

Healthcare innovation: digitisation and citizen participation for service improvement

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Purpose – The Covid-19 pandemic created a health emergency in all countries, highlighting the weaknesses of each healthcare system. The actions planned for the near future seem to converge on two important interventions: accelerating the process of digitisation and promoting the active participation of citizens.

The paradigm of Service-Dominant logic provides several interesting contributions about the value co-creation in healthcare. Although scholars agree in recognising the advantages, there is still confusion about the best strategies for citizens involvement and the variables affecting their participation behaviours. According to Service Science, the emergence of new digital tools provides new sources of information and new ways of interaction, involvement, and participation. Based on these assumptions, the aim of this paper is to investigate the factors influencing an effective citizen participation strategy based on digital tools.

Design/Methodology/approach – This work is based on an empirical investigation. According to the results of the literature review, we hypothesised that health literacy and patient empowerment have positive effects on citizens' value co-creation behaviours through digital tools. The hypotheses were tested through the administration of a questionnaire to a sample of Italian citizens. Results were analysed using the linear regression method. In addition, the questionnaire investigated the main reasons for and against the use of some digital tools introduced in the Italian healthcare system, among which the electronic health record and the App for the tracking of Covid-19 infections.

Findings – The results show that citizens with higher levels of health literacy and patient empowerment are more likely to engage in value co-creation behaviours with health professionals. Many of the digital tools introduced in the Italian healthcare are poorly used by citizens. Among the main reasons against their adoption there are a lack of knowledge of them, the apprehension of privacy violation, and a low perceived usefulness.

Managerial implications – Policy makers should introduce specific education and training programs aimed at increasing health literacy and empowerment of citizens in order to involve them in healthcare management. Digital tools can facilitate value co-creation processes, but they need to be promoted more also highlighting their usefulness and reassuring users about privacy protection.

Originality/value – Although several studies highlight the advantages of citizen engagement and digitisation of health services, there is a lack of evidence on the factors that influence, both positively and negatively, these processes.

Keywords Value co-creation, Service Science, Service-Dominant logic, empowerment, health literacy, digitisation

Paper type – Research paper