single-driving
- Different times of the day, or the year
- Boarding (show how to grip, how you stand, what you say or don't say)
- Drop-off (show how tangibly do)
- When you approach
- When you say goodbye
- During the journey itself

Driver (service) competence:

What would you say distinguishes an especially competent driver?

What is especially hard to do (of the things you describe)?

The underlying organisation:

What can be done within the administration of your company that would make it easier for you to do an even better job?

