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Well-being creation by senior volunteers in a service provider context

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Abstract

Purpose – Given the importance of senior volunteers in an ageing society, this study aims to deepen the understanding of how seniors create well-being by volunteering as service providers in terms of motivations for volunteer participation and value co-creation/co-destruction in service provision.

Design/methodology/approach – Focussing on senior volunteers acting as service providers in the tourism sector, this study conducted a programme of qualitative research with 15 senior volunteer tour guides in Japan and the UK through the purposive sampling method. The data were analysed by the Gioia method to identify data structure and create a conceptual model.

Findings – Seniors start with a mixture of different motivations, not only symbolic and health ones. However, after a certain period of training, they become more aware of their volunteer role as service providers and may strive to maximise the benefits to their clients. The overall performance of such a role supports their well-being. They may also experience episodes of value co-destruction; such negative experiences may be overcome by building good relationships with their colleagues in the organisation.

Practical implications – The paper identifies organisational support ideas for senior service provider volunteers aimed at overcoming negative experiences and achieving well-being, in terms of training and improved communication between organisation members.

Originality/value – This study contributes to the transformative service research literature by constructing a model to showcase the relationship amongst expectations of volunteering as a service provider, service delivery and well-being creation. This paper also discusses the positive and negative effects of volunteer service delivery on senior volunteers' well-being.

Keywords Volunteer motivation, Value co-creation, Value co-destruction, Well-being of seniors, Service provider

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

This paper describes how seniors who participate in a service delivery process as volunteers shape their well-being. As statistics show, an increasing number of senior citizens (aged 60 years and older) tend to participate in service provision as a volunteer (World Health Organization, 2019). According to previous studies, volunteering provides various well-being benefits to seniors, such as physical health (Dury *et al.*, 2014; Morrow-Howell *et al.*, 2003), life satisfaction and emotional well-being (Rebok *et al.*, 2004; O'Shea, 2006; Pavlova and Silbereisen, 2012) and eudaimonic well-being (Keyes, 1998) such as achievement of

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psychological well-being (Jirovec and Hyduk, 1999), increased sense of purpose through role identification (Greenfield and Marks, 2004) and personal growth (Macleod *et al.*, 2016).

The ability of seniors to gain value by participating in volunteer service provider activities depends, however, on whether they can overcome the various difficulties associated with volunteer activities (Magrizos *et al.*, 2021; Penner, 2002) and continue to participate (Pushkar *et al.*, 2002). Senior volunteers engaged in interpersonal service provision often experience conflicts between their sense of responsibility to provide benefits to customers and the age-related limitations of their abilities (Colibaba and Skinner, 2019). The gap between what senior volunteers can do and what they want to achieve (Gottlieb, 2002; Pushkar *et al.*, 2002) can also prevent them from volunteering (Pushkar *et al.*, 2002). The managers in volunteer organisations' need to understand the positive and negative value experienced and created by volunteering as service providers in order to continue motivating seniors to volunteer (Allen and Prange, 2021) and to create well-being.

Hence, this study aims to identify how seniors gain well-being in volunteer service processes in the context of the tourism sector. The 'silver tourism' segment has been active in terms of customers and tourism service providers, such as volunteer tour guides (Dashper *et al.*, 2021). Given this, the study qualitatively analyses data from interviews with senior volunteer guides at locations with ageing populations in the United Kingdom and Japan. Specifically, this study analyses how senior volunteers as service providers interact with tourists and achieve well-being, and hence shows the significance of senior volunteering in the service provider context. It also discusses the theoretical relationship amongst expectations of volunteering, value co-creation/destruction and well-being creation.

The findings of this study suggest that even in the context of volunteering, where organisational pressures towards customer orientation are considered relatively weak compared to business settings, seniors may form emotional stresses in the process of service delivery resulting in a reduction in their sense of well-being, which may be due to how they perceive their own service provider role. This result implies that the diverse initial motivations for volunteering (i.e. expectations of volunteering) are caused by a mechanism whereby, after a period of training to become a service provider, there is a shift in the sense of their role in the creation of social value. In service delivery, senior volunteers experience value co-creation as well as value co-destruction with clients, but basically they act to maximise the value of the client experience based on their own role awareness. The well-being of seniors is considered to be shaped by this process. These results contribute to an understanding of what service work looks like for volunteers, as opposed to traditional service work research, which has often been discussed in a business context. At the same time, good relationships with colleagues can serve not only as an opportunity to share knowledge in order to become better volunteers but also as an opportunity to recover from negative experiences in the service delivery process. The findings suggest that, to effectively create well-being through volunteering, volunteer organisations should carefully consider training programmes and create space for communication amongst organisation members.

2. Conceptual framework

2.1 Services and the service provider

In services, service providers are required to elicit customer needs and expectations and co-create value through their interaction with customers (Ogbonna and Harris, 2013; Lusch and Vargo, 2014; Frow *et al.*, 2016). In addition, service providers act as experience brokers, using their own experiences and skills to potentially help their customers to create and open up possibilities for diverse experiences (Zhu and Xu, 2021). For example, tour guides as service providers, besides helping people to access physical places that are usually inaccessible, also mediate encounters between clients and mediate empathy through

communication to increase attachment with the place (Zhu and Xu, 2021). These behaviours are thought to occur as service providers utilise their own operant resources in the context of their customers and co-create value with them (Vargo *et al.*, 2008). It is also known that when service providers have the opportunity to utilise such individual competencies autonomously, they are intrinsically motivated by their work, find their work rewarding positively influencing their work performance (Rayburn, 2014; Van den Broeck *et al.*, 2015).

On the other hand, the task of increasing customer satisfaction may require service providers to perform aspects of emotional labour in order to express the desired organisational emotions, even when they encounter situations that cause negative emotions such as anger or disappointment (Zapf and Holz, 2006; Pugh *et al.*, 2011). In addition, the customer orientation of service organisations may also increase customers' sense of entitlement (Fisk and Neville, 2011). Service providers may be chronically exposed to dealing with customers who have a strong sense of entitlement (e.g. customers who think they are special and demand special attention from the service providers), yet they are rarely able to deter excessive customer demands because they fear the consequences of not meeting customer expectations (e.g. complaints and loss of business) (Fisk and Neville, 2011). This situation can lead to a misintegration of resources between the service provider and the customer, involving interactions negatively influencing the service system (Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010). This phenomenon is known as value co-destruction (Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010; Echeverri and Skålén, 2011). Value can be co-destroyed accidentally owing to differences in knowledge levels or perceptions of the participants, or through deliberate action (Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010; Plé, 2017). Echeverri and Skålén (2011) described value co-destruction in terms of congruence and discrepancy in expectations between service system contexts. They argued that co-destruction may occur as frequently as co-creation in the value creation process. Value co-destruction has been reported in business-to-customer (Blut *et al.*, 2019; Echeverri and Skålén, 2011; Quach and Thaichon, 2017; Sthapit and Björk, 2019), business-to-business (Mills and Razmdoost, 2016; Prior and Marcos-Cuevas, 2016; Corsaro, 2020) and customer-to-customer (Kim *et al.*, 2020; Lund *et al.*, 2020; Stieler *et al.*, 2014) contexts in the services and public sectors (Makkonen and Olkkonen, 2017; Järvi *et al.*, 2018; Engen *et al.*, 2021). As a result, service providers are known to experience burnout and negatively impact their own well-being (Zammuner and Galli, 2005; Lings *et al.*, 2014).

Thus, in service work, service providers utilise their own resources to propose value to their customers, and in supporting their customers to have diverse experiences, they are considered to be shaping well-being in the form of job satisfaction. On the other hand, the pressure of business loss may force a response to even deviant customer behaviour, leading to value co-destruction and undermining well-being. What are the similarities and differences when seniors participate in service provision as volunteers without the pressure of business loss? The next section and beyond draws on the volunteering literature to discuss the importance of the motivational perspective as the driving force behind activities when examining the underlying factors that lead to value co-creation and value co-destruction.

2.2 Volunteering in a service

Volunteering is an activity in which the resources of a volunteer are integrated with other resources to co-create value for the volunteer and other beneficiaries (Conduit *et al.*, 2019). It must be noted that volunteers' engagement, a positive psychological state linked to various individual and organisational outcomes (Brodie *et al.*, 2011; Alfes *et al.*, 2016), promotes value co-creation (e.g. Hollebeek *et al.*, 2019). This is because the engaged individual 'allocates resources towards their role, and they intensely and persistently apply these resources to role performance' (Alfes *et al.*, 2016, p. 598). Conduit *et al.* (2019) found that volunteers create

different forms of value using different cognitive, emotional, behavioural, social and spiritual dimensions of engagement, depending on the beneficiary's context as a value co-creation behaviour (Laud and Karpen, 2017). The service beneficiaries phenomenologically determine the co-created value (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Lusch and Vargo, 2014) and subsequently the resultant value returns to the volunteer in the form of direct feedback (e.g. expressions of appreciation and pleasure). Volunteers can also acquire value by reflecting on their own experiences in the co-creation process, gaining insights, experiencing growth and receiving encouragement from their colleagues. Volunteer engagement positively influences service quality, a volunteer's intention to continue volunteering (Vecina *et al.*, 2012) and the volunteer's psychological well-being (Vecina *et al.*, 2013).

Value co-destruction in volunteering has received limited coverage in the academic literature. However, volunteers who interact with beneficiaries as service providers may misintegrate resources or induce customers to misuse resources when creating value. For example, volunteers known to provide high-quality services may be misperceived by beneficiaries as professional service providers and not volunteers. These misconceptions may lead to the misintegration of resources. In that case, the volunteer reduces the likelihood of receiving positive feedback from the beneficiaries and diminishes the volunteer's value gained through a reflection of the experience.

What is the fundamental factor that causes value co-creation and value co-destruction in volunteering processes? In this study, we consider that it is motivation that drives the activity. In the next section, we will discuss the motivation of senior volunteers.

2.3 Volunteer motivation

Clary *et al.* (1998) studied people's motivations to volunteer and found that volunteering can offer six benefits to the individual: (1) express their values related to altruistic and humanitarian concerns for others, (2) receive benefits related to learning, (3) build relationships with others, (4) obtain vocational benefits from engaging in activities, (5) protect an individual's ego from personal problems and (6) achieve self-enhancement, such as personal growth. Here, the protective benefit in (5) is concerned with eliminating the negative aspects surrounding an individual's ego, which is related to the self-enhancement benefit in (6), which involves a motivational process centred on the growth and development of the self. Some benefits are strongly associated with symbolic consumption such as value expression and self-enhancement (Walter and Samu, 2002). These show how volunteering enables participants to maintain, extend and change their identities through the formation of new roles.

In the context of senior volunteers' motivation, it must be noted that biological and life stage changes influence seniors' age-related self-concept (Mathur and Moschis, 2005). For example, upon retirement, seniors may become socially isolated and lose their identity as they leave the work world (Carstensen, 1995). Given that the loss of identity can influence various well-being dimensions, senior citizens are driven to expand their identity (Noble and Walker, 1997; Hogg *et al.*, 2009). This identity quest is also seen in the field of services marketing. In this field, the concept of symbolic consumption has been considered a consumption behaviour involving identity expansion using goods and services. Hoyer *et al.* (2016) described symbolic consumption as emblematic (demonstrating one's values), role acquisition (helping to fulfil new roles), connectedness (reinforcing personal connections) and expressiveness (communicating personal uniqueness through the consumption of goods and services). In the volunteering context, seniors acquire symbolic value by consuming the opportunity to volunteer. As a volunteer tour guide, for example, a senior can acquire a role (role acquisition), form connections with tour participants and colleagues (connectedness) and provide explanations (expressiveness). By continuing to provide guide services, at a societal level, seniors can demonstrate that they are a form of ambassador representing a location or area (emblematic). Thus, for seniors, volunteer experiences are a means

of satisfying the motivation to expand their identity and values (Hartline and Ferrell, 1996; Hogg *et al.*, 2009; Mitchell and Clark, 2020; Walter and Samu, 2002). Therefore, the symbolic value-seeking motivation of seniors has a potential to increase their volunteering engagement to realise value co-creation, thereby enabling them to achieve eudaimonic well-being.

However, seniors may also see volunteering as an opportunity to maintain and improve their health. Health value-seeking has become increasingly important, given the increasing focus on healthism in society. Healthism 'places the fulfilment and maintenance of good health as primary in peoples' lives and identity projects, so that a consumer's everyday thoughts and practices are directed towards this goal' (Yngfalk and Fyrberg, 2015, p. 436). Particularly, organisations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) have been actively promoting the importance of healthy living for seniors after retirement, and countries like Japan and the United Kingdom have been implementing policy initiatives in that direction. In other words, it has become a social norm to take responsibility for one's own health. Calasanti *et al.* (2018) showed that youthfulness amongst seniors reflects their active lifestyle and individual responsibility for health. Given the view in gerontology that various processes and values related to ageing are socially constructed (Phillipson, 2003; Phillipson and Baars, 2007), such norms are also likely to influence the value creation processes (Edvardsson *et al.*, 2011; Blocker and Barrios, 2015). Therefore, the health value-seeking motivation has the potential to enhance seniors' volunteer engagement, thereby improving their well-being through volunteering.

2.4 This study

Previous studies highlight that seniors tend to be motivated by the potential for expanding their social identity (i.e. to be a contributing member of society) and maintaining a healthy life (i.e. to be active), whilst experiencing life-stage related changes (e.g. retirement or becoming a grandparent) and biological changes (e.g. ageing). These two distinctive motivations of senior volunteers are thought to be the driving forces that increase their volunteer engagement and promote their value co-creation activity as a volunteer (e.g. Narushima, 2005).

However, according to research on service delivery, service providers may be forced to adopt emotional labour practices or accept customer deviant behaviour to minimise business failure which may ultimately undermine their personal well-being. Is the same phenomenon also occurring when seniors are volunteering as a service provider? Volunteers may not be concerned about business failure, but other social and personal motivations may be involved. Even if the seniors have diverse motivations for volunteer engagement at the start of volunteering (Wuthnow, 2012), the specific motivations in the volunteering process may change the behaviour of senior volunteers, thereby influencing the value volunteers gain from such activities.

Therefore, it is important to consider their underlying motivations for volunteering and how those motivations influence value creation for the volunteers as service providers. In this study, we interviewed experienced senior volunteers about their motivations for volunteering as service providers and their experiences of well-being creation, both positive and negative.

3. Methodology

We conducted qualitative research in Japan and the United Kingdom to understand how seniors in ageing countries gain value from volunteering. Qualitative research is effective in finding the underlying concepts and the relationship amongst them (Hyde, 2000). The data collection targeted senior citizen volunteers providing tour guide services (Hartline and Ferrell, 1996).

3.1 Ageing population and senior volunteer participation

Both Japan and the United Kingdom have an ageing population. According to a United Nations report on ageing (2020), in 2019, the proportion of senior citizens was 28% in Japan (estimated to grow to 30.9% by 2030) and 18.5% in the United Kingdom (estimated to grow to 21.5% by 2030).

The old-age dependency ratio was 51% in Japan in 2019 (estimated to grow to 57.7% by 2030) and 31.7% in the United Kingdom (estimated to grow to 38.5% by 2030). The ratio is particularly high in Japan, where the population is ageing and declining simultaneously.

In 2012, the Japanese government amended the Act on Stabilisation of Employment of Elderly Persons extending the upper age limit for employment to 65 years, in order to ensure that the seniors are well-positioned to contribute to society even after retirement. An employment and lifestyle survey in 2020 showed that about 30% of those who did not want to be reemployed after retirement wanted to engage in hobbies and volunteering (Okuma *et al.*, 2020). According to the Council of Social Welfare in Japan, the number of volunteers participating in organisations increased from 6.2 million in 2014 to 6.6 million as of 2018 (Council of Social Welfare, 2018).

In the United Kingdom, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) estimated that about 19.4 million people of all ages formally volunteered in the period 2018–2019. During this period, people aged 65–74 years were the most likely to volunteer formally on a regular basis, with more than one quarter (28%) volunteering at least once a month and more than a third (39%) volunteering at least annually (The National Council for Voluntary Organisations, 2020). This demonstrates the prevalence of volunteering in both Japan and the United Kingdom and shows that seniors in the United Kingdom volunteer more actively than those in Japan.

3.2 Interview procedure

The Japanese survey targeted senior volunteer guide groups from the Volunteer Tourism Guide organisation established in 1994 to provide guided sightseeing tours to domestic tourists for free. This group recruits guides who can speak the local dialect and introduce the tourists to a city's qualities and attractions not mentioned in the guidebooks, and thereby increase the footfall of admirers and repeat visitors to the city. As of 2017, the organisation had 344 volunteers. According to the president of the organisation, most members are of retirement age (65 years and older), and their average age is around 70 years.

In the UK survey, one author interviewed members of an organisation comprising mainly senior volunteers specialising in offering guided tours for a small fee. The target organisation was founded in 1968 and had 500 members as of 2017. Most of its members are of retirement age (over 65 years). Although the Japanese and UK organisations comprise senior members, the guided tours target visitors of all ages. The structure of the UK organisation is similar to that of the Japanese one, except for the difference that the UK organisation charges a small fee—a type of fee charged to cover the expenses of the volunteers (Cnaan *et al.*, 1996; Bussell and Forbes, 2002).

The researchers collaborated with volunteer organisations in both countries to conduct purposive sampling (Tongco, 2007) for the surveys. First, the local convention bureau introduced the Japanese research team to the Tourist Association, which, in turn, introduced the team to the volunteer organisations. One author explained the research purpose to the organisation's personnel and collaboratively found eight members (four men and four women) willing to participate in the study. At that time, the shortest and the longest serving volunteers had 13 and 23 years of experience, respectively. Some were homemakers who started volunteering after their husbands were transferred to other parts of the country. Others started after fulfilling caregiving responsibilities towards relatives. All the respondents started volunteering as a result of or in response to a life event. We conducted semi-structured interviews amongst these respondents. One author conducted the Japanese interviews, coded the answers in Japanese and translated the answers into English. Specifically, we ended the data collection after interviewing eight members, as, at this stage, we received similar views and had achieved data saturation.

Similarly, in the UK study, we conducted semi-structured interviews amongst seven members of the organisation (three men and four women). At that time, the shortest and the longest serving volunteers had 12 and 25 years of experience, respectively. They started volunteering before or after their retirement under circumstances similar to those in Japan–as a response to or anticipation of a life event. Table 1 presents the details of all the interviewees.

The sampled seniors had the experience of interacting with customers in volunteer organisations delivering specific services (i.e. guided tours). We conducted purposive sampling with individuals having more than 12 years of experience. After each interview, we reviewed the content and checked for data saturation, which is also in line with the perspective of obtaining 'sufficient information power' (Malterud *et al.*, 2015, p. 4).

Participation in the interviews was voluntary. Before the interview began, potential participants were informed that the interview transcripts obtained would be anonymised and published as a paper after analysis. Only those who agreed to do so participated.

3.3 Interview protocol

To shed light on the reality of and motivation for volunteering as a service provider, questions were asked about how they sharpened their guide skills, what they value in guide services, and what role they play. To shed light on the reality of value co-creation/destruction, we asked how they interact with tour participants in the field, what value they get from being involved in volunteer activities, and whether the benefits they receive from volunteering as a service provider are consistent with their expectations. We believed that an understanding of the discrepancies between expectations and reality would provide a better understanding of volunteers' negative interactions with tour participants, which influence volunteers' well-being. Since the interview was semi-structured, the wordings of the questions varied between the different interviewees, and probe questions were used to delve deeper into their responses (Creswell *et al.*, 2010).

3.4 Analysis

The aim of this study is not to generalise the findings. Rather, it is about constructing a theory as "a statement of concepts and their interrelationships that shows how and/or why a phenomenon may occur" (Corley and Gioia, 2011, p.12). To this end, this paper focussed on

Table 1.
Details of interviewees

	Initial	Volunteering experience (in years)	Gender	Starting of as a volunteer guide
JP	K	23	Male	After retirement
	S	18	Male	Before retirement
	Y	23	Male	Before retirement
	A	23	Female	Return from relocation
	F	14	Female	Before retirement, after fulfilling caregiving responsibilities
	OD	18	Female	Return from relocation
	OK	18	Female	Before retirement; after the death of a relative
	T	13	Male	After retirement
UK	AN	20	Male	After retirement
	F	23	Male	Before retirement; after being made redundant at work
	J	12	Female	After retirement
	K	23	Male	After retirement
	KI	25	Female	Before retirement; after being made redundant from work
	R	25	Female	Before retirement; after childcare
	A	13	Female	Before retirement; after childcare

generating grounded theory by structuring the qualitative data (Japan and UK) based on the Gioia method (Nag and Gioia, 2012; Gioia *et al.*, 2013).

The Gioia method is one of the inductive research methods for generating grounded theories (Gioia *et al.*, 2013; Gehman *et al.*, 2017). It has the assumption that 1i) the (organisational) world is essentially socially constructed and that (2) informants are "knowledgeable agents" that means people know what they are trying to do and can explain quite knowledgably what their thoughts, emotions, intentions and actions are (Gehman *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, it is recommended that researchers do not proceed with the interpretation of the data from the beginning, but rather classifies them using the language used by the informants as much as possible (Gioia *et al.*, 2013), focussing on similarities and dissimilarities through a process akin to open coding (Corbin and Strauss, 1990) as the first order analysis. In the second order analysis, the researchers use "researcher-centric concepts, themes and dimensions" (Gioia *et al.*, 2013, p.18) through a process akin to axial coding (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). Through this process, the textual data are structured. This methodology makes it possible to contribute to showing how certain phenomena may occur and their interrelationships (Corley and Gioia, 2011; Gehman *et al.*, 2017). As our study aims to explore the perceived experience that seniors have as volunteers in service delivery, we considered the Gioia method to be suitable.

According to Pandey *et al.* (2022), the advantage of the Gioia method over classical grounded theory is that it leaves scope for co-creation of theories by considering both the informants and researchers as knowledgeable agents, which is expected to provide new insights (Mäntymäki *et al.*, 2019). Regarding the coding process, the two authors in this paper respectively checked the consistency of the codes and their representative content, as well as the validity of the interpretation of the data structure as an output. These procedures are considered an advanced feature of the methodology on grounded theory generation as "it enables us to be true to the informants experiences whilst also meeting the scientific criterion of presenting evidence systematically" (Gioia *et al.*, 2013, p. 17).

However, as has been pointed out, data structures is 'a static picture of a dynamic phenomenon' (Gioia *et al.*, 2013, p. 22), they do not allow us to gain a deeper understanding of the process of well-being creation for senior volunteers. The Gioia method emphasises the importance of considering the mechanisms that led to such a data structure (Gehman *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, the themes generated in the second step and the dimensions in the third step were used to model the data, taking into account the connections between the concepts in an interpretative way (Saldana, 2015).

4. Results

Figure 1 shows the data structure, including first-order concepts and second-order themes, which led to the generation of the aggregate dimensions.

4.1 Expectations of volunteering

We identified three themes under expectations of volunteering—using skills to contribute to society, maintaining mental and physical health and incentives.

4.1.1 Using skills to contribute to society. We found that the senior volunteers are volunteering as service providers in the expectation that they will be able to use their skills to contribute to society in their retirement. For example, one of the UK respondents volunteers because he wants to use his language skills to provide tour opportunities for foreigners who do not speak English well enough.

> Almost all I do is in French, German, Italian or Spanish. Those who have languages earn more and get more work. We avoid doing English-speaking tours to let others who can't speak languages get opportunities. (UK Guide AN)

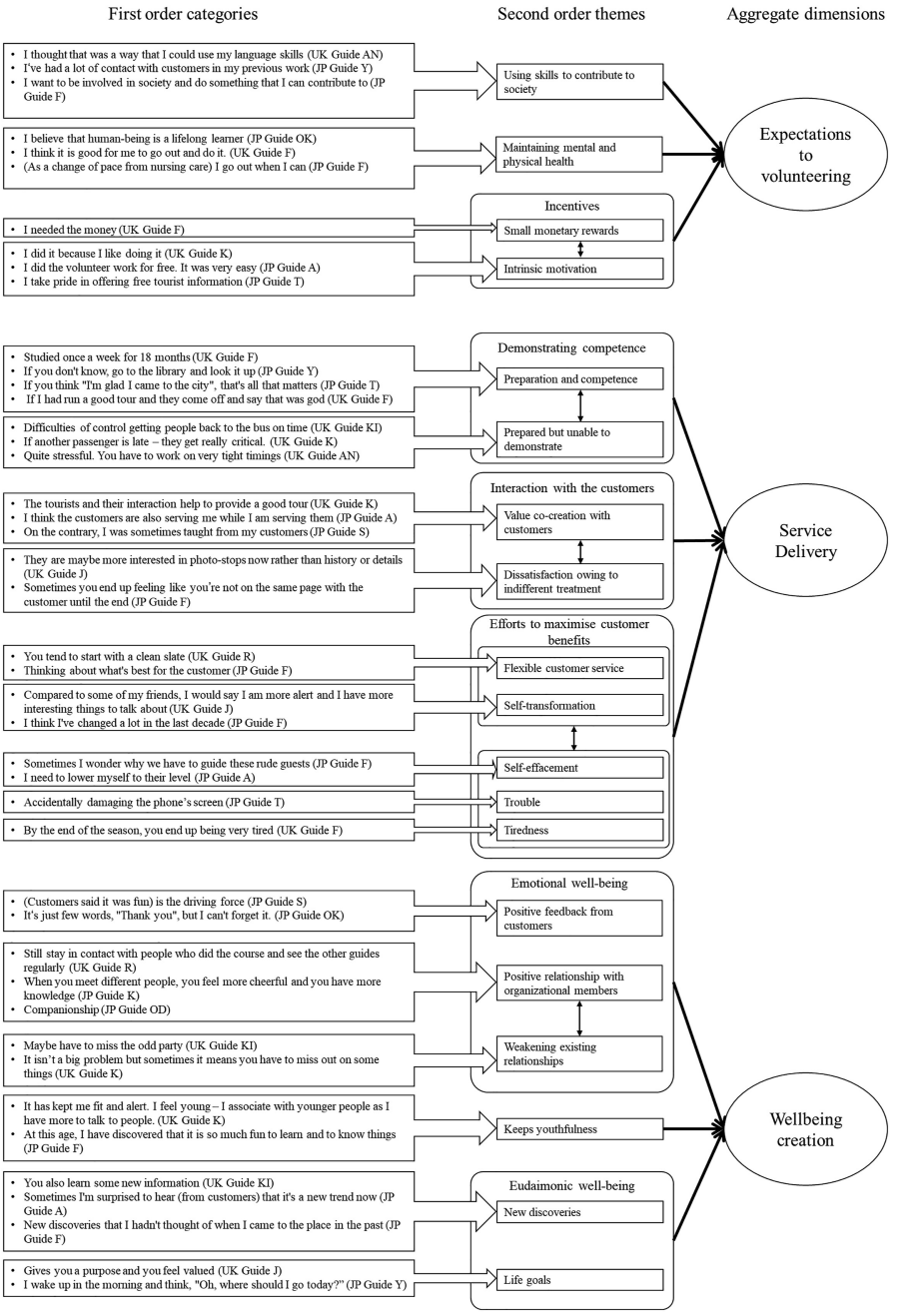

Figure 1.
Data structure

4.1.2 Maintaining mental and physical health. A guided tour is a service that introduces tourist attractions while walking with tourists. This means that they have to be outside and have to learn about the places they visit. We found that these requirements provide an opportunity for senior citizens to maintain their health. In addition, as volunteers, they can work when they want to, which is an advantage for them; for a particular Japanese volunteer, who was taking care of her parents at the time, the volunteer opportunity was a tool to maintain her mental health through a change of scenery.

> At a time when I was in a bit of a depressed state, caring for my parents at home, I came across the idea of being a tour guide. In the beginning, you have to learn about the place because you don't know anything about it. It was a good distraction for me because I had to read a lot of books at home. Also, because we are volunteers, we only have to show up on the days that we are available, so that was a good opportunity for me. (JP Guide F)

4.1.3 Incentives. Because UK Volunteers receive a small financial reward, some UK senior volunteers said that the financial reward was the motivation for their work. On the other hand, some seniors were proud of being unpaid, saying that even if they were paid, they would still participate because they liked it. As for being unpaid, some of the seniors mentioned their attachment to the place, not only because they like the work of guided tours, but also because they like the place itself. This is highlighted in the following responses:

> I absolutely love it and hope to do it for many years to come. Love meeting all the different people and showing them the place. (UK Guide R)

> (The city I'm showing you around) has such a good situation. I think it's hard to find a city that is so compact, that has so many elements still here, that you can walk around so much as a tourist. (JP Guide A)

Thus, the incentives for volunteer participation include extrinsic motivations (in which pleasure comes from something the task leads to, such as money) and intrinsic motivations (in which pleasure comes from the task activity itself) as identified by Locke (1991).

4.2 Service delivery

Three themes of service delivery were identified—demonstrating competence, interaction with customers and efforts to maximise customer benefits.

4.2.1 Demonstrating competence. Demonstrating competence is the behaviour of playing the role of a tourist guide. A senior guide described experiences in which the guides recognised their role as guides, fulfilled their role by providing tourists with accurate information about the history of the region and gained satisfaction when their work was highly valued by the participants. This is evidenced through the following quotes of the volunteer guides:

> I went to the library to learn more about a historical figure's family history. We presented this history to the visitors, which led to their satisfaction. One visitor with an affiliation to a historical figure wished he had learned about the figure's history from his grandparents when they were alive. He acknowledged that it was the first time he had learned where the information about his family history was located. (JP Guide S).

> It was an entertaining and interesting experience. I want to visit the place with the tourists again. This gave me confidence as a guide. (JP Guide F).

> If I had run a good tour and they come off and say that was good—that gives you a lift—it makes you feel good. (UK Guide F)

In this context, it must be noted that senior volunteers are required to undertake several months of training to become a guide. After the training, they are officially recognised as guides and

awarded a tour guide badge. It is believed that the physical evidence of a badge or uniform stimulates seniors' role awareness (Zeithaml *et al.*, 2009). By holding these roles in high regard, the tour participants stimulate a sense of success and a good feeling amongst the senior guides. The outcome of training and tourist evaluation are highlighted in the following quotes:

> Went to the tourist guide training. Studied once a week for 18 months—as well as tests/exams had to do excursions on the training etc. Then you got your badge presented to you at the city chambers. (UK Guide F).

> You have to study for 10 months at the "volunteer university" and if you finish it successfully, you can join us if you want . . . Our uniform is a yellow jumper, but sometimes people come to us because they want to wear a yellow jumper. In terms of brand, I think our organisation is widely known . . . (JP Guide K)

However, even with careful preparation for tour guiding, it can be stressful when tourists deviate from service process (e.g. not meeting on time), which results in seniors being unable to perform to the best of their ability as a guide. For example, a UK guide mentions the following experience.

> They have become more critical of other passengers—so for example if another passenger is late—they get really critical. If you are waiting for 2 people from a cruise ship—the other 43 sometimes tell you just to leave them because they are late—they get so irate. (UK Guide K)

Thus, it can be assumed that senior volunteers are balancing their service provision between their own opportunities to exercise their abilities and the possibility that these may be compromised.

4.2.2 Interaction with the customers. In the interaction with the customers, senior volunteers experience value co-creation that senior volunteers and tourists contribute their knowledge to each other in order to create good tourism value. If knowledge is shared between the guide and the tourist, the tourist can get more tourist information from the guide and the senior volunteers themselves can learn more about other areas and latest trends. For example, it is true that the guide knows a lot about the history and culture of the place, but they may not know about the latest youth culture or the history of the place where the tourist lives.

> When I guide young people, they tell me the names of sweet shops in the area I'm showing them. What's that? Where is it? and they look it up on their phone and tell me. There are a lot of situations like that now. (JP Guide Y)

> Through conversations with customers, you naturally come to know about things not only in the place but also in the whole country. I also get to know how castles in other areas are. Then, I will know what is the characteristic of this castle that I guide. (JP Guide T)

However, during interaction with customers, the customers' indifference towards a guide often leads to negative feelings on the part of the guide. Although seniors seek symbolic value through volunteerism to expand their own identity, their identity (existence value) as a guide is damaged when tour participants disregard the experience or advice of the former. One interviewee expressed this feeling by commenting that 'my talk was like background music' (i.e. futile efforts) because the tour participants ignored them. A senior volunteer fails to achieve symbolic value fully if the senior receives indifferent treatment as a tour guide. This results in anger and dissatisfaction and is expressed in the following words of two tour guides:

> There were about five people in a scenic spot. 'We'll take a picture', the visitors screamed. My talk was like background music. And I was so mad that I said I was going home after telling visitors, 'do not ridicule me. (JP Guide T).

> There is now tick box tourism where they have to get certain photos rather than learning anything. Took a group to St Giles Cathedral but they didn't want to go in, they just wanted to take a photo—didn't have any questions. (UK Guide K).

4.2.3 Efforts to maximise customer benefits. Efforts to maximise customer benefit refer to the attitude of the senior volunteers towards the customer during the service process. A tour guide service may have a fixed route, but it may also be flexible and change the route according to the tourist's requirements. The guides are therefore prepared to be flexible. Furthermore, based on their successes and failures, they reflect on their own way of guiding and try to improve themselves in order to satisfy their clients as much as possible. For example, one of the Japanese guides has reviewed her guiding style and changed it to increase the value to her clients (we named as self-transformation), as shown below.

> At first, I was trying hard to explain about the city. However, I realised that it is not necessary to explain every detail owing to the availability of information online. I think there are more important things we need to tell the visitors. Hence, the focus is to inform visitors about places that I find interesting, beautiful, and historical. (JP Guide OD).

On the other hand, the attitude of trying to satisfy the customer can lead to physical exhaustion (tiredness) and a needless humiliation of oneself. A guide must act for the benefit of the tour participants. In order to gain the favour of the participants, the tour guides may invest emotionally, which may lower their self-esteem (we named as self-effacement). A Japanese guide recounts the following experience.

> Volunteer guides are only there for the customers. It's like I'm trying to cater to my customers' moods. I don't know, somewhere along the line, I need to lower myself to their level. Sometimes I have to give up a little bit of myself .... I'm sure (other volunteers experience such things too ...). (JP Guide A)

In addition, customer service that goes beyond the role of the guide (e.g. being a photographer when tourists take pictures) can lead to accidents. Some senior tour guides feel stressed when they are compelled to perform other, non-routine and unfamiliar tasks, including using smartphones to take photos. Owing to the increasing popularity of posting photos on social media, tour guides are often asked for assistance to take photos with smartphones. In such situations, a senior guide unfamiliar with smartphones may accidently damage a participant's device. This can be regarded as an accident caused by engagement to perform non-routine guide services as explained through the following comment:

> A senior male volunteer assisted a visitor in taking a picture, but he dropped the visitor's smartphone, accidentally damaging the phone's screen. This accident caused him a lot of trouble. (JP Guide T).

4.3 Well-being creation

We identified three themes of well-being creation—emotional well-being with positive feedback from customers, feelings of youthfulness and eudaimonic well-being.

4.3.1 Emotional well-being. Emotional well-being is defined as emotional pleasure. This well-being can be achieved when a client gives positive feedback as a result of providing a guide service. One of the Japanese guides describes how being told 'thank you' by a client left a very strong impression on her and motivated her to continue volunteering.

> I still remember the very first customer I showed (I have no idea what I showed him), but I think I did my best. When we said goodbye at the end, he said 'Thank you' in his greeting. It was only five words (A-RI-GA-TO-U), but I couldn't forget those five words and it made me want to do volunteer work again. (JP Guide OK)

Senior volunteers also gain emotional well-being from the positive relationships they develop with organisation members. They cherish the emotional value of spending time with friends and colleagues in a shared activity. A UK guide mentions about interaction with organisation members and a Japanese guide highlights the sharing of problems through interaction with organisational members as follows.

> Social bonds definitely were built during the course and these relationships have continued except when people have died—we still meet for coffees, birthdays etc. There is a network of friends. There is a lot of interaction between the guides whilst they are waiting on the coaches for the tourists to come off the ships—that is one of the main reasons why I like doing it. I like going for breakfast with them before we get the tourists. (UK Guide KI)

> (About the women's informal group in the organisation) We talk about various problems that volunteer guides face, and we talk about them frankly. We try to have a meeting once every two months. We hope that this will give us a chance to get to know each other better and talk about things that make volunteering fun. We like to make it a place where we can get advice from senior guides and listen to their worries about what to do in such a situation. (JP Guide OK)

Although they build new social relationships with organisation members and improve mental health through intellectual stimulation, these benefits come at the cost of the time and physical resources they can allocate to their personal relationships as evident in the following statements:

> If you only do 2 a week, it isn't a big problem, but sometimes it means you have to miss out on some things. (UK Guide K)

> If you have a partner, it might upset them that you are always out (particularly if you go on extended tours). The tours get in the way of doing other things—so sometimes you have to turn down invites to things because you are booked to do a tour. (UK Guide AN)

4.3.2 Feelings of youthfulness. Several seniors have achieved anti-ageing outcomes, such as retaining a sense of youthfulness and maintaining attention, by serving as a tour guide. One of the Japanese guides was concerned about his retirement and explains the health value of volunteering outdoors. A UK guide also explains that meeting different people through volunteering is what keeps her young.

> I was always worried that I will not be able to interact much with people after retirement and suffer from mental deterioration. However, volunteering gives an opportunity to interact with people. Hence, when I heard about volunteering, I decided to try it. Volunteering also gave me an opportunity to learn about history, which is one of my interests. Since this role entails performing outdoor activities, it positively influences one's health. (JP Guide S)

> Yes, compared to some of my friends, I would say I am more alert and I have more interesting things to talk about. I feel healthy and meeting all of these people keeps me young. I don't know how I would occupy myself if I wasn't doing this. It has given me a lot of confidence, which is what I needed after my husband died. (UK Guide J)

Youthfulness is not the only value that comes from interacting with people. The value of volunteering for seniors also lies in the stimulation of their brains by learning new things. Through volunteering, one of the Japanese guides realised that learning is really interesting, and she is working to satisfy her own intellectual curiosity.

> At my age, I have discovered how much fun it is to learn things and to know things. I don't feel like I have to learn things at school, I feel like I want to learn things. I want to know. That's why I've been attending various courses and reading books. (JP Guide F)

4.3.3 Eudaimonic well-being. Eudaimonic well-being means 'mental health with human potential that, when realised, results in positive functioning in life' (Keyes, 2006, p. 396). It is

related to the development of skills in order to become a better person. Senior volunteers discover new things from their activities and use them to develop their own skills. One of the Japanese guides says the following about when she provided guiding services to disabled people.

> We also get requests from blind people. He/she wants to see the cherry blossoms when they are in bloom. I thought, 'How can I make him/her feel the cherry blossoms?' . . . I let him/her touch the branches and smell the blossoms at a cherry tree on a street where few people pass. I thought of something that would help the blind to understand the scenery, like touching and smelling the flowers.. . . It turned out to be very good for the blind people. I think this kind of experience is very important for my development as a guide. (JP Guide F)

We also found that senior volunteers found purpose in their lives by taking part in volunteer activities. A UK guide explains that volunteering gives them a reason to get out and about and is a valuable activity for older people who tend to be confined to their rooms, helping them to form new routines in their lives.

> I think it is good for me to go out and do it. It forces you to go out, because there are a lot of older people sitting at home isolated. Gets them out of bed and it is good for me. (UK Guide F)

5. Discussion

5.1 Model

This study aims to deepen understanding of the process by which senior volunteers engage as service providers and attain well-being. Previous studies found that volunteer activities positively influence the various forms of well-being; however, there are insufficient studies of the process of how senior volunteers create well-being in the value creation process of volunteering as service providers. Based on the interview analysis, we developed a conceptual model for well-being creation through volunteering as a service provider as shown in Figure 2.

The survey results suggest that the motivation of senior volunteers is formed by the expectation of extrinsic and intrinsic rewards, in addition to motivation to make a social contribution and improved health, which are typical motivations of senior people that this study focusses on (health value and symbolic value-seeking). However, rather than a volunteer having a single motivation, there may be a mixture of motivations in the mind of

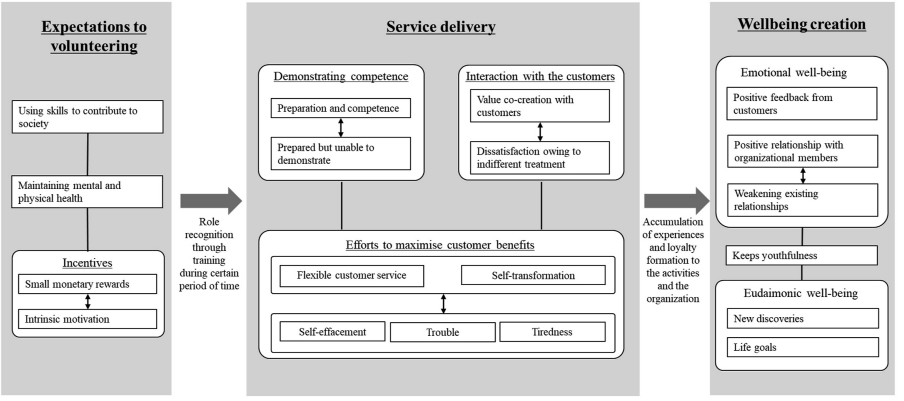

Figure 2.
Well-being creation process of senior volunteers

each person, making it difficult to identify what is paramount. Instead, what is more important is how such motives are linked to service delivery.

The research shows that senior volunteers acting as service providers do not always co-create value with clients during the service process. This may result from the customer making some deviations in the service process. As Tsaur and Teng (2017) pointed out, in order to conduct the tour safely, sometimes guides are required to mediate conflicts between tour participants. These conflicts can cause stress, particularly to senior volunteer guides and thereby disrupt mental health. For example, the inability of a subgroup of participants to return to the meeting place by the specified time can upset other participants and negatively impact the guide's performance. A senior volunteer guide with an awareness of his/her own responsibilities as a guide would take measures to prevent such problems by using extra resources. However, the need to obtain extra resources (Laud *et al.*, 2019) may affect the guide's mental health.

In spite of these disadvantages, senior volunteers acting as service providers may be motivated to maximize the benefits to their clients as they put time and effort into receiving training to become a service provider (i.e. a tour guide, in this study). During more than 10 months of preparation, they have learnt not only about the knowledge needed to be a tour guide, but also about the goals and behaviour of tour guide services. As training programmes have the function of increasing commitment to the role of service provider on the job (Solomon *et al.*, 1985), they may also have this purpose for volunteers. They will try to use what they have learnt as much as possible, and if it does not work, it is thought that they will self-reflect and motivate themselves to improve.

As for the creation of well-being, we found that the value of the service is enhanced by the promotion of value co-creation with customers in the service process and that this mechanism leads to the acquisition of emotional well-being through actions, such as thank-you letters from customers. Interestingly, the stories of successes and failures experienced in the service process are shared with colleagues in the organisation, and learning from each other leads to the formation of health and eudaimonic well-being, such as the feeling of youthfulness and the desire to constantly absorb new things and build better social relationships. This is similar to the phenomenon of diminishing value (Vafeas *et al.*, 2016), where the resulting value may not be optimal but may nevertheless lead to some improvement in the well-being of the customer and the provider. This well-being is achieved through continuous volunteer service provision. Even though the senior volunteers experienced what they considered to be value co-destruction with customers during the service process, they eventually tried to resolve this experience by talking about it with their colleagues. The senior volunteers thus found a place where they could recover from the consequences of value co-destruction.

5.2 Theoretical implications

In this study, we found that there is a mixture of motivations in the mind of each senior person in volunteering as a service provider. Especially, in terms of seniors' typical motivations (symbolic value-seeking and health value-seeking), our study found that the senior volunteers perceive the value of volunteering as the opportunity to learn and discover new things as they age. This implies that health-related well-being creation (eg. 'being youthful') is not motivated by personal desire (e.g. 'I want to learn about this because I am curious'). Rather, it may be motivated by the desire to better perform a role as a service provider (e.g. 'I want to learn about this because I want to improve my tour guide knowledge and skills'). Similarly, engagement motivated by symbolic value-seeking can drive volunteers to discipline themselves as guides. These motivations can set healthy patterns in their lives and encourage them to continue participation in volunteer activities. Thus, this study suggests that the symbolic and health-value-seeking motivations, which are typical for senior volunteers, have

the potential to be synergistic and enhance value creation in the service provision process. In traditional service work studies, when asked why service providers try to enhance value creation for their clients, the answer may be in response to operational or organisational goals (e.g. Ogbonna and Harris, 2013). This study proposes a more diverse answer to that question, including motivation related to oneself.

However, the synergy between these motivations may also lead to value co-destruction. This is because, as a result of the synergy, the symbolic value-seeking motivation may encourage volunteers to perform the role as a service provider and drive the volunteers to prioritise the interests and concerns of the beneficiaries over their own personal needs. Particularly, the Japanese data revealed that guides often engaged in self-effacement, lowering themselves to insignificance, beneath the customer. In Japanese culture, self-effacement manifested through external communication with superiors is considered to be an act of humility. Volunteering is generally based on the assumption that actors have equal relationships (e.g. Graham, 2007). However, in the role of service provider, the seniors may prioritise the needs of the customers over their own personal needs. The value co-destruction occurs when senior volunteers become overly conscious of their service provider role and thus misuse their resources in the presence of others. This overly role-conscious engagement may create value for the beneficiaries by making them deviate from the tour itinerary or by driving the guide to perform non-routine tasks (e.g. taking photos). However, it may also cause accidents or delays in the tour schedule. This can cause stress for senior volunteer guides. The immersion of seniors in volunteer service provider activities may also impact on their own existing personal relationships.

Previous studies on service providers have pointed to the phenomenon of employees being forced to suffer emotional stress in order for their organisations to avoid business failure (Fisk and Neville, 2011). However, the findings from this study suggest that even in contexts where organisational pressure is considered relatively weak, it is possible for service providers to form emotional stress and reduce their well-being, which may be due to the perceived demands of their own service provider role. It is already known that the creation of well-being through service involves conflicting values (e.g. the desire for others to be happy even if they are economically impoverished) in the process of resource integration (Kelleher *et al.*, 2020); and it has become a topic that needs to be advanced in TSR as the study of the transformative paradox (Russell–Bennett *et al.*, 2020), which posits that there are incompatible well-being dimensions in the process of well-being creation. Our finding provides a concrete explanation of the tendency of people to compete for well-being dimensions in relation to self and society from the perspectives of engagement and value co-destruction in the context of volunteer service and responds to the call to advance the study of the transformative paradox.

Value co-destruction also occurs when customers misuse the resources. In a service framework, customers may prioritise their desired actions by perceiving themselves as the sole beneficiaries of a service and may interact with volunteer service providers without being respectful of the fact that they are volunteers, which can decrease the quality of the co-creation experiences (Wang *et al.*, 2019). The value co-destruction analysis revealed that such behaviour in beneficiaries reduces the volunteers' self-respect. People perceive a lack of respect if processes that resolve disputes and allocate resources fail to maintain fairness (procedural justice) (Simon and Grabow, 2014; Hollander-Blumoff, 2017). A professional guide may ignore unfairness for the sake of customer satisfaction and customer-centricity; however, in a service run by volunteers, a sense of unfairness can lead to value co-destruction and volunteer dissatisfaction.

Thus, this study presents insights into how seniors' motivation to volunteer may be linked to value co-creation and co-destruction in a service framework, and how this may impact on the creation of well-being. These findings provide new perspectives for transformative

service research by illuminating the contribution of voluntary service provider activities to an ageing society.

5.3 Practical implications

From a practical perspective, this study suggested how senior volunteers can improve their well-being by participating in volunteer service provider activities. Given this, volunteering presents an attractive option as a second career after retirement. However, this study does identify that senior volunteers can face a variety of negative experiences in the service delivery process. Nevertheless, in order to enable seniors to shape their well-being, the following types of support may be needed.

The first is in relation to the training of senior volunteers. The aim of the training is to clearly communicate the role and social value of the volunteer service provider. The knowledge required for different volunteer jobs will vary, but it is important that managers in volunteer organisations not only equip volunteers with the necessary knowledge, but also share with them the expectations of what the volunteer service does and what its purpose is. By doing so, they may be motivated to self-manage their development through volunteering. In business, service providers may be required by the organisation to perform emotional labour to improve satisfaction for customers. Volunteers, on the other hand, usually are not under such pressure from the organisation, while an over-identification with their own service provider role can lead to value co-destruction. It is considered important to explain this to volunteers by showing them specific examples. In addition, it is also important to set limits for what is to be expected of a service provider. For example, in the Japanese data, a volunteer developed the attitude that he does not force himself to do something he does not think he can do. It will be important for volunteer managers to make senior volunteers aware that senior volunteers do not have to work too hard and to foster an attitude of doing as much as they can manage to avoid value co-destruction with customers.

Secondly, there is a need to create a space that encourages interaction with other members of the organisation. According to this study, sharing knowledge and experiences of success and failure with like-minded people can satisfy intellectual curiosity and help people recover from negative service experiences. This is consistent with a study which reported that support from co-workers has a stress-relieving effect on employees in working environments when they are treated unfairly by others (e.g. customers) at work (Sloan, 2011). Even where the interaction with customers is negative, a positive experience can be created by receiving supportive feedback on one's performance from colleagues in the volunteer organisation through reflective meetings and peer feedback (Allen and Prange, 2021). Therefore, in creating an attractive place for volunteer service providers, it is important that the organisation develops a culture that encourages positive peer evaluation and support.

6. Conclusion

This study aimed to deepen the understanding of the volunteering process by which senior volunteers who are engaged in service provider roles attain well-being. Through interviews with Japanese and UK senior volunteer tour guides, we developed an indicative conceptual model for well-being creation in service provider volunteering, consisting of the expectations of volunteering, service delivery, and well-being creation. We presented insights into how a senior volunteers' motivation to volunteer may be linked to value co-creation and co-destruction, and how senior volunteers manage their negative experiences and create their own well-being. In particular, we demonstrated that

senior volunteers and beneficiaries sometimes misunderstand their own identities and fail to use their resources effectively, which may lead to value co-destruction in the service process and may force volunteers to compete for well-being dimensions in relation to self and society as the transformative paradox. The findings suggest additional perspectives for transformative service research in terms of the contribution of service provider roles for an ageing society.

By integrating the results of the analysis of the interview data with senior volunteers in Japan and the UK, the present results extracted the multifaceted impact of service volunteering on the creation of well-being. While both countries have similarities in terms of their ageing populations, there might also be differences in terms of volunteering, culture and attitudes towards service. Future research should include collecting such data in both countries and examining the factors in each country that may be appropriate for promoting service activities to seniors in other countries. In addition, our findings only relate to the tour guide context and the external factors that are characteristic to this context. Therefore, to generalise our findings, future research should analyse the behaviour of senior volunteers engaged in other services and contexts through quantitative approaches. The data collection only covered the service provider perspective in this paper; it may also be important to examine how customers experience interaction with senior service provider volunteers.

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