

Kyoto University Design Visions Series

“The Diffusion of "New Services" in India”

Julien Cayla

Nanyang Business School (Singapore) / Kedge
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Date: October 1 (Thursday), 2015 14:45-16:15

Location: Multimedia Lecture Room (3rd Floor),
Research Bldg. No.2



Participants: 15

Professor Cayla reported his research on gym trainers and coffee shop baristas in India. These are new services to this country. A lot of new jobs like these are created rapidly. Professor Cayla conducted ethnographic fieldwork in New Delhi and in-depth interviews with gym trainers, baristas and their customers. He showed a film that he made about a gym trainer.

Professor Cayla described the interesting social dynamics involved in these services. Gym trainers who are from low middle class, non-English speaking, serve customers in upper middle class, English speaking. The relationship is quite complicated. Initially, trainers are afraid of touching customers when they needed—a customer got injured as the trainer did not physically support her. It takes them some time to get used to the relationship with the customers.

Elite upper middle class customers call them by “Sir.” This was a big deal because such respect and recognition from the elite would have been inconceivable. Gym trainers are seen as gurus, giving knowledge to others. Nonetheless, this recognition is complicated because it is uncertain whether the same recognition would be given outside the gym.

Coffee shop baristas have different cultural issues. As employees, they are required to clean tables and pick up customers' leftovers. In the Indian culture, such jobs were given to certain people. For the same reason, they do not want to be seen sweeping by broom. They are willing to sweep inside but not outside. Such resilience of local culture has been a challenge for services.

In the discussion, we debated how the concept of recognition can be used in service research. Particularly, struggle for recognition, as theorized by Hegel and advanced by Honneth, would be an interesting framework to understand services. In addition, we discussed how to use the video in ethnographic research. Professor Cayla's film of a gym trainer was powerful conveying the reality.

