

Refurbishing services and how services enhance consumer well-being

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore how services might impact a general consumer sense of everyday well-being or life satisfaction.

Design/methodology/approach – It was decided to focus on the existential benefits of refurbishing services and see how they might impact owner sense of self and overall life satisfaction. A qualitative study was fielded which consisted of analyses of website testimonials of customers of refurbishing services for products such as pianos, watches, boats, bicycles and other durables. Also analyzed were results from one-on-one qualitative interviews of customers of refurbishing services and selected refurbishers of similar products.

Findings – The study suggests that refurbish services provide a mix of hedonic and eudaimonic benefits. They provide an enhanced sense of self and general well-being insofar, as the newly restored item connects owners to loved ones, to other collectors or fans and to their own personal life histories. It also connects them to the refurbishers and their “magic”. Insofar as refurbishers invite customer involvement in the process, they co-create how the process will proceed, so customers feel a special involvement and gain an understanding of the workings of the item and how to best use it.

Practical implications – Refurbishing services might offer, like all the new internet-mediated sharing services, a more sustainable alternative to the buy-and-dispose consumption behaviors found in most world economies.

Originality value – This paper provides insights into the lives of products after purchase and the roles of relevant service providers. It also provides examples of how service providers in general might deepen and facilitate customers’ feelings about themselves and their daily lives. It shows how service providers can enhance customer hedonic and eudaimonic appreciation of provider knowledge, skills and efforts.

Keywords Sustainability, Well-being, Quality of life, Netnography, Service systems, Service trends

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

“My father bought a two-tone version [of Rolex Datejust] when I was a wee lad and I grew up lusting after that time piece ever since. I found exactly what I wanted at a pawn shop in Dania Florida [...] [but years later] it was running real fast. So I took it to an expert and told him to do his magic and he did. I’ll be damned if this doesn’t look like a brand spanking new, factory fresh 40-year-old Rolex. If only I looked as good and healthy as this watch. My guy said it was a beauty and should easily give my heirs lifetimes of trouble free service with regular service.” (Al, refurbished watch owner)

Given the prevalence of services in all aspects of everyday life (Anderson and Ostrom, 2015) and the emphasis on services research as a promising topic (Kunz and Hogreve, 2011), it is interesting that a group of researchers have begun researching the potential of services to impact people’s feelings about themselves, about daily life and well-being in general. The emerging field of transformative service research (TSR) (Anderson *et al.*, 2013) is aimed at “improving the lives of individuals (both consumer and employees), families, communities, society, and the ecosystem more broadly” (Anderson and Ostrom, 2015). TSR in turn spun out of transformative consumer research, a new field aimed at consumer well-being, including emotional well-being and

social, economic, physical, spiritual, environmental and political well-being (Mick *et al.*, 2012).

Most of the research in this area thus far focuses on services for vulnerable people, that is, people with serious problems such as homelessness (Blocker and Barrios, 2015), chronic illness (Spanjol *et al.*, 2015), financial issues (Mende and van Doorn, 2015) and hepatitis (Yao *et al.*, 2015). In this paper, we consider how service providers might enhance peoples’ lives, but our focus is less on helping people get out of severe negative life situations and more on how to improve their overall well-being. We suggest that there is a gap in the TSR literature and that it concerns how service providers might optimize consumers’ daily lives. Ostrom *et al.* (2014, p 564) call for research that examines “how positive outcomes, such as happiness, life satisfaction, and strong physical and mental health can be engendered by the nature of service interactions or co-creation activities between employees and customers”.

Norton *et al.* (2010) investigate how service and other brands can facilitate not only personal and shared hedonic goals (wine bars, Disney) but also self-actualization goals (e.g. education) and altruistic goals (e.g. site: “How to Use Facebook to Help Your Cause”).

The current issue and full text archive of this journal is available on Emerald Insight at: www.emeraldinsight.com/0887-6045.htm



Journal of Services Marketing
© Emerald Publishing Limited [ISSN 0887-6045]
[DOI 10.1108/JSM-11-2016-0395]

Received 14 November 2016
Revised 16 May 2017
20 July 2017
16 August 2017
21 August 2017
29 August 2017
18 September 2017
Accepted 21 September 2017

We chose to explore well-being attained through product refurbishing services. As Kahneman *et al.* (1990) would argue, in accordance with the “endowment effect” (Shu and Peck, 2011), people are often more reluctant to give up an object than they are to buy new. Valuation of objects is high upon initial purchase and can grow with time of ownership (Strahilevitz and Loewenstein, 1998). These authors claim that length of ownership increases owners’ opportunities to interact with items, consider their various benefits and generally become more familiar with them. There might be an innate tendency to keep something the longer one owns it and maybe even have it refurbished. It might also be true that the item has become integral to the other items the person owns and uses to define him or herself (Belk, 1988).

As more refurbishers advertise their services online, there are more and more customer testimonials and websites which extol the skills of the refurbishers and how the newly refurbished items make them feel better about themselves and the world around them. In a nutshell, it appears that having a special item refurbished might give the owner a deep sense of self-satisfaction, a good feeling about oneself and life in general. Csikszentmihalyi (2000) wrote of “micro-flow” experiences. These are not transformative experiences in the sense of profound, life-altering changes but rather low level, positive, reflective moments of “attending” to treasured items and possessions.

Transformative service research, refurbishing services, and customer well-being. Hedonic well-being versus eudaimonic well-being

In keeping with research on TSR by a number of writers (Zayer *et al.*, 2015; Blocker and Barrios, 2015; Mende and van Doorn, 2015; Ringberg *et al.*, 2007), we base our approach on theories of consumer well-being including hedonic and eudaimonic outcomes. We explore how these emotions are represented in refurbishing experiences and how they relate to theories about self-identity, as this identity is formed in social situations such as the customer–refurbisher interaction.

The type of well-being associated with refurbishing services is mostly hedonic. For the customer, refurbish experiences seem to be dominated by feelings of happiness and intense sensory gratifications (Ryan and Deci, 2001). The sound, feel and beauty of a newly restored piano is probably very gratifying. Regular consumption behavior (purchase then discard) has been associated with short-lived hedonia in the case of the “hedonic treadmill” (Brickman and Campbell, 1971). Consumers make purchase after purchase as the happiness with each purchase wears off. Refurbished goods might have a different effect, that is, rekindling the owner’s feelings of pride and ownership. While mass retailers (particularly of fast fashion, trend items) can be accused of putting consumers on hedonic treadmills, refurbishing services might be thought of as facilitators of hedonic second winds.

Hedonic emotions, however, are thought to overlap considerably with another type of positive emotions, eudaimonic emotions (Deci and Ryan, 2008). Anderson *et al.* (2013) call for an agenda for TSR that focuses on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. Eudaimonic well-being is thought to be associated with doing what is worth doing and with living in

accordance with one’s true self (Ryan and Deci, 2001). Belk (1988) argues that cherished possessions are closely tied to the sense of self. To the extent that a cherished item is brought back to life, the owner’s sense of self might similarly be reinvigorated. Ryff and Singer (2008) go further, claiming that eudaimonia covers motivations including self-acceptance, sense of purpose, positive relationships with others, personal growth and control over the environment. It is possible that having a personal item refurbished makes the owner feel good because it engages all these gratifications. Seeing some special possession revitalized might celebrate and confirm to the owner, “this is who I am”.

Veenhoven (2004) and Ryff and Singer (2008) separate hedonic experiences from eudaimonic experiences in terms of duration. Hedonic experiences tend to be intense and short-lived, whereas eudaimonic experiences are less intense but can last a long time. Pleasurable experiences can also be based on specific parts of life (baseball game) versus life in general. Vreehoven proposes four types of satisfaction based on duration of enjoyment and specificity of experience. In Table I below, “pleasure” represents passing enjoyment based on a specific part of life, “part satisfaction” represents pleasure based on ongoing satisfaction with a specific part of life (e.g. job), “top experience” represents a passing experience about life in general (enlightenment) and “life satisfaction” involves just that, ongoing satisfaction with life.

In terms of services marketing, a bar that makes a good drink would provide the hedonic pleasure typical in Cell 1. Insofar as a week vacation at a Disney resort brings together many hedonic experiences to provide (ideally) a total general hedonic life happiness experience, it would fall in Cell 3. Cell 4 involves sustained life satisfaction, a state of eudaimonic well-being based on successful provision of an ongoing service such as weekly therapy sessions.

Regarding Cell 1, a consumer might initially feel high excitement (hedonia) on acquiring a new possession. This excitement is reactivated and sustained as the consumer has it refurbished (Cell 2).

The goal for service providers is a Cell 4 experience. Can refurbishing their possessions make people feel better about life in general?

Transformative service research, consumer culture theory and refurbishing services

As indicated above, some of the recent TSR articles focus on how service providers to vulnerable populations (alcoholics, drug users) enhance well-being, self-concept and self-esteem among these people through cultural processes. A few TSR articles, however, are not about vulnerable people getting out of negative situations but rather of how organizations use cultural means to help people in good situations lead even better, richer

Table I Four kinds of satisfaction

	Passing	Enduring
Part of life	Pleasure: good gin and tonic	Part satisfaction: fulfilling job
Life as a whole	Top experience: oceanic, holistic feeling, “isn’t life great!”	Life satisfaction: overall life happiness

Source: From Veenhoven (2004, p. 663)

lives. Blocker and Barrios (2015), for example, write of how upper income peoples' social consciousness is raised through interactions at a homeless shelter with homeless people. Price and Arnould (1999) describe how friendships are formed in service settings in spite of the transactional nature of the customer-provider relationship. Mirabito and Berry (2015) investigate how social movement-type mechanisms in corporate cultures facilitate improved employee health.

Similarly, having special items be refurbished may generate hedonic and eudaimonic responses through particular cultural and social settings. The smell and feel of a newly refurbished leather couch are very nice, but the appreciation of the couch is deepened if it was where the owner sat as a child with a loved grandparent. The eudaimonic worth of an item is increased if it is refurbished and becomes the basis for friendship with collectors of similar items. The meanings and values shared between customer and refurbisher might have important implications for customer feelings of competency and control.

Research goals

The goals of this paper are to explore:

- 1 How do consumers and refurbishers feel about refurbishing services and refurbished products? How are hedonia and eudaimonia manifest in refurbishment experiences?
- 2 What aspects of customer self-identity are impacted by the refurbish experience? What is the relevance of social settings such as the customer-refurbisher interaction?
- 3 What can be learned from how people experience refurbished goods that can be used to suggest new service initiatives for regular product servicing (e.g. get car repaired) that enhances customer overall happiness and sense of well-being?

Long term disposition of products including refurbishment

Terms like refurbish, restore, remanufacture and renew are often used interchangeably. It can be difficult to use these terms because the definition can vary from category to category. Automobile refurbishers define the term "refurbish" differently than refurbishers of purses or furniture. As a result, we adhere to the term "refurbish" and use a definition from Hauser and Lund (2003) which describes a refurbished item as one which is brought back to a "like-new condition, giving the product a second (or third, or fourth) life". If something is refurbished, it is rebuilt to the same condition it was in when it came from a factory. By contrast, "repaired" items are altered or improved in terms of a limited number of components.

Oakley (2014) said of refurbished furniture items, "these items are "touch stones" to our past and full of times good and not so good ones, but they are part of us in more ways than you would imagine". James (2013) said of man's possessions that "if they wax and prosper, he feels triumphant" but "if they dwindle and die away, he feels downcast". Belk (1988) argues that because possessions are a reflection of a person's identity, the more closely the person integrates a possession into his or her concept of self, the more he or she will be concerned with the care and maintenance of the object. Accordingly, we will argue that if an item is refurbished, the value proposition

includes not only financial (refurbishing versus buying new) and environmental benefits but also experiences of the self, loved ones, refurbishers, the original product designers and manufacturers.

The refurbish industry

Even though consumers tend to doubt the longevity of restored products, the refurbishing business has grown considerably around the world (Grant and Oteng-Ababio, 2012) and includes everything from cars, purses, pianos, bicycles, rugs, cameras, shoes (Allen Edmunds, Birkenstock), luggage, airplanes, hardbound books, boots, furniture, jewelry, motorcycles, boats, stoves, fountain pens and watches to trailers and clocks. This is particularly evident, for a large number of brands can last a long time (Esch *et al.*, 2006) and some restored items – such as Airstream trailers – can last indefinitely.

Hauser and Lund (2003) call remanufacturing a "hidden industry". They claim that remanufacturers or refurbishers seek little publicity, do not introduce new products or new technologies and have weak brand names and very little government influence. Research to date on restored or refurbished products has focused mainly in the areas of product design (Bras and Rosen, 2001) or operations (Gershenson *et al.*, 2003). There are a few articles on marketing restored products, but they focus mainly on profit maximization (Atasu *et al.*, 2008). Other studies evaluate the impact on sales of new products when remanufactured products are placed alongside (Agrawal *et al.*, 2015). There has not been much consideration of buyer attitudes and motivations. An exception is a recent article by Abbey *et al.* (2015). This article indicates that consumers appreciate remanufactured products the more they are discounted, that major brand names can hurt perception of remanufactured electronics, that only environmentally minded consumers care about green benefits of these products and that many consumers feel disgust at the idea of buying remanufactured personal products, that is, products that were in close physical contact with prior owners. The latter finding reflects research by Argo *et al.* (2006) which found that people are much less likely to buy clothing that has been touched by other customers in a store.

Refurbishing services have become popular web sites. The over 50 segment is growing, and these consumers seem to have deeper attachments to items than younger consumers (Belk, 1988). These attachments might suggest a growing market for refurbishing services. Also, many of the items we investigate are considered design classics, items that are widely appreciated for their unique and timeless designs (Cornfeld and Edwards, 2000; Doblin, 1970).

In the USA, the rise in popularity of cable TV channels and Google sites dedicated to refurbishing furniture, houses, cars and clothes attests to the appeal of refurbishing services. Refurbishing services are spread geographically and tend to be small, independent, privately owned and often handed from father to son (Hauser and Lund, 2003).

Methodology

In the present study, we used a multi-method, grounded theory approach over three years consisting of participant observation,

one-on-one interviews and netnographic analysis of online customer refurbisher testimonials. One author had a number of items restored over the years: a watch, a sports coat, a ring, dress shoes, book, two tables and a chair. This author became familiar with several different refurbishers and restoration specialists, was able to make visits to their shops, see them work on many products and interview them on nine occasions. He kept field notes from visits to the watch and piano restorers and still maintains all the items today.

The one-on-one interviews were of 16 adults: 8 refurbishers and 8 customers. Refurbishers were all men and worked on the following products: pianos, jewelry, furniture, refrigerator, bicycle or boats. As indicated above, restoration work is often a father-to-son business, and there are not yet many women doing this work. Refurbishers work closely with customers (often, repeat customers) and seemed to be good informants in terms of customer motivations. All customers were equally male and female (Table II). All respondents, refurbishers and customers were over 50 years old and lived in the Northeast USA, mainly upstate New York. Refurbishers were found through local business websites, and customers were reached through the refurbishers.

In-depth customer interviews were conducted on the telephone or in person in the homes of the respondents and lasted between 30 min to 1 h. None of the respondents were paid. Questions followed the grand tour format (Spiggle, 1994) and began with the general questions, "tell me about yourself" and "tell me about something you have had refurbished". Verbatims were recorded and typed and yielded over 200 pages of notes.

The netnographic approach involves gathering and analyzing customer comments from computer sites and is felt to be a source of valid data because it is unobtrusive and more natural than standard qualitative methods such as focus groups and in-depth interviews (Kozinets, 2002). There are indications that using electronic mediated communication in qualitative research obtains more valid data because the Web environment helps bring peoples' guards down and that people are more

honest than they are in face-to-face settings (Gibson and McAllister, 2009; Hinchcliffe and Gavin, 2009).

To complete the netnographic portion (Kozinets, 1999; 2002), we searched for websites dealing with "refurbished pianos", "refurbished purses", "refurbished watches", etc. and identified websites for popular refurbishers which included extensive testimonials. We downloaded, printed and analyzed over 300 transcripts from online testimonials of people who had personal goods refurbished: pianos, purses, watches, fountain pens, cars and shoes. Fortunately, there were a lot of websites, some of which have very large followings, for example, Lindeblad Pianos in Philadelphia and William Evans Furniture Restoration in Maine. A major limitation of netnographies is the difficulty of learning about the backgrounds and life stories of the writers. It would have been very valuable to understand peoples' feelings about refurbished items and the refurbishing process in the context of their identities and personal narratives. At the same time, the testimonials were often lengthy (a third were over 150 words) and there was a lot of rich content to analyze.

We took notes and cross-checked for emergent themes in the data. We tried to take a content analysis approach but did not feel that we were seeing meaningful patterns in the data.

The two of us separately read and reread the verbatims and later agreed on themes for organizing our results. The themes that emerged reflected theories about hedonic and eudaimonic responses, particularly as the latter touched on self-identity development and sub-cultural meaning systems (Deci and Ryan, 2008; Blocker and Barrios, 2015; Ryff and Singer, 2008). Our goal then became to understand what can be learned about hedonic responses, eudaimonic responses, identity development and shared social meanings through refurbishing services, that is, what happens, for example, in identity construction through refurbished goods? Contents were also read and themes were independently confirmed by two graduate students.

We researched feelings about "good quality, expensive" items such as furniture, pianos and jewelry because we wanted to maximize the opportunity to research feelings about expressive items, items in which owners might invest more emotion and might be more reflective of owner self-image. We interviewed a few retailers of refurbished electronic products (personal computers and phones) but dropped these from further consideration because these items have such high instrumental significance to owners.

Findings

In the following sections, we describe and explain how the refurbish process generates hedonic well-being as well as eudaimonic well-being. We first consider the most hedonic moment, the "reveal", then in separate sections describe the refurbish experience in terms of self-identity development and eudaimonic responses.

Key hedonic moment

When an item is refurbished, it appears to generate great excitement. Producers of television programs about refurbished cars, homes and furniture know that the "reveal" moment is highly hedonic, highly cathected. All the

Table II Profiles of participants for in-depth interviews

Pseudonym	Education	Refurbished product	Role
Paul	College	Airstream trailers	Refurbisher
Dan	HS	Piano	Refurbisher
Al	HS	Bicycle	Refurbisher
Ed	College	Sailboat	Refurbisher
Carl	Grad school	Refrigerators, stoves	Refurbisher
Zak	HS	Watch	Refurbisher
Jake	HS	Refrigerators, stoves	Refurbisher
Max	College	Computers	Refurbisher
John	College	Watches, cameras	Customer
Bob	College	Sailboat	Customer
Joe	College	Bicycle	Customer
Jill	College	Jewelry	Customer
Martha	College	Table	Customer
Will	HS	Refrigerator	Customer
Sam	College	Watch	Customer
Alice	Grad school	Couch	Customer

testimonials suggest great owner happiness with the newly refurbished items. In short, considerable attention and adulation is placed on the item. Sensory experiences including textures of newly refurbished rugs, sounds of refurbished cars and look of newly refurbished purses generate great excitement. As the opening quote about the Rolex watch revealed, the owner seemed to feel bad about his personal situation in comparison to the newly rebuilt watch: "if only I looked as good and healthy as this watch".

Of course, this remark is probably tongue-in-cheek; the owner is delighted with himself. We argue that while the watch generates a lot of excitement and attention directed toward itself, it might facilitate a new reinvigorated sense of self for the owner. The watch is a vehicle which refurbishes the owner's self-identity in terms of his past relationships (his father had a similar watch), his future relationships (his heirs will own it) and his uniqueness versus other people (few of whom own Rolexes).

Themes that emerged in owner and refurbisher comments reflected a range of owner eudaimonic self-enhancement and self-development goals.

Uniqueness – "this is who you are"

People who have items refurbished tend to be different, eccentric and this is something they value. The "distinctiveness principle" refers to a push "toward establishing and maintaining a sense of differentiation from others" (Breakwell, 1986). While the refurbish industry is growing, it is still relatively rare that people have things refurbished. When an item is at the end of its useful life, the owner can buy a new version, buy a used one or have the current item refurbished. Options 2 and 3 save money versus Option 1, but Option 3 is unique. The owner wants to retain the item, in many cases, because it is an expression of his or her unique selfhood. Having the item refurbished reaffirms that selfhood.

Piano owners say they like their own restored pianos better because they "match my style of play":

I wanted to keep a bright tone, not fuzzy and cold but definitely bright and brilliant because I play a lot of fast music, a lot of Bach, a lot of Mozart – things where the muddy tone would not be appropriate.

He voiced it in a way that reflects my quirky personality.

A man who had his 25-year-old boots restored by LL Bean said that "I broke them in so the uppers fit me really well. I just needed the bottoms but I wanted a different color". In other words, the owner feels the distinctiveness of the refurbished item in his or her own life sphere.

Refurbish customers like it that they can be creative, co-create with the refurbisher a new look that compliments their own individual style:

I like my Danish slim-lined couch which is designed for small rooms in Europe. But it was all faded. I found online some beautiful Danish fabric, so I could get enough and send it to a refurbisher I found in Wooster. It took me time to find the fabric in a traditional Danish weave. It is a light color I love - it's kind of my design project. See, there is a challenge here, if you are not rich, how can you get these sophisticated things in a reasonable way. It is one of my favorite things. I move it from house to house. It is a whitish fabric. I don't want people to sit on it!

At the same time, this respondent was a professor who had traveled extensively and developed expensive tastes yet had to live on a professor's budget. Sociologists (Malewski, 1963) call

this "status incongruity" and explain that people will use consumption behavior to ameliorate their marginal situations. People feel a need to establish self-identity when it is threatened. It might make sense that one would refurbish a valued personal item when it helps reflect to the self a desired personal identity.

It is also important that this distinctiveness be recognized socially. Sometimes, this is risky. Because many items have older styling and materials, owners of restored items confess that in the eyes of the general public, they often appear a bit eccentric. A restored bicycle owner said, "we have a pair of restored Schwinn tandem bikes and in the summer we will take them into town and get ice cream. They are conversation pieces and people think they're a little kooky but pretty cool". But there are also positive identities represented to significant others. Owners of very old restored pianos love to hear compliments about their pianos from house guests and especially love compliments from piano tuners. The restored sailboat owner loved compliments in the harbors from "knowledgeable" sailors about his refurbished 1965 wooden Concordia yawl.

Not only owners of refurbished items feel a sense of their distinctiveness but also there was also a lot of uniqueness and quirkiness among the refurbishers. Like artists according to the "great men" theory of art, they were all men. They were people who seemed proud of their unique professions and personalities. They were often reclusive and suspicious of the interviews we wanted to conduct. Many worked alone. In spite of low pay, most said they would never leave the job. Most worked in shops that were cluttered with items that were partially done and items that had historic significance. Customers noted how difficult it can be to find the best refurbishers, how one has to be "in the know". Refurbishers, like tribal shaman who transform initiates into clan members or newly dead into members of the next world, are treated by customers with a mixture of awe and respect: "he is the purse refurbish guru". Considerable service research is focused on large scale service providers (hotels, banks, insurance companies), relatively less on small service shops.

The uniqueness of many of the refurbishers is related to the combination of their warm, friendly demeanor (they want the business) with their otherworldly skill set ("it is a miracle that he was able to fix the oriental rug my dog ruined"). Thus, part of their uniqueness is that they have an aura. Benjamin (2008) defined aura as *a unique phenomenon of a distance however close it may be*. The refurbisher is present and friendly yet has an otherness or strangeness based on his abilities. The restoration service might have existential value as well as utilitarian value to the consumer.

The refurbisher's unique skill set enables him to do jobs that even surprise him. One piano restored told us, "you never know if a piano will come out really great. It is about one in five that will really sing. Then you say, ooooooh yes, this one will be really good".

In short, the shared hedonic and eudaimonic benefits between customer and refurbisher might be about celebrating not only sensory product benefits but also personal authenticity and ability, about being true to one's unique identity.

Shared love of items

Share love of items with other people

My dad gave me this watch.

Optimal distinctiveness theory propose two motivational principles, a need for “differentiation of the self from others” and a need for “inclusion of the self into larger social collectives” (Vignoles *et al.*, 2000, p. 339), which are understood to act in opposition to each other. Optimal distinctiveness occurs at a point of equilibrium between the two needs, which normally will be a state of moderate distinctiveness. The more “different” an owner of a restored motorcycle might feel from general friends and family, the more he will build his identity on his friendship with other owners of restored motorcycles. Owners of refurbished items can feel different from local people based on the item – but part of larger groups of people who share their passion for the restored items. Refurbish customers might be unique individuals so it is not surprising that they seek each other out. Large internet communities have grown up around sites for refurbished cars, furniture, clothing and watches. Car restoration shops set up booths at restored car gatherings and festivals.

If an item is refurbished because it was owned by a beloved parent or grandparent, it is often something that binds siblings together; all come together to share the enjoyment of the result and experience themselves as part of a larger family. One respondent told of how she refurbished her grandmother’s couch and how this brought her closer to her sister: “it has “in-family importance” – My sister would absolutely take it in a heartbeat”.

Older consumers might be assumed to have owned items for longer periods of time. With advancing time, possessions become more embedded in self-identities, broader meaning systems, self-esteem and social interactions. The items in the present research items which were refurbished had all been owned by the same owners for long periods of time:

I am totally satisfied with the decision that I made. I said, “I want to be here for the piano’s homecoming”. And so I took off the day, they brought it in, they set it up, and I sat and played for three hours after they left. The first song I played was “Amazing Grace” because I kept think it’s like amazing grace that we found these [refurbishers]. (Owner of restored Chickering piano that belonged to grandmother)

In short, the piano might be taking on a metaphysical role here. The piano appears to be bringing together the owner, her religion and her grandmother. Like the comment above about the purse guru, again there are references to refurbishing as a service which sometimes has supernatural overtones.

Shared love of item with refurbisher

Customer and refurbisher come to share a passion for the refurbish work and product, and this often becomes a basis for a friendship (Price and Arnould, 1999). A customer of a furniture restorer in Maine wrote that “not only do I have beautiful works of art for my farmhouse, but I made a warm friendship with a true craftsman as well!” Customers come back on a repeated basis to have more things restored by favorite refurbishers. As indicated above, the internet has made it possible for certain refurbishers to have large communities of followers. These followings develop into cult-like groups, people who will bring item after item back to be refurbished.

Note that when customers of refurbishing services speak of their goods, they tend to use brand names rather than category types. Brand authenticity is an important motivation, as respondents referred to “my Rolex” or “my Steinway piano”. While notable brand names hurt the sales of remanufactured electronic products (Abbey *et al.*, 2015), the brand legacy is important to the motivations of someone who brings in a purse, piano, watch or other non-electronic durable to be refurbished. In the latter case, the consumer has subjectively melded the brand identity with his or her own self-identity. Customers validate who they are and what they believe in when they meet a refurbisher who shares their love of the same product and brand.

A recent article on the Popular Mechanics website (popularmechanics.com) references the emotions of an owner of newly refurbished LL Bean Boots (Paterniti, 2017). The owner ascribes supernatural powers to the boots, and romanticizes about the boots, the authenticity of the brand and his own identity:

These boots are one of the most important things in my life. [...] When they started to leak, [...] I felt weakened. [Upon the boots’ return] Everything familiar about them was still there. And everything broken was fixed. I have other boots—expensive, nice boots—but these are my armor. I basically haven’t taken them off since they were returned. [...] The new stitches don’t take the exact path that the others did, [...] The original track of stitches was put there years ago by whoever made the boot—and now the boot has these tracks by a new person. I love these imperfections! All these people are in the boots too. And there’s real power in that—or I really do feel powerful when I wear them.

As Paterniti (2017) writes, the owner’s “attachment comes as a kind of response, as well, to what he sees as the ills of our consumerist culture. He finds his kids are left always wanting: new video games, clothes, whatever. He likes that the boots have a history, that they represent authenticity and an era when people lived more simply, recycling the items of their life. He waxed almost poetical about the stitching on his boots”.

LL Bean boots also represent high authenticity because they are old and were the first of their type. Gilmore and Pine (2007) call this “original authenticity”. In having one’s Bean boots – or Steinway piano or Burberry raincoat – refurbished, one is connecting oneself to an original brand icon. This experience reflects the desire among contemporary consumers for authenticity. Scholars note an increasing desire for authenticity (Hartman, 2004) given current trends toward inauthenticity in many product and service offerings (Gilmore and Pine, 2007).

The best refurbishers manage their work and interaction with customers in ways that follow a narrative which is typical of hedonic experiences. The restoration process, although lengthy (six months for piano, two years for a car), builds drama from beginning to end. It starts with the initial meeting and the diagnosis of the poor condition of the item. The refurbisher starts work and then periodically sends back pictures of the work in progress along with stories about new problems encountered along the way (more drama). Toward the end, once the keyboard and action are installed, piano restorers will play the piano for the customer over the phone. The climax, as described above, is the “reveal” of the newly restored item, which is the peak moment for the customer.

Efficacy

Efficacy is grounded in knowledge, and knowledge is associated with positive feelings about the self. Efficacy and knowledge are

concerned with one's ability to control life events. Sartre (1992) proposes that there are three ways we come to regard an object as part of our self or self-identity. We can acquire it, we can create or make it and, third, we come to learn about it or know it. In the same way that having sexual relations involves intimate knowledge of another person or "having" them, acquiring special knowledge about an item fuses it more closely with our self-identity. As clients of refurbishing services learn more about items they bring in, the items become more closely tied to their self-concepts.

Refurbishers seem to possess arcane knowledge and skills yet are very happy to share this with customers. It appears that owners of refurbished goods augment their feelings about themselves and their own personal efficacy to the extent that they learn about the goods from refurbishers. The customer's sense of his or her *locus* of control is enhanced from knowledge from refurbishers. Specifically, refurbishers enrich customer knowledge base and self-identity by sharing the three types of knowledge.

Technology – how the product works (e.g. gas combustion)

When the consumer interacts with the refurbisher, he or she has an opportunity to learn how the product works. He or she hears the diagnosis, that is, "what's wrong and why" – or why the product is no longer "doing its job". Owners of restored pianos appreciate knowing more about the workings of their pianos. In one testimonial, an owner wrote, "Paul saw my piano, and he took time in explaining to me and showing me not only what needed to be done to repair my piano but WHY".

Assembly process – how the product is put together or made

Owners of items like to see how the items are rebuilt by the refurbishers. Many purses which are brought in to be refurbished were originally stitched by hand, and refurbishers will point this out to customers to explain the value of the purse.

One woman wrote about her piano, "I made a simple display of the photographs you sent of the work in progress". Also evident was owners' feelings about refurbisher craftsmanship: (piano restoration) is "such an arcane sort of business. It's just old-fashioned workmanship and handiwork and artistry that requires that passion, and that comes through".

Refurbishers heighten customer attachment to goods when they bring the items back to life and share a deep, hedonic enthusiasm for how they were originally designed and work. As Zak, a watch restorer, said:

One customer said, "I over-wound this when I was 6, and it's been broken and in a box ever since. I always felt bad about it" so when I restored for him, you can imagine the great feelings he had. I share the watches with customers [...] Many of these pieces are beautiful, both on the outside and the inside, so you open up an old pocket watch, and when it's running and a bright light is on it, it is flashing and sparkling, and twinkling and in a way that is just fascinating

Isaacson (2011) explains the attachment that consumers feel to Apple products in terms of Steve Jobs learning from his father, a carpenter, that it was as important to make the inner workings of a product as aesthetically beautiful as the outer form or shape. Zak the refurbisher is heightening his customers' appreciation of what they are doing (the restoration) by enlightening them about the internal workings of a great watch.

Praxis – how to make the product do its job

The refurbisher might also instruct the him or her on how to use the product differently so there is less harm to the item over time. Furniture restorers will tell customers to keep mahogany items away from sunny windows because the sun fades the stain, and jewelry restorers tell customers how to care for older jewelry.

Mende and van Doorn (2015) investigate how co-production of financial plans between financial advisors and their clients greatly enhance client learning and understanding about the markets. The result they highlight, however, is reduced stress among clients. We suggest that passing learning on to service customers might also enhance their overall well-being and life satisfaction.

Continuity

This watch has been through everything with me.

There were many accounts of people feeling good about themselves because they were "saving" items that had belonged to family members and were important parts of family histories. One woman said of her restored couch:

(It is about) feeling good about honoring something that was important to a lot of people in my family [...] You know, this is something that my grandmother had and really appreciated and loved (so what) I am doing is honoring her. My niece sits in it, and you know she never met my grandmother (because) she passed away before she was born so this is like a fourth-generation chair. She (niece) was reading a book that I used to read in that chair, and she was wrapped in a blanket my Grandmother made.

It appears that a lot of the value of refurbishing certain items might be due to their embeddedness in prior connections with friends and loved ones, as well as connections to friends and loved ones in the future. Pianos, watches, furniture, clocks, books, jewelry and fountain pens are often refurbished because of emotional ties to past friends and relatives plus possible generations to come. The emotional value or meaning of the item to be refurbished is closely bound up in the person's experiences of past, present and future (Keen, 1975).

If we assume that an item is refurbished multiple times by one owner, the owner's subjective experience of the item might be closely bound up with his or her experience of the passage of time, both past and future. When one looks back on an event in life from a whole life perspective, Luckman calls this "reverse telescoping" (Luckmann, 1991). As he says, "what looms large when seen with the naked eye recedes into the background if one looks at it through the wrong end of the binoculars. The meaning [...] does not disappear in such telescoping but is set in relation to the vaster background of an entire lifetime" (Bender and Wellbery, 1991). With a cherished refurbished item, the person relives the original ownership experience in the context of intervening years. An owner of an old sports car who had to part with it said that "it carried a lot of memories of people and events". The meaning of the car is cast in terms of events from subsequent years.

In contemplating their restored items, people think about the items' origins, time is suspended; present is juxtaposed against past:

Now seeing, smelling and driving the car has instantly caused the love affair to blossom again. I went to the garage twice last night just to smile and stare. I don't know who all to thank besides you, Sue and Eric, but I want you all to know you've made me feel like a kid again. It's like the first time I ever rode in the 300 SL. I am one happy guy – thanks to you! (Restored Mercedes owner)

Atila, you've been a fountain of youth for my big, old, living room rug. Your work is extraordinary. Colors glow again, pile is soft and deep. The fringe binding you wove calls no attention to itself, but it is 9 feet of the finest stitching and a thing of beauty. I feel as I did years ago, that I am an owner of a work of art. (Restored Oriental rug owner)

Experiencing the product again in as-new condition reasserts earlier self-identities which were grounded in the product. A woman below writes how her restored piano influenced her many years ago in ways which are still impactful today:

The [newly restored] piano reflects a significant part of my growing up. I think it contributed to really the path that I took in life just building confidence being able to stand up in front of people and say my name and then perform from memory in front of a room full of, at first parents, and then later judges. (Restored Steinway piano owner)

The implicit promise of having something refurbished is that it will evoke what Benjamin and Tiedemann (1999) call an "Arcadian" past. This is a past that is full of memories, a special, magical time and place. Consumers seek to recall the past because lifelong preferences are influenced by styles that were popular during the individual's youth (Schindler and Holbrook, 2003).

Many refurbished products are also experienced in terms of "forward telescoping". Owners focus on the product in the future and how it will play a variety of meaningful roles in theirs and others' lives. They define the product in the future in terms of intervening actions and events. Refurbished pianos, Rolex watches and certain sports cars are often viewed as "investments", assuming the growth of favorable markets for these items in years to come. People also expect to hand the items on to subsequent generations to current heirs and heirs to come. Many testimonials suggest that refurbished products will be valued for long periods of time because refurbished product owners do not simply have emotional attachment to their products but also value the products for implicit heirloom capabilities:

Saying "thank you" doesn't seem enough for all the time, energy and most of all, love Lindeblad put into my piano. It will grace our home for many years before I hand it down to our oldest son [he's 24 now]. I hope this piano will stay in our family for many more generations to come. (Refurbished piano owner)

My family takes great pleasure knowing that this special Steinway piano, which has been played and much loved by four generations, will continue to make joyful music for many years to come.

Service marketing is enhanced by continuity; the customer has greater trust, self-satisfaction and confidence in a provider who has worked in the profession for a long time. For many refurbishers, not only they have done refurbishing long time but also their fathers and grandfathers worked at it. As one owner of a refurbished piano wrote, "Everyone was asking, 'who did this?' and so I told them about the four generations of the Lindeblad family who have been in this business". Long-term ownership of a watch, piano or furniture piece in a family is paralleled by long-term refurbishment support from the same refurbisher.

As Baumeister and Vohs (2002) explain, "the meaning of life is an imposition of a stable conception onto a changing biological process", and "meanings impose stability" (p. 609). The world is in constant change, socially, biologically and geographically. Yet meanings are grounded in terms of ongoing, shared subjective representations, for example, language, knowledge systems and values. As time passes,

refurbishers enhance feelings of security in customers insofar as they enhance their sense of purpose (as curators of older items), values (certain designs are important) and efficacy (product knowledge described above).

Summary

A summary of key findings is provided in Table III. This table provides key gratifications experience by customers of refurbish services, the type of well-being relevant to each gratification type and the social context or setting which facilitates each condition.

Based on this table, hedonic and eudaimonic benefits accrue to many different aspects of the customer's total refurbish experience. For example, customer and refurbisher share hedonic responses at the final reveal stage of the process. Warm, hedonic responses around the item are also re-kindled for family members, collector friends and all other groups who share a special enthusiasm for the item. The customer experiences heightened senses of self-identity, personal efficacy and continuity through the process, all of which relate to eudaimonic or self-worth benefits.

Implications

While the classic marketing approach places emphasis on manufacturers producing a constant stream of new products coming into the market, a refurbish approach stresses service providers, people who "keep (current) things going". Value is produced not so much in terms of bringing new items to the world but rather maintaining items which are already here. The recent growth in interest in service-dominant logic is a reflection of this trend. A recent paper (Durgee and Agopian, 2016) suggests that people are willing to refurbish their pianos, jewelry, dining room tables, bicycles and watches but much less willing to refurbish their refrigerators, cell phones, overcoats, televisions or purses. Could the latter items be suitable candidates to be refurbished if they shared more of the same attributes and addressed more of the same consumer needs as the former items? Ferrari through its "Classiche" program brings older cars back to the headquarters in Italy to be refurbished. Walker (2013) claims that "it would be entirely appropriate to have fewer, higher quality, more enduring products that can be maintained and occasionally revamped, particularly if those products are tangible representations of a more balanced value system that recognizes the importance of practical, social and personal meaning". (p. 106) Hopefully, the current trends toward refurbishing will continue, public opinion will look more favorably on refurbishing services, and the net impact will be good for customers, refurbishers and consumption systems everywhere.

To repeat, we wanted to explore customer feelings about refurbishing one's possessions, particularly as refurbishing services facilitate hedonic and eudaimonic self-being. Hedonia was expected to be a prominent aspect of the refurbish experience. Insofar as eudaimonic well-being concerns self-identity and self-fulfillment goals such as social connection, empowerment and meaning, we also wanted to explore if and how self-identity is achieved through the refurbish process.

Table III Summary of gratifications, associated emotions and relevant social settings for customers of refurbishing services

Gratification	Gratification definition	Emotion	Social context
Reveal of refurbished item	Excitement experiencing newly refurbished item	Hedonic	Shared with refurbisher
Customer sense of self-identity	Feel personal uniqueness, feel connection to refurbisher who has "special powers"	Eudaimonic	"most other people" as reference group, shared sense of uniqueness with refurbisher and his powers
Shared love of item, brand	Shared appreciation of authenticity, heritage, beauty, other qualities of item	Hedonic, Eudaimonic	Family, friends, collectors, refurbisher
Feeling of personal efficacy	Based on learning from refurbisher, have better understanding of item, technology, proper usage	Eudaimonic	Refurbisher, collectors
Sense of continuity	Feel like curator of item, preserving item as heritage for future generations	Eudaimonic	Past, future family members

In Table IV, we provide a summary of customer gratifications and implications for designers and marketers of refurbishing services.

First, the refurbisher should maximize all sensory aspects of the reveal experience. In television home remodel shows, the reveal experience is mainly visual. For classic car show reveals, the refurbisher has someone drive the car into the garage space, so the owner can hear and see the refurbished car. The importance of the refurbisher would argue that original manufacturers wishing to provide refurbishing services do it as much as possible on a local basis and have a designated refurbisher "guru" who could interact with customers. The close, personal contact between customer and refurbisher is important in terms of heightened customer feelings of affection for the product as well as increased sense of himself or herself as someone who has developed a special sense of appreciation for the item. Customers also seem to appreciate their friendships with refurbishers and are in awe of their "special powers". Thus, the marketing of refurbishing services should be informed by

Table IV Summary of gratifications, associated emotions and implications for refurbishing services

Refurbish gratification	Emotion	Implications for refurbish services
Reveal of refurbished item	Hedonic	Refurbisher Maximizes all sensory aspects of reveal experience
Customer sense of self-identity	Eudaimonic	Address customer positive self-identity as someone who appreciates item and its importance. Bring customer in to experience refurbisher "special powers"
Shared love of item, brand	Hedonic, Eudaimonic	Stress authenticity, brand identity of item. Cultivate internet community around item
Feeling of personal efficacy	Eudaimonic	Provide materials on how to properly use and care for item
Sense of continuity	Eudaimonic	Establish item as an "investment", help customer plan long term care of item, including among heirs

customers' needs for not only hedonic experiences but also eudaimonic experiences, including the reaffirmed sense of self, a deeper, more developed knowledge of the item and how it works and a chance to share affection for the item with loved ones (past and future), refurbishers and fellow "fans". Refurbishers should also consider ways to engage customers going forward, stress the meaning of the item as an investment, help succeeding generations use and care for the item in the future.

Could other service providers use these means to the same end? Properly executed, any service that improves the condition of something (getting haircut, dog washed, clothes dry-cleaned) could potentially facilitate enhanced hedonic and eudaimonic well-being among its customers. Providers would have to engage customers, get them more involved in how to appreciate, understand, curate and tend to the items under consideration. A small number of researchers (Bryant and Veroff, 2007; Laddy, 2012) have begun researching how to help consumers heighten their appreciation of everyday items. Providers would also engage customers, and leverage the items in terms of elaborating shared meanings of the items through relevant social groups. The provider becomes a friend who shares the customer enthusiasm for the item, the provider becomes a connector node who links the customer with other customers who are fans of the item, and the provider helps the customer negotiate the meaning of the work on the item with loved ones and friends ("how would everyone react if we cut your hair this way?").

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