
The Convergence of the Hair-Dressing Salon and the Bar: A Case Study of Social Beauty Spaces

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Abstract

The convergence of different service industries across different sectors is an on-going process. In this study, the focus is on the convergence of the hospitality industry and the hair-dressing industry, a convergence that may be transformative to the hair-dressing industry. Both the hospitality industry and the hair-dressing industry represent industries in the people-processing categories and industries with a high degree of face-to-face interaction. The aim of this paper is to examine the convergence of these two industries. The method is a case study of a chain of hair-styling salons in London, using public document data. The findings show that by converging with the hospitality industry, the case company can prolong the service interaction and increase the service intimacy with their clients. It represents a new category, social beauty spaces, a category that has more in common with companies in the leisure industry than with the hair-dressing industry.

Key words: *Hospitality industry, Service industry, Service Package, Enabling services, Enhancing services*

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Introduction

The convergence of different service industries across different sectors has been an on-going process since the 19th century. An early example was the convergence of the transportation industries and the hospitality industry, an example of which being the introduction of sleeping compartments and dining compartments on trains (American-rails, com, 2020). Another example is the convergence of experiential services and hospitality services, an example of which being the establishment of cafés *inside* museums.

It has been pointed out in a literature review that in the hospitality industry, “service provision has a particularly high proportion of employee-customer interaction that requires an emotional offering, which, in turn, mandates genuinely caring attitudes, emotional connections to guests, warmth, and generosity” (Kandampully et al., 2014). Lashley (2017) has also pointed out that one of the unique aspects of the hospitality industry is the possibility of creating a bond between host and guest. By serving food and drink as an addition to a core service that is *not* a hospitality service, a company in the non-hospitality service industries can extend the service interaction and increase the service intimacy (cf. Timm, 2009, p. 5) and thus get “the opportunity to develop a genuine bonding relationships far beyond most other service contexts” (Kandampully et al., 2014). Therefore, it seems likely that the convergence of hospitality services and non-hospitality service industries is going to continue, something that may transform the specific non-hospitality service industry in the process.

The aim of this paper is to examine, theoretically and empirically, the convergence of hospitality services and other service industries that, like the hospitality industry, also have a high level of face-to-face interaction.

The Hospitality Industry

In academic research, hospitality is a place—a hospitality place—that provide hospitality services—food, drink, sleeping accommodation of varying types, and entertainment (Brotherton, 2017). A hospitality place can both be stationary, such as, for instance, hotels, restaurants, bars, cafes but also mobile, such as, for instance, airplanes, cruise ships, ferries (Brotherton, 2017). Stationary hospitality places can also be hostels, resorts, airlines, hospitals, prisons, and military barracks (Brymer & Petersen, 2000, p. 6).

The hospitality industry is a service industry, that is, what is offered at hospitality places are service offerings. Numerous definitions of services have been introduced (Grönroos, 2015, p. 48, Lovelock, 1992; Fitzsimmons et al., 2014), but no ultimate definition of service has been agreed upon (Grönroos, 2015, p. 48). However, service offerings are often understood as a service package (Normann, 2007, p. 75; Grönroos, 2015, p. 206). There are several ways to describe service packages (for instance, Grönroos, 1987; Grönroos, 2015, p. 209; Fitzsimmons et al., 2014, pp. 18-19; Lovelock, 1992; Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018, p. 95).

The Grönroos basic service package model consists of the following elements: the core service, enabling services and goods, and enhancing services and goods with the additional element of physical production resources, which may be anything from huge technical production facilities (for instance, a cruise ship) to machines with which the customer interacts (for instance, an ATM) (Grönroos, 2015, pp. 209-211).

Enabling services and/or goods are typically required for the core service to be used by customers. Enhancing services and/or enhancing goods do not facilitate the consumption of a service and are not obligatory for the core service to work. Enhancing services and enhancing goods are used to increase the value of or differentiate the service offering (Grönroos, 2015, p. 208).

In the hospitality industry, the physical production resources in the basic service package model are identical to hospitality places. In these places, food and drink may be served and/or a bed may be provided, as an economic exchange. However, this does not mean that preparing food and providing a bed to sleep in are the core services at all hospitality places. In a service package context, preparing food and providing a bed to sleep in can represent different types of service categories. Some well-established service packages can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Service packages for different types of service offerings.

<p><u>Hotels</u> Core service: Accommodation Enabling services: Booking, check-in Enhancing services: Food and drink services.</p>
<p><u>Restaurants</u> Core service: Preparation and serving of food and drink Enabling services: Booking, check-in Enhancing services: Valet parking, bar.</p>
<p><u>Hospitals</u> Core service: Health care Enabling services: Food and drink services, sleeping accommodation Enhancing services: Convenience store, transportation.</p>
<p><u>Trains</u> Core service: Transportation</p>

Enabling services: Booking, ticketing
 Enhancing services: Dining car, sleeping car.

Amusement parks

Core service: Park entertainment and amusements
 Enabling services: Booking, ticketing
 Enhancing services: Food and drink services.

Providing food and drink or a bed to sleep in can be a core service (restaurant, hotel); an enabling service (hospitals) or enhancing service (transportation, amusement parks).

Services Classification Matrix

The service package model is not the only way to classify service offerings. Lovelock (1983) has created a classification matrix that classifies services in four different categories. The classification is based on two questions. 1) Who or what is the direct recipient of the service (people or possessions)? 2) What is the nature of the service act (tangible actions or intangible actions)? The classification has four categories of service offerings: people processing, possession processing, mental stimulus processing, and information processing services. The matrix can be seen in Figure 2.

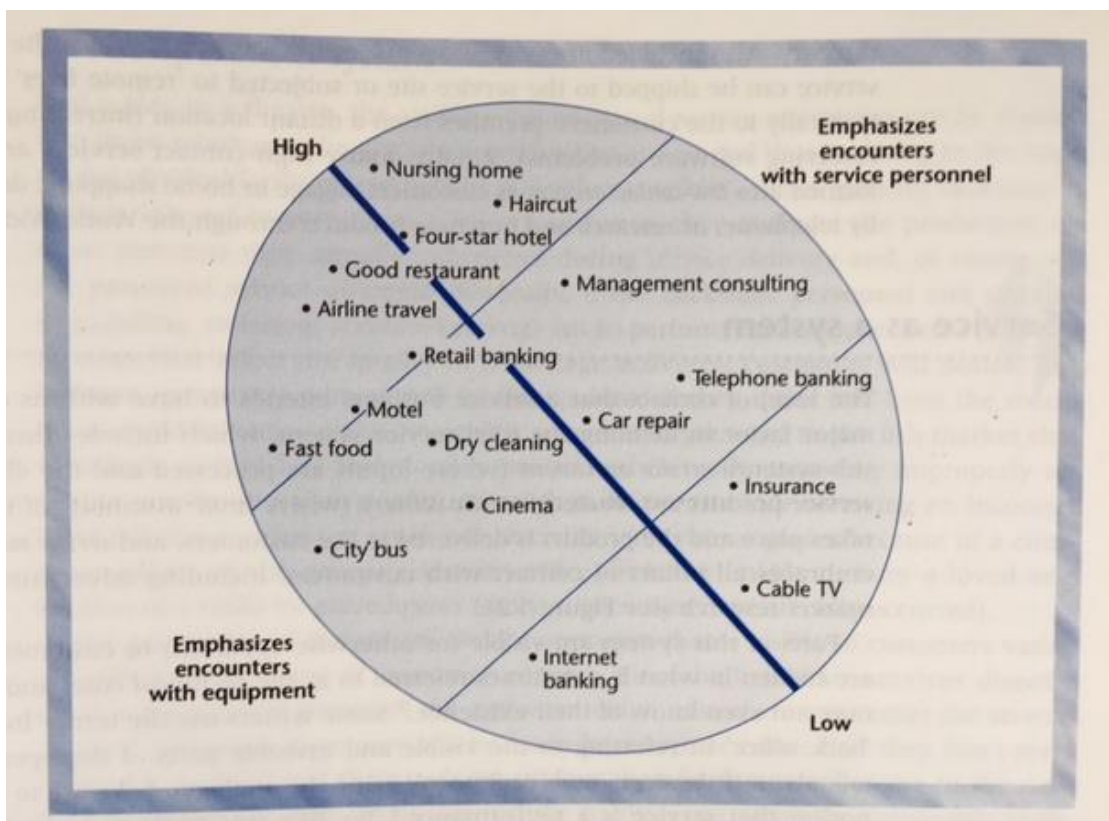
Figure 2. Classification of service offerings based on the direct recipients of the service and the nature of the service act (photo of Lovelock and Wirtz, 2004, p. 15).

		Who or What Is the Direct Recipient of the Service?	
		People	Possessions
What Is the Nature of the Service Act?	Tangible Actions	<p><i>People processing</i> (services directed at people's bodies):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passenger transportation Health care Lodging Beauty salons Physical therapy Fitness centers Restaurants/bars Barbers Funeral services 	<p><i>Possession processing</i> (services directed at physical possessions):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freight transportation Repair and maintenance Warehousing/storage Office cleaning services Retail distribution Laundry and dry cleaning Refueling Landscaping/gardening Disposal/recycling
	Intangible Actions	<p><i>Mental stimulus processing</i> (services directed at people's minds):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertising /PR Arts and entertainment Broadcasting/cable Management consulting Education Information services Music concerts Psychotherapy Religion Voice telephone 	<p><i>Information processing</i> (services directed at intangible assets):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accounting Banking Data processing Data transmission Insurance Legal services Programming Research Securities investment Software consulting

In Figure 2, the hospitality industry (restaurants/bars, lodging, health care, passenger transportation) are categorized as people processing services. However, these services have a different status in the mind of the consumer: In a comparison to hotels and restaurants, Kandampully et al., (2014) write “Although it could be argued that similar relationships occur in health care, we believe that there are important differences between them, driven by the motivations for purchase because most people are hoping to repurchase health care as infrequently as possible as opposed to hospitality, where customers generally aspire to dine out and have accommodation experiences more frequently and more voluntarily. The emotional bonds thus created are often the outcome of repeated positive customer experiences”. This is likely also the case for services such as physical therapy and funeral services. With the exclusion the mentioned industries, the industries left on the list of services in the people processing category are fitness centers, beauty salons, and barbers.

The interactions with the service provider can take many forms but are mainly interaction between a customer and the service provider’s staff or system(s), number and type of touchpoints (face-to-face, physical equipment, or digital), and responsiveness (Grönroos, 2015, p. 209). Figure 3 is a graphic illustration of three levels of service provider-customer interaction (low to high) and of whether the emphasis is on interaction with staff or with equipment.

Figure 3. Levels of service provider-customer interaction with service organizations and the focus on the interaction (photo of Lovelock et al., 1999, p. 49).



The beauty salons and barbers are in the same category as “hair cut” in Figure 1, that is, the interaction is high and there is interaction with staff. With respect to fitness centers as a category, the level of interaction is typically with equipment.

Of the two categories (beauty places, fitness centers), beauty places have the highest level of interaction. it is with staff, and it is face-to-face. Figure 4 shows a small cluster of service industries in the people processing category with a very high level of face-to-face interaction with staff.

Figure 4. People processing services with a high degree of face-to-face interaction.



Among the three categories mentioned in Table 1, hair-dressing salons is likely the biggest industry on a worldwide scale. Therefore, this industry will be the focus of the empirical part of this study of the convergence of hospitality services and non-hospitality services with a high level of face-to-face interaction.

Method

London has a history of being a trendsetting city (Vejlgaard, 2008, pp. 96-97); the city has also historically been known for being a hotbed for innovations in hair styles (O'Hara, 1986, p. 220). Therefore, London was chosen as the place to search for empirical evidence on the convergence of the hair-dressing industry and hospitality services. In Autumn 2019, English and Danish beauty magazines were searched for news on innovative hair salons in London. A Danish beauty magazine had an article about a hair dressing salon in London described as “One of Europe’s most happening hair salons” (Skøn, 2019, pp. 78-79). This salon was chosen as the case for this study.

This magazine will be used as source, as will the website of the salon. Thus, the source materials are documents (Bowen, 2009). Documents have a variety of forms, for instance, books, charts, newspapers, institutional reports, survey data, and various public records. The analytic procedure then ‘entails finding, selecting, appraising (making sense of), and synthesizing data contained in [the] documents’ (Bowen, 2009).

Findings

Duck & Dry is not a hair-dressing salon; it is a “blow dry bar” and “social beauty space” (DD1). Duck & Dry's flagship store opened in 2014 (DD1). Today, the chain has stores in five locations in Central London. It's website states “We have 5 iconic locations including Chelsea, Oxford Circus, Mayfair and Spitalfields, featuring stylish interiors and a fun vibe.” A location in Oxford Street Regent Street area is described by a beauty magazine as being “in the middle of everything” (Skøn).

“A Duck & Dry styling costs 35 pounds” (Skøn). There is a complimentary coffee bar that serves espresso, milky coffee, tea; there is a drinks menu (DD2). The salon “has its own Prosecco bar [...] At Duck & Dry everything becomes a lot more fun, when there are bobles in the class. A glass [of Prosecco] costs five pounds, and are you more people, you can buy a whole bottle [of Prosecco] for 30 pounds. The salon is the perfect setting for a girls' day out and the perfect place to start if you are going out to enjoy London nightlife and you want to have great hair [...]” (Skøn).

There is a “style menu” on the website (DD3), this is a reference to the different services on offer. The website states: “you can enjoy a glass of prosecco, browse through a menu of on-trend blow dries and chic updos or get a trim by a skillfully trained stylist. Meticulous attention to detail, bright and beautiful interiors, feel-good vibes and a buzzy atmosphere, proved an instant success” (DD2).

This is where “you go when your hair needs to be perfect, and when you want to have a good time while you get styled” (Skøn). The magazine described Duck & Dry as “cool” and “Instagram-friendly”. The experience element of the concept is also highlighted on the website: “Duck & Dry is the brand behind the finest blow

dries and updos in London. Our blow dry bars are known for their energy and buzz – as a go to place for great hair and a great time” (DD1).

“Our instagrammable spaces make the perfect setting for any event, with our talented stylists on-hand to create trendy hairstyles to add a touch of glam. Whether you’re planning a special occasion with your friends or organizing a corporate event and looking for a twist, you can never go wrong with blow dries and prosecco!” (DD2).

“However big or small your girl squad, choose one of our stores to host your blow dry party. We have a beautiful group table in each location that you can hire out exclusively for your event.”

“Our bright, big and bold stores can be hired exclusively - from intimate groups to large scale events. Each location offers a fully licensed prosecco bar, beautiful styling area, dedicated group area and plenty of space to socialize! [...] Ideal for pamper parties, staff treats, press launches, influencer events, workshops, photo/video shoots” (DD3).

The founder had a clear vision for the concept: “Passionate about beauty and entrepreneurship with a desire to create an exciting new brand, she [the founder] left her career in finance and set out to create a modern styling destination. With the goal of professionally styled hair to become part of an everyday beauty regime. Uncompromising on quality yet affordable in a fun and vibrant environment” (DD1). Duck & Dry “proved an instant success” (Skøn).

“In 2019, [the founder] launched sister brands Duck & File and Duck & Pluck in select stores. Following the experiential ethos of Duck & Dry, the brow and nail bars are part of London’s first social beauty spaces, where feathers can be styled, brows preened and nails perfected, all in one nest, amidst stylish interiors and a happening environment“ (DD1).

“With the brand following growing quickly and to meet the needs of the stylists and clients, [the founder] developed a range of hair care and styling essentials for a professional blow dry. [...] Delivering results while being kind to your hair, all products exude our signature scent of the wild English meadows for the ultimate Duck & Dry experience” (DD1).

On the website, it is indicated that there there are other blow dry bars: “London's leading blow dry bar, Duck & Dry is known for its quality on-trend hair styling in a fun environment. Our distinctive brand and experience-led concept has garnered a loyal consumer following” (DD4).

Concluding Comments

The hair-dressing industry has a high degree of face-to-face interaction, typically in one extended touchpoint. Duck & Dry staff interact for a shorter time with their customers than with hair-dresser because of the specific service that is offered: it is a place to get your hair blow dried, not to get a haircut. However, by adding hospitality services to the service package, Duck & Dry can prolong the service interaction and increase the service intimacy with their clients. The interaction is not only with the hair styling staff but also with the bar staff. This can affect the customers’ the attachment to the place and, consequently, to the brand (cf. Hallberg, 2004).

The hair-dressing industry already has some of the best possibilities for developing genuine bonding relationships with their customers far beyond most other service contexts. With the inclusion of hospitality services, instead of having one extended touchpoint, the number of touch points is increased. Thus, the bond can be further strengthened which can be a competitive advantage.

In a service package perspective, a hair-dressing salon that offers something to drink can be categorized as follows:

Company: Duck & Dry

Industry: Hair dressing salons

Core service: Hair styling

Enabling services: Booking

Enhancing services: Drink services, event services, space rental

As a category, the social beauty spaces category is “heavy” in the enhancing services, and one may ask, if the category is still hair dressing salons or if it would be meaningful to re-categorize the industry that Duck & Dry represents. There are some clues in the how the industry can be re-categorized: The Duck & Dry brand seems to follow an approach to host-guest interaction of a company that is known for having a very unique approach to host-guest interaction, the Walt Disney Company, which is known for their “guestology”, a focus on the guest experience rather than traditional business efficiencies (Solnet, Kandampully, & Kralj, 2010). Walt Disney developed an internal language based on Hollywood terminology: Staff are cast members, a job description is a script, HR is casting etc. It has been pointed out that “This analogy with show business helps immerse both staff and guest in the imaginary world of Disney, putting everyone in the spotlight (Hudson & Hudson, 2013, p. 3). The Duck & Dry salons use language, which gives associations to hospitality, for instance, “menu of on-trend blow dries”, “blow dry bar”, “brow and nail bars”, “blow dry party”. In the case of Duck & Dry, the analogy with hospitality helps immerse both staff and guests in a party atmosphere.

The company writes about it being an experience-led concept, which gives associations to experience services and the leisure industry, a cluster of the arts, entertainment, and recreation industries (BLS, 2020). This industry is about, for instance, museums, theaters, and amusement parks. This also alludes to the understanding of hospitality as experiential services (Hemmington, 2007) and to a wide understanding of the hospitality industry (Ottenbacher, Harrington, and Parsa, 2009). By defining itself as a social beauty space, its core service changes to a cluster of experiential services, event services, and space rental, in short, it is in the leisure industry. Thus, the service package is de facto as follows:

Company: Duck & Dry

Industry: Leisure industry

Core service: Social beauty space

Enabling services: Booking

Enhancing services: Drinks service

This re-categorization of the service package is interesting from a concept perspective; however, it also affects the service delivery because in the transformative process, their customers may become guests, which in turn may turn the provider into being a host (Hemmington, 2007). In the convergence that Duck & Dry represents, the staff-customer interaction is not just about delivering a service (hair blow drying) but also about exercising the role of host. However, this does not necessarily mean that the hair stylists serve drinks. The company may take the same approach that the Disney companies have to the role of host: In 1979, one Disney World host explained his job as follows: “Our job, every minute, is to help the Guest enjoy the park” (Pope, 1979).

There is one final comparison to Disney, which early on capitalized on the fact that many guests want a memento of their Disney experience (Fanning, 2015). The Duck & Dry brand has also followed in this footsteps, by introducing Duck & Dry merchandise.

Guests at social beauty spaces may have an experience that can be compared to the experiences that other well-established experience services in the leisure industry offer but for a different target group.

In conclusion, the convergence highlighted in this paper is transformative to the hair-dressing industry but also to existing companies in the leisure industries, which will be competing with the social beauty spaces category.

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