A strengths-based approach to customer vulnerability

Special Issue Information Session
Journal of Business Research
March 2024

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Session outline

- Overview of session |
- What is an SBA approach to customer vulnerability?
- What are the differences between Strength-based and Deficit-based approaches
- Why adopt SBA in service research and practice?
- What is the scope of the special issue?
- What are the potential topics for this special issue?
- What are the journal submission guidelines and process?

What is a strengths-based approach to customer vulnerability?

Humans like to sort and classify

We like to put people into categories

Label the person – characteristics: Places the condition first as the description ie **homeless person** (identity-first language)

Label the situation- context: Places the person before the condition ie **person experiencing homelessness** (**person-first** language) (Dunn and Andrews 2015)

*Note some communities prefer identify/condition-first language ie deafness, blindness, autism

We should classify the circumstance not the characteristic

Person-first: you see the person first, shifts focus from the condition to the person (labels the situation).

Research shows that people perceive person-first language as less offensive (Uduehi and Reed 2018)



Humans are hard-wired for the negative (deficit)



Biological survival
We have learnt to pay more attention to danger and risk.
We act faster.



Mission/role of government/NGOs Historically, role has been paternalistic
have power over others to save them harm (or themselves)



Traditional role of government as protector and provider
Helping role rather than facilitating self-help



Beliefs about the condition:
Identity-first (homeless people) reflects beliefs that a condition is permanent, can't be changed



Beliefs about who is responsible:
Identity-first (homeless people) reflects belief that the condition was in the person's control and they were not willing to change

A time-line of consumer/customer vulnerability research



1990

1st definition of consumer vulnerability

Investigated dissatisfaction & complaint behaviour

"Vulnerable consumers are those who are at a disadvantage in exchange relationships where that disadvantage is attributable to characteristics that are largely not controllable by them at the time of the transaction"

Andreason and Manning 1990, p13

1997

1st approach to targeting strategies for vulnerable consumers

Identified level of market acceptance for appropriateness of harmful/les harmful products for high/low vulnerability.

Smith and Cooper-Martin 1997

2005

1st Framework of contributing factors and consumer, market and policy responses to vulnerability.

Shifted focus from WHO experiences vulnerability to WHAT constitutes consumer vulnerability

"Consumer vulnerability is a state of powerlessness that arises from an imbalance in marketplace interactions or from the consumption of marketing messages and products"

Baker, Gentry and Rittenburg 2005, p134

2010

1st dynamic approach to consumer vulnerability (consequences of customer vulnerability become future antecedents of the market system)

Expanded Baker et. al. 2005 framework to include market imbalances and active/passive consumer response.

Adkins and Jae, 2010 *Journal of Macromarketing*

2013

1st TSR article – centrality of addressing consumer vulnerability for wellbeing.

Anderson, Ostrum, Corus, Fisk, Gallan, Giraldo, Mende, Mulder, Rayburn, Rosenbaum, Shirahada and Williams 2013,

2017

1st Special issue on Consumer Vulnerability

Rosenbaum, Seger-Guttman & Giraldo 2017 Journal of Services Marketing

2022

1st consensus definition of consumer vulnerability

"unique and subjective experiences where characteristics such as states, conditions and/or external factors lead to a consumer experiencing a sense of powerlessness in consumption settings"

Riedel, Messenger, Fleischman and Mulcahy 2022, p

2022 New strengths-based definition of customer/consumer vulnerability



Previous definitions that use deficit framing:

- Problematise the behaviour as atypical
- Position vulnerability as a trait or individual characteristic
- Often reflects the gaze from a privileged position which amplifies the deficit tone
- Reinforces powerlessness and reduces implied agency



Past definitions conflate hardship with vulnerability



We broadened term from consumer to customer to be inclusive.

> **Experiences of vulnerability are subjective perceptions of susceptibility, which are part of the human condition that may come to pass with the passage of time, prompt introspection and give rise to greater strength and resilience**

Raciti, Russell-Bennett, Letheren, 2022 Journal of Marketing Management

What are the differences between Strength Based and Deficit Based Approaches?

Strengths-based not deficit approach to vulnerability



Traditional deficit-approach to people experiencing vulnerability

- Focuses on what people lack that needs filling
- Passive – disempowering and victimising
- Often leads to paternalistic interventions
- Solutions are designed FOR them



Strengths-based approach to people experiencing vulnerability

- Focuses on what people have that can be leveraged
- Active – empowering and gives agency
- Leads to people-led interventions
- Solutions are designed WITH them

Case: WBP Language Glossary

Introducing some of the phrases and words that can be used in place of the commonly adopted deficit-based terminology. Try to apply as many of these changes as you feel comfortable with and remember it's a learning process – making small steps towards strengths-based language throughout daily interactions is recommended.

Strengths-Based Language	Deficit-Based Language
Experiencing housing stress	Homeless
Experiencing a period of vulnerability	Vulnerable/At-Risk
Leverage strengths	Respond to problems
Opportunity; Situation of heightened volatility	Crisis
Engage	Intervene
Empower	Control
Adapt to	Reform
Understand	Diagnose
Support	Fix
End-use and person oriented	Expert-oriented

Strengths-Based Language	Deficit-Based Language
Focus on potential	Focus on problems
Inclusive	Exclusive
Movement	Epidemic
People-centred	Mandate-focus
Change the systems and processes to empower people	People expected to adapt to systems and processes
People are at odds with current system	People are inherently bad/selfish
Unique	Deviant
Encountering barriers to engagement	Resistant
Build flexibility	Rigid
A result of many different structural, social and personal circumstances	Their fault

From: Hammond, W., & Zimmerman, R. (2012). A strengths-based perspective. A report for resiliency initiatives, 1 – 18.

Five project features that were reframed for strength



Project Title

High tech vs high touch support: Preventing homelessness for mature women.

Women's Butterfly Project: empowering mature women to maintain secure housing using high tech and high touch



Design Principles

Removal of tangible, emotional and psychological barriers to prevent housing stress

Leveraging tangible, emotional and psychological strengths to enhance wellbeing and maintain secure housing



Persona Profiles

- Risk profile
- Language: Lack of…. Loss… Missing ……
- Focus on barriers

- Strength profile
- Language: possess, skills, seeking
- Focus on benefits/motivators



Quiz

- Risk likelihood
- Negative experiences and emotions - worry, anxiety,
- Serious tone

- Stability likelihood
- Positive experiences and emotions - happiness, home-making, socialising
- Uplifting tone



Tools

- Language –support, being helped
- Focus on resources

- Language – wellbeing, self-help
- Focus on human capabilities

Why adopt SBA in service research and practice



Strength-Based Approach in Research

Strength-based research should-



adopt an empowerment orientation that focuses on community, individual strengths, resources, meaningful relationships, and activities.



have an intentional focus on including measures and tools that seek to understand the many strengths of populations experiencing vulnerability

start with the “what’s right with people” question (Hammond and Zimmerman 2010).

Strength-Based Research

(Mollard et al. 2020)



Includes research questions that lead to **empowerment, growth** and **positivity** beyond just problem-focused questions



Focuses on **capabilities, strengths,** and opportunities



Adopts a **participatory** approach and do research **with** and **by** instead of **about** the individuals or groups



Uses language that is **person-centered** and **optimistic** and leads to positive perceptions



Identifies and study **social context** and the resources that exist in communities



Engages research participants with **respect**, them to offer and share their own **expertise** about their situation



Offers evidence-based interventions developed **in collaboration with** the participants

Methodology for Strength-Based Research



Both qualitative and mixed methods are important in understanding the nuance, subtlety, and depth of individuals' strengths and experience



The intentional integration of qualitative and quantitative components through mixed-methods research may increase meaning, relevancy, and understanding of the contexts



The researcher intentionally asks strengths-based questions (e.g., "What is working well for you this moment?", "What do you think you do well?", "What connections do you have in your community?")

5R Guidelines for a Strength Based Approach to Codesign with Customers Experiencing Vulnerability

(Russell-Bennett et al., 2023)

1. **Reframe** the issue label
2. **Relate** to the client
3. **Revise** the language
4. **Rewire** the brain through reflection
5. **Redesign** methods

Researcher's Checklist for Strength-Based Research

Researchers must ask themselves in each stage of research:

- Does my research tend to place blame on the participants?
- Does my research label the person or group AS vulnerable?
- Does my research consider larger systemic context?
- Does my research (unintentionally) contribute to negative pervasive and implicit beliefs about the participants/population?
- Does my research (unintentionally) reinforce negative hegemonic systems or thinking?
- Does my research use the language that promotes pessimism or hope?



What is the scope of the special issue?



This special issue has a wide scope. We hope to:



to receive **multidisciplinary** collection of papers, not only from service scholars, but also from colleagues in other business or social science disciplines and those papers that draw on literature from **outside of business research** will be given priority.



to receive conceptual work that offers critical synthesis and **new insights and directions** rather than bibliometric or literature review articles.



to receive papers that consider **the environmental factors** affecting vulnerabilities that individuals experience including **the role of the service ecosystems and contextual factors**.

What are the potential topics for this special issue?

Potential Topics



Foundational Insights

Conceptualizing strength-based approaches and their dimensions.

Understanding the impact and effectiveness through empirical evidence.



Strategic Applications

Design and delivery in Transformative Service Initiatives (TSIs).

Practical applications in various service contexts and organizations.



Ecosystem and Cultural Dynamics

Analyzing service ecosystems and addressing tensions with strength-based approaches.

Investigating cross-cultural determinants and their effects on adoption.



Organizational and Methodological Perspectives

Exploring enablers, barriers, and methodological innovations for implementation.

Potential Topics



Service Constructs and Critical Perspectives

Examining the role of service constructs and adopting critical marketing perspectives.



Interdisciplinary and Cross-Disciplinary Insights

Learning from societal-focused disciplines and integrating service technology.



Sustainability and Social Impact

Addressing sustainability concerns and extending the transformative service research (TSR) work.



Communications and Engagement

Leveraging strength-based approaches in service marketing communications and customer engagement.

Useful Resources



A useful guide to understanding a a strength-based approach is a report by Hammond and Zimmerman 2010.

This guide outlines 9 principles and a language glossary.



The UK Social Care Institute for Excellence has a number of resources that demonstrate how the strengths-based approach work in different settings.



Organization case studies applying a strengths-based approach to customer vulnerability. A customer vulnerability symposium was hosted in Australia in 2023 with the theme of a strengths-based approach.



Positive Psychology has a website with a free toolkit on using strengths-based approaches in psychological interventions. Download it here

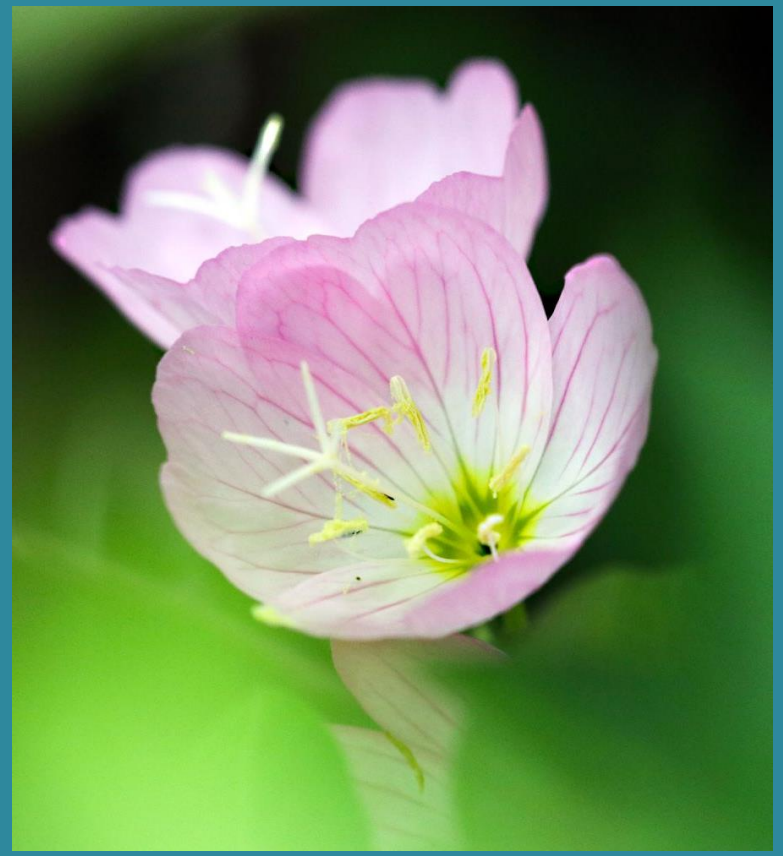
Get inspired from the world around us!



A mother's love inspires us to nurture and care for others.



Volunteering together creates bonds and inspires us to help one another.



The beauty of nature inspires us to appreciate the world around us.

What are the JBR submission guidelines and process?



Manuscript Submission Information:



Submission portal opens: October 1, 2024

Paper submission deadline: November 30, 2024

All manuscripts should be submitted via Editorial Manager: https://www.editorialmanager.com/JOBR/default.aspx

All submissions will go through the JBR regular double-blind review process and follow the standard norms and processes.

JBR Submission Guidelines

Manuscript must not exceed 45 double-spaced pages, with 1-inch margins, and 12 pt fonts, not counting title and abstract pages.

Tables and references should be typed on separate pages at the end.

The title page should contain title, authors, and affiliations.

An Abstract of 150 words or less and a list of four-six keywords should follow the title page.

On page 3 of the manuscript repeat the title, but not the author's names, to permit anonymity during the reviewing process.

Final accepted manuscripts typically should have less than 8000 words (all inclusive).

https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/journal-of-business-research/publish/guide-for-authors

Thank you

Q&A

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