THE IMPACT OF CONSUMERS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW SERVICES

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ABSTRACT
In order to achieve the best results, many businesses in the service sector are seeking to understand the needs of consumers and involve them in the process of new services development as well. The formation of individualized consumer portrait allows business entities to get to know their target clients and identify their needs. Meanwhile, the management symbiosis is made by this involvement process and business entities have a perfect opportunity to improve their services according to suggestions and experiences of consumers. All companies, that allow their consumers to involve in the process of new services development, can create an enabling environment for the easier generation of ideas and testing of conceptual services. Such companies can be prepared for new services implementation in a more effective way as well. According to the opinions and theories of different authors, this article analyzes the impact of consumers on the process of new services development. In order to evaluate the object of the research more closely, the research was carried out from the perspective of the business subject also. In order to carry out the results of this research, the methods of comparative analysis and synthesis were used.
KEYWORDS: *consumers*, *new service development*, *impact*, *involvement*.

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Introduction

The modern lifestyle, constantly rising living standards and great availability of information intensifies the aspiration of businesses entities to assess the needs of consumers and make them an integrated part of the new services development. The perception of consumer behaviour allows business entities to create a detailed portrait of a potential consumer and choose the right tools to meet their needs as well as to determine the basis of the decision to purchase the service. Meanwhile, consumer involvement in the development of new services can be related to the usage of their knowledge and experience in order to improve an existing or newly developed service and adapt it to the trends of market or technological innovations. Despite the fact that researches about the impact of consumers are gaining more importance in the overall context of new services development, all modern scholars have analyzed this topic in a fragmented way. Until now, the scale of consumer involvement is not entirely clear and specific staff training is not discussed enough. B. Edvardsson *et al.* (2013) point out a lack of information on how the interaction between a business entity and a consumer can increase the productivity of developing new services.

The object of the research – the impact of consumers on the new services development.

The aim of the research – to assess the impact of consumers on the development of new services and identify the opportunities for consumer involvement at different stages of this process.

The goals of the research: 1) discuss the general characteristics of consumer needs in the context of the development of new services, 2) to reveal the advantages and disadvantages of consumer involvement

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in the development of new services, 3) to identify the opportunities for consumer involvement at different stages of new service development, 4) to form a graphical scheme of consumer involvement in the process of developing new services. The research is based on the methods of scientific literature analysis and synthesis.

1. Methods of the research

The research was divided into three stages. The first stage can be described as the preparation for the literature review. In order to evaluate the impact of consumers on the development of new services, the most appropriate keywords were selected at this stage in order to get more possible results on searching. The following keywords were chosen as the most valuable variations: "consumer involvement", "consumer behaviour", "consumer involvement in new service development", "consumer involvement in the context of NSD", "consumer behaviour in the context of NSD", "interface between consumers and employees", "role of consumers in the context of NSD". The following data basis were used for the search of scientific literature: *EBSCO*, *Cambridge Journals Online*, *Emerald insight*, *Oxford university press*, *SAGE journals*, *Science Direct*, *Springer*, *Tailor & Francis*, *Wiley*, *Vilniaus Gediminas Technical universiversity scientific journals* as well as other scientific sources. Wherever it was possible to choose a segment of the databases, only the articles related to the service sector or its business entities were filtered. The search for scientific articles was not restricted by any annual range.

The second stage was a selection when the publications found in scientific databases were systematically selected. The total number of publications was 38. However, 8 of them were repetitive, and 19 of them did not meet the criteria and requirements of the selection process.

In the third stage, the comparative analysis was carried out. 11 selected publications were classified in accordance with the analysed consumer involvement in the different stages of the new service development.

2. Consumer needs in the context of new service development

It is getting more difficult to reach and attract consumers in this technologically advanced and information-overloaded environment, as a result, the need to assess their expectations and behaviour changes is gaining more importance. B. Edvardsson and J. Olsson (1996) emphasise the importance of considering the changes in consumer behaviour and determine their involvement during the process of new services development. According to the authors, these are the key factors to create an attractive new service in terms of value and quality. According to H. Kärkkäinen *et al.* (2001), if the newly developed service is targeted to a specific group of customers, the systematic collection of information about customer behaviour and their needs is essential. The further development of a new service, improvement of quality and its availability might be based on this information. A. Krishna and P. Kautish (2012) state that such behavioural changes of consumers as increasing scepticism, willingness to criticize, sophistication, decreased loyalty and data security prioritization force business to improve their approach to the process of new services development. According to the authors, different knowledge and skills are indispensable to properly learn from consumer behaviour, experiences, and attitudes.

While studying the bond between services and needs of consumers, M. Gabbott and G. Hogg (1994) found out that customers tend to base their choices on external and internal information when they are looking for a service. The external information is needed when a customer experience a lack of personal information about a service, as a result, customers are encouraged to follow the experience and recommendations of others. The internal information contains an individual attitude of a consumer towards a service or business entity. According to the authors, the common practice of consumers to follow the internal and external information encourage business entities to improve their services in order to meet the needs of potential customers and increase the loyalty of existing customer as well.

While analysing the quality of banking services and the challenges of this sector, L. Sathyan and J. M. Raj (2015) recognized that most businesses must deal with transformations of consumer behaviour as young people migrate to the web and mobile applications, and older consumers require for more live consultations. In

accordance with these authors, increasing incomes, demographical changes and different attitude of consumers make businesses entities to be more flexible in designing and developing new services. J. Tiihonen and A. Felfernig (2017) have a similar opinion and state that the aim of adapting services to the constantly changing needs of consumers is to provide the personalized services that would be distinguished in a competitive business environment in terms of price and quality. In this case, personalized solutions can help to overcome the challenges of customizing services to the needs of consumers.

C. H. Lovelock with J. Wirtz (2016) alert that behavioural changes can occur at any stage of the development or provision of a new service: from the initial designing steps to the stage of providing a new service or after the service was purchased. The authors observe that the ability of a business entity to assess and determine the needs of the consumers is an important component to improve the further image of the service provider itself. It can be claimed that understanding the behaviour of consumers and the ability to identify their needs allow business entities to gain more feedback that is important to the overall context of developing new services.

These opinions reveal a fact that a business entity might get more insights about the buying habits of consumers, evaluate their offers and complaints about the newly developed service, and form a portrait of a target customer by the detailed analysis of collected information about the needs of customers.

3. The advantages and disadvantages of consumers involvement in new services development

Usually, the success of goals set by an organization depends on the financial capital, experience and ability to adapt to market changes. The importance of proper management of human resources has appeared in the scientific literature in recent years as well. A simpler distribution of workloads and clearer procedures for completing tasks motivate companies to adopt new approaches based on human resources management. This is extremely important while developing new services when employees of different profiles and potential consumers play an essential role. When developing a new product or service, organizations seek to understand the needs of modern consumers in order to create the most detailed portrait of their targeted consumers and offer a user-friendly product. However, it is not enough to take the needs into account, as a result, the process of consumer involvement is also necessary in those cases (see Fig. 1).

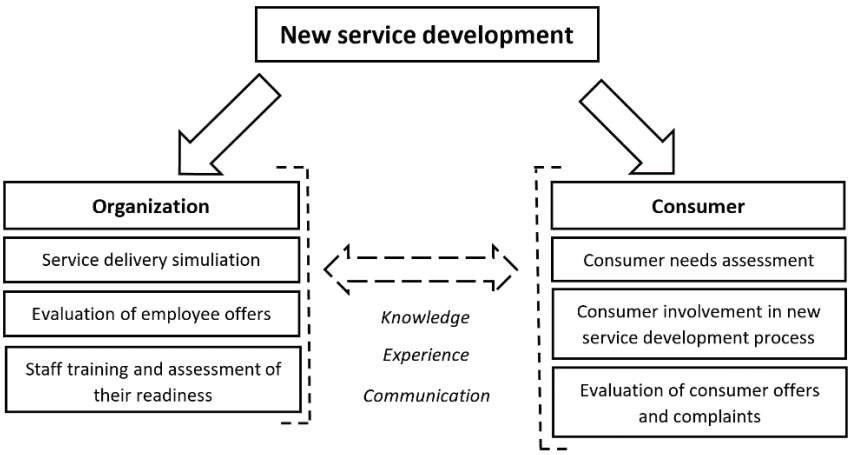

Figure 1. Interface between organization and consumer

Source: compiled by the author

Figure 1 shows that the involvement of employees and consumers in the creation process of new services can be very wide and multi-functional. It is also noticeable that the involvement of both sides stimulates the sym-

biosis of management and create a possibility to share the experiences between both sides. The involvement of consumer can be described as using their knowledge to achieve the organizational goals, i.e., to develop a new service successfully. Many other benefits related to the involvement of consumers are distinguished by different authors in the scientific literature. According to M. F. Svendsen *et al.* (2011), the involvement of consumers is an important factor for the great success of a new product. These authors quote Salomo et al. (2003) and point out that direct interaction with consumers can be considered as a high-speed tool of communication when an informal communication helps to spread complex or new information, and this provided information can make the process of organizational development smoother. The correlation between speed and consumer involvement is highlighted by I. Alam and C. Perry (2002). The research accomplished by these scholars revealed that the ideas provided by the consumers reduce the overall time consumption of a new service development cycle. According to the authors, consumer involvement is a key-point for better and differentiated services.

It was noticed that the possibility to use the experiences of consumers is highlighted in the context of consumer involvement in the process of new services development by different scholars. S. Nambisan (2002) claims that companies seek to take and use new ideas by involving consumers in organizational activities. W. D. Hoyer *et al.* (2010) agree and add that customer involvement increases productivity and efficiency. Authors say that the contribution of employees might be partially replaced by the contribution of consumers while developing new products or services. The study of C. Storey and C. Larbig (2017) revealed that consumers play an important role in mastering and changing the information that is related to them. They help an organization to better understand the needs of consumers and use this indirect information to the concept of services. B. Dong *et al.* (2008) have analysed the significance of consumer involvement for service providers who have failed. According to the authors, it is useful to involve consumers with their specific knowledge and skills into the problem-solving process for those service providers who have struggles. In accordance with P. Kristensson *et al.* (2004), the involved consumers are able to generate ideas that usually are more creative, market-driven and easier to implement. Y. He *et al.* (2014) claim that companies can make itself more familiar with their product, internal culture, goals, and market because of consumer involvement. According to Z. Jian and Y. Liu (2016), an interaction with consumers means a process of dynamic activity when an organization and a consumer collaborate and create innovations for projects of new service development. H. L. Melton and M. D. Hartline (2010) have collected data from 160 organizations across various service sectors and found out that the engagement of consumers and professional employees during the specific stages of a new service development process indirectly affects sales and performance of project development. According to the authors, companies should involve consumers in the stages of design and development in order to provide successful new services. It would help to identify market opportunities, generate, and evaluate all ideas for a new service, define benefits and features of potential service, and provide comprehensive feedback on service testing.

Undoubtedly, there are many positive aspects of consumer involvement described in the scientific literature. However, the researchers are increasingly keen to talk about the potential risks of this process as well. According to A. Lundkvist and A. Yakhlef (2004), despite the fact that consumer involvement can significantly increase the chances to solve specific problems of the organization, the insights or suggestions of consumers are still taking as a symbolic help. J. Backmann *et al.* (2015) have noted that a diversity of knowledge leads to a certain degree of knowledge usage. If the obstacles to interpret the information and communicate with consumers occur, it might affect the results and team processes. The research made by M. Antioco *et al.* (2008) showed up that the discrepancies and overload of information can be resulted by excessive contact with consumers.

In conclusion, the interaction between a business entity and a consumer makes the preparation for individual operations easier as well as improves the dissemination of information. If taking this situation from the perspective of a customer, the opportunity to engage in the development process of a new service provided by an organization gives the participants a social sense of identity that enables sharing of knowledge and experience. However, a business entity should rationally evaluate all suggestions and recommendations of consumers, as a result, most of them might be difficult to implement or require taking some additional resources.

4. Consumer involvement at different stages of new service development

More and more researchers are focused on analyzing the role of consumers in the different stages of the development of new services (see Table 1) and ways how to use the assistance of customers in the most effective ways. V. A. Zeithaml et al. (2017) state that formal brainstorming, requesting new ideas from employees and consumers, the research about potential customers, and learning about the offers of competitors are the most common ways to improve the process of new service development. According to H. P. Hsu (2017), in order to transfer the knowledge of consumers to an organization, all tacit knowledge should be transformed into explicit knowledge while sharing experiences, making dialogues, discussions and using other forms of communication. In this way, an organization is fully able to exploit consumer knowledge and enhance its competitiveness. Jin et al. (2014) have proposed to divide the consumers involvement into the 5 following categories:

1. *No involvement.* An organization believes that it has enough knowledge about the new service ideas and understands all the needs of a market, as a result, consumers are not invited to participate in the process of new service development at all.
2. *Involvement by observation.* First of all, consumers are considered as objects of research. As the information is based on current services and it is limited, an organization focuses on existing issues of their services. Second, an interaction is possible only during the initial stages of new service development. Third, the indirect interaction typically takes the form of indirect methods of needs analysis such as technological forecasting, analysis of consumer complaints and suggestions, market data collection by external organizations, and direct observation of consumers.
3. *Involvement by advice.* First, an organization integrates consumers into the process of developing a new service and considers them as the sources of information. Second, the consumer involvement occurs not only in the initial stages but in the later stages as well. Third, direct and structured methods of analysis such as face-to-face interviews, questionnaires, focus groups and brainstorming to find out the needs and observations of customers are used.
4. *Involvement by doing.* First, consumers are considered as co-creators and no longer play passive roles in the process of new service development. Second, consumers are actively involved in every stage as they became an integrated part of the new service development team. Third, direct and unstructured methods of needs analysis such as open dialogue, interviews with the targeted consumers, or direct involvement are used here.
5. *Involvement by sytong control.* First, consumers become partners of an organization. The relationship at this level of maturity lasts longer and consumers are involved in every stage of new service development. Second, these consumers are usually loyal and close to an organization, as a result, an organization collaborates with them while developing other projects too. Third, in order to maintain long-term relationships with consumers many committees, business clubs, consumer forums or advisory groups are established.

These opinions of the authoritative researchers have shown that the consumer involvement in the process of new service development can be diverse and universal enough. The consumers can be involved in the process during the separate stages or in all stages at once depending on the needs of an organization. A similar trend can be spotted in the research of the above-mentioned authors who highlight the dimension of a consumer at their new service development models or conceptual schemes (see Table 1).

Table 1. Authors who explored the consumer dimension in different stages of new service development

No.	Year	Author (-s)	Name of the new service development scheme, framework, model or algorithm	Consumer needs	Consumer involvement	New service development stages that suggest to involve the consumer			
						Preparation stage	Analysis stage	Formation stage	Realization stage
1.	2000	Johnson *et al.*	*The NSD process cycle*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.	2005	E. Stevens, S. Dimitriadis	*The systemic learning model for new service development*	✓	✓			✓	✓
3.	2007	A. Shekar	*Conceptual Framework of Service development*		✓		✓		✓
4.	2009	M. Reinoso *et al.*	*The Resources-Processes-Customer Framework*		✓	✓		✓	✓
5.	2014	D. Jin *et al.*	*New service development maturity model*		✓	✓	✓	✓	
6.	2013	O. Gaus *et al.*	*Modified NSD model in accordance with Gustafsson and Johnson*		✓	✓		✓	✓
7.	2013	M. Rapaccini *et al.*	*NSD reference model*		✓			✓	✓
8.	2013	B. Edvardsson *et al.*	*Conceptual model for NSD*	✓					✓
9.	2014	E. Yu, D. Sangiorgi	*New service development research framework*		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10.	2016	F. E. Santana *et al.*	*Phases and activities Framework*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
11.	2017	H. P. Hsu	*Service blueprint in NSD*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Number of models with custom attributes:				**5**	**11**	**8**	**8**	**9**	**10**

Source: compiled by the author

This research has revealed several aspects related to consumer involvement. First of all, no significant deviations have been observed during the different stages of new services development when consumers are involved. In this case, it is assumed that consumer involvement is possible throughout the process of developing a new service. Second, the aggregate result of consumer involvement is slightly lower during the stages of preparation and analysis, if it is compared with the stages of formation and realization. This implies that the consumer involvement is related to gathering the information needed to develop a new service during the stages of preparation and analysis. Meanwhile, all the collected information is processed, and consumers participate in the testing of new service during the stages of formation and realization. Third, the highlighted dimension of a consumer in new service development models or conceptual frameworks typically covers the process of involvement without highlighting the need for behavior analysis. Taking the results of the research into account, the principal scheme of consumer involvement in the development of new services has been formed (see Fig. 2).

The scheme highlights the dimension of a consumer during every stage.The consumer dimension not only defines what the organization has to do (evaluate the suatability of idea or identify consumer needs) but also highlights the role of the consumer who is involved in this process (conceptual service testing, provision of recommendations, etc.). Despite the benefits of consumer involvement, it has been noted that scientific research is more cautious about the need to take suggestions and recommendations of consumers into account.

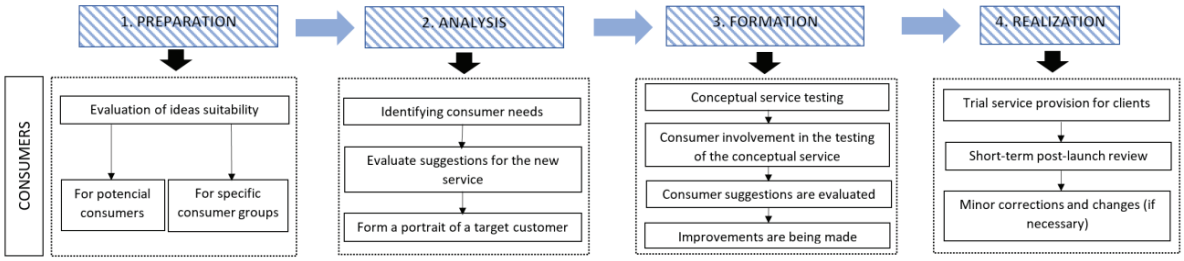

Figure 2. Consumer dimension in the process of developing new services

Source: based on Skačkauskienė et al. 2019

Conclusions and recommendations

The involved consumers become a specific kind of help to the company, as a result, many authors seek to highlight the importance of consultancy techniques in the context of a new services development. The specific surveys that consist of various suggestions, feedback, and ideas that consumers and employees of a company fill out during a conversation were distinguished by A. Lundkvist and A. Yakhlef (2004). These text surveys can provide more feedback to an organization itself and its employees. B. Dong *et al.* (2008) suggest that employees of organizations should take more time to communicate with consumers online or in a live way. In accordance with M. F. Svendsen *et al.* (2011), it is possible to apply the analytical methods in order to build a platform for better involvement of consumers. The authors point out that this way would enable the more effective management of value in the area of service providing. Despite the benefits of consumer involvement, research has shown a more cautious approach to the need to take consumer suggestions and recommendations into account.

The study has revealed that the overall result of consumer involvement during every stage of a new service development varies insignificantly between 8 and 10. This means that consumers are usually involved in all stages of the process. As a result, a conceptual scheme for consumer involvement in the development of new services has been presented and the dimension of a consumer has been emphasized at every stage. In this way, the opportunities of consumer involvement, benefits or information flows are highlighted as well as the necessary actions before moving to the next stage.

Research on the impact of consumers on the development of new services is recommended to continue. In the following stages, it is useful to assess the preliminary time savings due to consumer involvement. Setting individual timeframes would allow for a more accurate justification of the advantages and disadvantages of consumer involvement at individual stages of the development of new services. First, it would help to figure out how to improve communication between the organization's employees, workgroups and consumers. Second, it would allow rational planning of the entire process of developing new new services. Third, it would provide more information on which generations (*Baby Boomers, X, Y, Z*) would be beneficial to include in the different stages or even entire process. The PERT method is expected to be used to expand this study. This method allows to calculate the expected time of an individual task using the most likely time, optimistic time and pessimistic time estimations.

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Santrauka

Spartus visuomenės gyvenimo tempas, augantis pragyvenimo lygis ir informacijos sklaida skatina verslo subjektus kurti naujas paslaugas – ne tik įvertinti vartotojų elgsenos pokyčius, bet ir juos įtraukti į šį procesą. Vartotojų elgsenos supratimas verslo subjektams leidžia sukurti potencialaus kliento portretą ir parinkti vartotojo poreikių tenkinimo priemones, lengviau išsiaiškinti apsisprendimo pirkti pagrįstumą. Tuo tarpu vartotojų įtraukimas į naujų paslaugų kūrimą gali būti siejamas su jų žinių ir patirties panaudojimu, siekiant patobulinti esamą paslaugą ar sukurti naują, atsižvelgiant į esamas rinkos tendencijas ar galimybes diegti technologines inovacijas. Nors bendrame paslaugų kūrimo kontekste vartotojų įtakos tyrimai tampa vis svarbesni, mokslininkų darbuose tai analizuojama gana fragmentiškai: skirtinguose šio proceso etapuose nepakankamai aiški vartotojų įtrauktis, mažai dėmesio skiriama darbuotojų pasirengimui, nors siekiama išsiaiškinti vartotojų poreikius ar įtraukti juos į produkto kūrimo procesą. Tyrimas atliktas, siekiant įvertinti vartotojų įtaką naujų paslaugų kūrimui ir nustatyti jų įtraukties į šį procesą galimybes. Tyrimas pagrįstas mokslinės literatūros analizės ir sintezės metodais.

Išanalizavus teorinius tyrimus nustatyta, kad vartotojų įtrauktis į naujų paslaugų kūrimą gali būti įvairialypė ir gana universali. Atsižvelgiant į organizacijos poreikius, vartotojai į šį procesą gali būti įtraukiami tam tikrame etape arba dalyvauti visuose etapuose.