

Service Design for Co-Produced Service Excellence

Wieslaw Urban

Bialystok University of Technology
Wiejska str. 45A, 15-351 Bialystok, Poland

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to recognise factors affecting excellent service provision when a service is arising simultaneously during co-production and afterwards to discuss the implications for service design. The study tries to provide a comprehensive explanation of the specificity of achieving service excellence during co-production. The factors influencing co-produced service quality are determined drawing on an in-depth field investigation. The study suggests that existing service design tools are not sufficient for preparing the service company to deliver excellent co-produced services. Service design should consider the preparation of the service environment for the effective determination of service requirements during each individual service process. Moreover, particular attention must be paid to knowledge assets preparation and effective two-way communication as crucial factors of excellent co-produced services.

Keywords: service design, co-production, service excellence.

Introduction

The issues of product design and process design in the manufacturing of goods have long been discussed by quality management. In this field there are several tools and techniques supporting the design process, aiming for high quality products, e.g. the FEMA technique and QFD. In manufacturing it is widely accepted that in the designing sphere causes exist affecting production process problems, as well as customer dissatisfaction due to poor quality products. Deming (1992), a quality guru, underlines in his quality management rules the importance of building quality into a product in the first place, in this way eliminating the need for inspections. The designing process of services in the context of influence on customer-perceived service quality is not so deeply exploited and explained. The service design process differs markedly from the manufacturing one, as it must consider the intangible and simultaneous nature of services.

This study is based on Vargo's and Lush's (2004) Service Dominant Logic (SDL) premise, which states that the customer is always a co-producer. Customer involvement in service co-production determines the field of interest of this study, particularly its involvement in the formation of service quality by the service provider's

organizational system. The study aims to recognise factors affecting quality arising simultaneously under the direct influence of the customer during the service process, then to figure out their repercussions for service design. According to the literature, what exactly occurs when the customer acts in the co-creation process still remains unexplored (Eichentopf, Kleinaltenkamp and van Stiphout, 2011). This study goes further and tries to contribute to service design field drawing on what is discovered with respect to co-production. In the literature there is lack of studies on consequences of co-production for service design. The study is based on qualitative in-depth interviews with service staff. The investigation of service staff allowed to understand how quality is formed during co-production, including the consequences for service design.

Views on co-production and co-creation

The SDL theory has provided a fresh view of value and its delivery by bringing out the service nature of economic relations. On the list of SDL theses co-creation/co-production appears to be a very important pillar of this theory. First of all, it is said that value is always relational; it is co-created with the customer's engagement – Foundational Premise #6 (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). Moreover, the SDL theory implies that the company cannot create/deliver value alone, but it can collaboratively (interactively) create value following the customer's acceptance – Foundational Premise #7 (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). In the whole output of SDL, two similarly meaningful notions appear: co-production and co-creation. Co-creation refers primarily to value, and it has a broader meaning other than customer participation in production or design processes. SDL implies co-production as mere customer participation in the development of a firm's offering (e.g. design, assembly, self-service), and it seems optional (Vargo and Akaka, 2009). In the literature the words co-production and co-creation are very often utilized interchangeably, and also as synonyms. The point of interest of this study is co-production in the meaning as presented above – as a jointly performed service process.

According to Grisseman and Stokburger-Sauer (2012), co-production does not mean only to shift work from the service provider to customers. Co-production (co-creation) is understood as a service process carried out collaboratively with a customer, wholly or partially, paying

particular attention to the customer's participation in the performance of various activities occurring in the service process (Auh et al., 2007; Etgar, 2008). According to many studies, the main issue of co-production is intense and dialoguing customer-company interactions (Payne, Storbacka and Frow, 2008; Andreu, Sánchez and Mele, 2010; Grisseman and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012; Grönroos and Voima, 2013) in which the provider's staff listen and react promptly to customer needs (Grisseman and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012). In this interaction the role of the customer is particularly important, and it ought to contribute, to a considerable extent, to the service process (Auh, 2007; Fuller et al., 2009; Grisseman and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012). The authors also note that the customer, while co-producing, acts freely (Fuller et al., 2009) and spontaneously (Bolton and Saxena-Iyer, 2009). While co-producing a service, service staff also perform creatively and openly, and are authentically engaged in the interaction (Dong, Evans and Zou, 2008; Grönroos and Voima, 2013). If both sides collaborate with commitment, then an individually tailored and unique service process occurs (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo and Akaka, 2009).

The authors also point out that customers engaged in the service product design stage are of significant benefit to the company (Morelli, 2009; Edvardsson et al., 2010; Edvardsson et al., 2011; Saarijärvi, Kannan and Kuusela, 2013). This is referred to as co-design. It takes place when a service provider collaborates and acts collectively with customers, and thanks to this cooperation new service products emerge (Payne et al., 2008). During this process of co-design the latent and hidden needs of customers are uncovered, and the service provider motivates customers to employ their creative potential in new service product development (Saarijärvi et al., 2013). According to Edvardsson et al. (2010), customer co-development is a core concept in understanding innovations in services. Co-creation is a factor positively supporting product success when developing incremental innovations (Gustafsson, Kristensson and Witell, 2012), and it is also important in radical innovations (Gustafsson et al., 2012; Perks, Gruber and Edvardsson, 2012).

The customer in the co-production process

According to the literature the co-creation process is one of the three elements forming services (Heinonen et al., 2010). The others are the service providers' internal activities and outcome elements. According to the process-based framework for value creation, there are three kinds of processes: the customer value-creating processes, the supplier value-creating processes, and the encounter processes (Payne et al., 2008). The encounter processes are perceived as the processes and practices of interaction and exchange that take place within customer and supplier relationships, and which need to be managed in order to develop successful co-creation opportunities (Payne et al., 2008). The process is characterised by the passage of time, expressed in terms of 'stages' or 'phases', as well as transformations and changes (Helkkula, 2011). Apart from these, the authors characterise the service process as a

dynamic, non-linear, and also sometimes unconscious (Payne et al., 2008).

The process viewpoint allows us to observe how dynamic and individualized services are; they are dependent on both sides. However, the customer's role in the co-production process is very special. First of all, customers are engaged in the production process (Grönroos and Raval, 2011) and participate in the performance of various activities occurring in the service process (Etgar, 2008). As Wind and Rangaswamy (2001, p. 21) state, in the co-production perspective the traditional provider's question 'What can we do for you?' is replaced by 'What can you do with us?' Being active participants, customers share responsibility for the process's outcome, measured in terms of quality and added value (Eichentopf et al., 2011). Moreover, in the service process ex ante uncertainty exists regarding the customer – service provider interactions. This uncertainty has its roots in the unpredictability of customers' needs and expectations. Edvardsson et al. (2011) mention an anticipation of the customer's needs by the service provider. This indicates the necessity of sufficient information exchange between the sides of the service interaction.

The immediacy of the customer's reaction in the service process is noted by Tronvoll (2007) and, what is very important, according to this author, the customer can evaluate the service interaction and the value-in-use at about the same time. The author underlines the importance of feedback from customers. Investigating customer complaint behaviours and treating them as a service-adjustment process reduces the discrepancy in the service process (Tronvoll, 2007). According to Payne et al. (2008), during a single process cycle the supplier teaches the customer, but at the same time the supplier listens to the customer and then customizes its actions. Others suggest that service providers should go beyond what is clear and expressed by customers, saying that attention should move beyond the interactions visible to the service company to those often invisible and mental activities and experiences that lead to value emergence (Heinonen et al., 2010). It looks obvious that not all issues during the service process can be thoroughly described, so there is space for spontaneous actions from the provider's staff. According to Hunter (2011), the foundations of excellent service are manifestations of the core values of respect, compassion and hospitality. The author underlines the crucial role of 'smiling customer service', which is simply defined as when service providers or frontline staff are willing to go above and beyond their job description to ensure total customer satisfaction (Hunter, 2011). Similarly, other authors, while mentioning the importance of surprise in customer satisfaction in services, also see the importance of vague service activities by service providers, which are unexpected by customers (Kim and Mattila, 2010).

Service quality in co-production

When talking about quality from an organizational perspective it is always referred to as a relative attribute (Harvey and Green, 1993; Smith, 1993) considering quality requirements and their fulfilment. The typical

understanding of the concept of quality is called 'manufacturing-based', and is proposed, inter alia, by the ISO 9000 international series of standards defining quality management system requirements. According to ISO 9000:2005, quality is meant as the degree to which a set of inherent characteristics fulfils requirements. The ISO 9000 quality definition is perceived by researchers as codified for world class manufacturers (Russell and Miles, 1998). Indeed, this manufacturing-based conceptualisation of quality emerges as the most useful one for carrying out operations in any organization, including service systems. The authors consider that quality, meant as conformance to requirements, is very useful while carrying out operations in any organization, including service ones (Blind and Hipp, 2003; Prajogo, 2008; Zajarskas and Ruževičius, 2010). It certainly occurs in the co-produced service process that service staff operate by just following strict behaviour patterns defined by the service provider in advance. But, taking into consideration the deliberations in the previous paragraph, there must undoubtedly occur service provider actions which go beyond the defined requirements.

As also suggested by the literature (Haackel, Carbone and Berry, 2003; Heinonen et al., 2010; Kim and Mattila, 2010; Hunter, 2011), elements which are not strictly defined and not described in rigid standardized terms have great importance in services, and these elements form co-produced service quality. The service provider can obviously foresee many options, but it is not certain what the customer requirements would be. This is mostly related to the fact that the customer might not know, at the beginning of the service process, what exactly he/she expects. So during the interactions the service provider tries to discover the precise meaning of what the quality requirements are, and at the same time what excellent service in this particular service process exactly means. In fact service requirements which are the basis for achieving quality emerge during each individual service process. This lies in the assumption that when starting an individual service process some requirements are not known, but they are discoverable during the process. While discovering the requirements and getting to know about them, very often it might be appropriate to help the customer to determine his/her needs by teaching and advising.

Service interactions are full of intangible elements emerging from personal features (Hunter, 2011), and, therefore, not all quality patterns can be expressed by the customer and learned by the service staff. During a service process which is co-produced there are actions taken individually by service staff, and not based on defined routines and individual requirements obtained from the customer. These are the attempts to meet customers' unexpressed needs. The effects of these attempts are usually recognisable only after the actions, by the sight of a happy (or unhappy) customer. These kinds of actions include elements like understanding, compassion and ethical values shown to customers. These imply that emerging service requirements cannot always be comprehensively and precisely expressed, established and learned – so they remain elusive during the individual service process. This manifestation of service quality

includes very personal human aspects which, according to the literature, play an important role in quality perception by the customer in services (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988). Finally, it can be concluded that there is particular kind of service quality which is specific to service co-production. This might be qualified as the 'co-produced service quality component'.

The concept of co-produced service quality is presented in Figure 1 below. The figure shows the service process as actions performed by the customer and the service provider. During process stages interactions between both sides occur; these interactions include acquisition of the information regarding customer's requirements. Consequently, in opposite direction, there is a fulfilment of known and understood requirements. If requirements are obtained properly and comprehensively, and afterwards performed perfectly by the provider, the customer has a perception of an excellent service.

Service design

Service design is a crucial element of successful service. It determines a correct and faultless service process flow. Service design is considered a part of new service development, and is very closely related to service innovations (Johnson et al., 2000; Goldstein et al., 2002). Service design is about understanding the client, the organisation and the market, developing ideas, translating them into feasible solutions, and helping to implementing them (Moritz, 2005, p. 39). According to the literature, there are a few phases of design thinking: inspiration, ideation, and implementation (Katzen, 2011). Service design takes into consideration functionality, ergonomics, ecological integrity, economic feasibility and aesthetic values, but it concerns a living product (Mager, 2004). Service design is supported by several tools. One of them is a service prototype. This is a tool used to explore, evaluate and communicate design ideas and concepts (Blomkvist and Holmlid, 2010). But the most appropriate tools engaged in service design, and probably the most often used, are blueprints (Bitner, Ostrom and Morgan, 2008; Morelli, 2009; Zehrer, 2009; Kostopoulos, Gounaris and Boukis, 2012). Another developing technique, very similar to the above-mentioned one, is called the 'service experience blueprint' (Zehrer, 2009). Morelli (2009) additionally pointed out quality function deployment (QFD) and integration definition for function modelling (IDeF0) as techniques appropriate for utilization in designing services.

Mager (2004) considers that service design is focused on 'a living product'. If it is 'living', not all its features can be precisely defined during the service design stage. There should always be a space left for livingly co-produced service product elements which emerge during interactions between the service provider and the customer. In consequence, the co-produced part of the service process and its quality must be one of particular interest in service design. According to Morelli (2009), there is a need for a change in the thinking about the quality of the offering by the service provider.

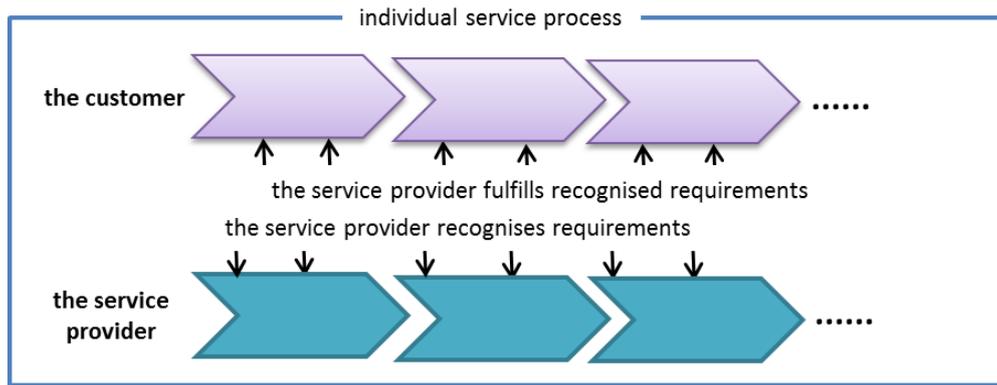


Figure 1. Co-produced service quality concept

This can no longer be a precisely fixed requirements pattern; it must instead be an open support of customers' interaction.

The co-produced service quality component mentioned above should be carefully thought through during the service design stage, particularly its predicates. Certainly, the crucial issue for this component is service requirements recognition during short cycles of interaction between both sides of the service encounter.

Field research methodology

From the co-produced service quality component concept emerges many practical and theoretical questions. Practically, this means, from service managers' viewpoint, the identification of quality requirements in short cycles of one single service process is the key challenge. The empirical research is focused on factors from the service organization side which are crucial to obtain service (customer) requirements during a co-produced service process. These requirements form outlines for aiming towards excellent service performance. The factors obtained by the research would have first-class meaning in service design in terms of the co-produced service quality component.

The interviews were carried out with direct contact service staff representatives recruited from different service sectors. Attention was focused on many customer services, assuming that service co-production occurs broadly. Service spots were selected in random manner from the data base of service companies. In each spot one service representative was asked to take part in the interview. The research considers co-production as a jointly created service process, with a significant contribution from the customer, who at least partly, but recognisably, affects the course and shape of the service process. During direct interviews interviewers asked whether a respondent had ever experienced a situation of co-production, and if the answer was 'yes', the interviewer asked a series of questions about potential factors which play important roles in identifying requirements during service co-production. A respondent could answer 'not applicable', or leave a comment explaining how the factor influences requirement recognition. The factor list was

formed based on in-depth literature studies. They are as follow:

1. staff's professional knowledge concerning provided services (professional knowledge),
2. staff's creative approach and innovativeness in the provision of services (creativity and innovativeness),
3. experience in customer service (experience),
4. the ability to empathize (empathy),
5. the ability to communicate easily with the customer (communication),
6. the ability to learn from the customer (learnability),
7. the ability to teach customers (teaching),
8. the ability to persuade the customer (persuasion),
9. comprehensive listening to the customer (listening),
10. advising the customer (consultancy),
11. tangible assets, for example, hardware and equipment (tangible assets).

If necessary, questions concerning the above-mentioned factors were supplemented by additional ones in order to achieve exhaustive descriptions of influential matters. The interviews were conducted by a group of trained field researchers during winter 2012/2013. The collected answers were recorded and afterwards transcribed to an Excel spreadsheet. In total 168 service representatives were interviewed.

Factors affecting service requirements recognition

The frequency of answers concerning each factor is presented in Table 1 below. Based on the frequency it is possible to distinguish three factor fractions with a noticeably different frequency of positive answers. The first fraction with a frequency of a positive answer above 120 out of 168 (frequency noticeably above 70 %) can be treated as the collection of key factors of simultaneous recognition of service requirements. These are professional knowledge of direct contact personnel, advice provided to customers, willingness to listen to customers comprehensively, the ability of easy communication with customers, and experience in serving customers. Another group of factors (considering frequency) contains two factors (frequency between 50 % and 60 %): creativity and innovativeness, as well as tangible assets.

Table 1

Statistics of answers

Factors	Respondents who left comments		Respondents who answered 'not applicable'	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Professional knowledge	138	82.1 %	30	17.9 %
Consultancy	128	76.2 %	40	23.8 %
Listening	127	75.6 %	41	24.4 %
Communication	126	75 %	42	25 %
Experience	121	72 %	47	28 %
Creativeness and innovativeness	99	58.9 %	69	41.1 %
Tangible assets	95	56.5 %	73	43.5 %
Teaching	62	36.9 %	106	63.1 %
Empathy	56	33.3 %	112	66.7 %
Persuasion	52	31 %	116	69 %
Learnability	44	26.2 %	124	73.8 %

The other factors, according to the conducted research, seem to be less important.

The interviewed service staff representatives provided explanations justifying particular factors. These are mostly longer statements rather than single sentences. All the stories by respondents were repeatedly read and analysed, with the aim of figuring out the deep meaning and context of each factor. With reference to the factor 'professional knowledge', one respondent said: *Expertise has a big impact on the quality. I am able to prompt a better solution to offer a range of materials that are needed to perform the job, and at the same time arrange for prompt wholesalers with better prices* (renovation services, male, age 18-30). Another respondent reported an explanation as follow: *It is certain that the professional knowledge of a designer, who is at the same time a seller, is important in determining the quality requirements. If it were not, I would not have anything to talk with a customer about because I could not even tell what the anticipated duration of the project's execution was* (an interior designer, male, age 18-30). As the presented examples showed, in the case of decryption of customer needs and translating them into service requirements, the very practical meaning of professional knowledge has primary importance. Knowledge leads to tangible benefits for customers, like, for example, better price rates or precise project passage scheduling, etc. In many ways two other factors are similar. Consultancy is also based on the service staff's knowledge, but it is different because it is based on teaching customers and responding to various customer concerns. The factor 'experience' also concerns knowledge but is manifested in actions.

Two more factors from the first (most frequent) group concern information exchange between the two sides of a service encounter. Listening to customers (the third factor on the list – Table 1) in general can be perceived as an element of communication (the fourth factor on the list – Table 1). One of the respondents commented on the factor 'listening' as follows: *In one case the client, after being*

thoroughly listened to by the renovation team, felt appreciated; all his doubts and questions were expertly answered (construction and renovation services, female, age 18-30). Another service representative justified the factor 'communication' in the following words: *Indeed, the ability to communicate is important. In a telephone conversation diction and voice modulation play important roles, as does giving feedback, thus avoiding communication errors. In our company each employee undergoes training regarding communication with the customer. It is important to use a nice, patient, warm and helpful tone of voice* (food service, female, age 18-30). These two respondents' comments mention two ways of communication. The first of them is the ability to listen carefully to what customers would like to say, and giving it as much attention as necessary. The second comment underlines the importance of proper communication towards the customer. But all of these communication aspects are employed to determine the requirements of a service process that is just being performed.

The gathered data indicate that the first mentioned group of five factors is characterized by a large linkage between factors. It definitely shows the dominant role of many forms of knowledge and its particular utilization in practice, as well as two-way communication in the determination of service requirements during service provision. In the second group tangible assets exist which are perceived by service staff as an enabling component, allowing the achievement of high standards of services. Furthermore, the creative talents belonging to the creativeness and innovativeness factor allow the service staff to meet the customer's latent needs. The third group presents the least important factors. Surprisingly, empathy appears here, which might have been expected to play a notable role in obtaining requirements in service co-production. The research allows us to conclude that the many manifestations of knowledge play primary roles, along with effective two-way communication in the service encounter. These two are crucial for achieving excellent

service in terms of the co-produced service quality component.

Implications for service design

Knowing the factors which determine serving the co-produced quality component is important for preparing service to deal properly with this component. Therefore, a few postulates for service design with reference to the co-produced quality component have been formulated.

1. The service design phase should take into consideration the preparation of a service for discovering and determining service requirements in short cycles - during each individual service process.

One of the most crucial elements of service design, apart from defining activities, tangibles and process flow, should be the prediction of potential fields of co-production in the designed service. Service design should foresee how situations of emerged service requirements would look, and assign what kind of tangible and intangible assets are appropriate to deal with these situations. The proper question is what is needed for service staff to determine service requirements, and what is needed to achieve their fulfilment. It must be emphasised that the potential fields of co-production, as well as potential service requirements, cannot be described in a precise manner but rather as vaguely defined issues. These are the potential fields of challenge that could be met in service provision by the service staff. Service design should prepare the service system to deal with these challenges. This postulate meets voices from the literature that say designers must embrace the holistic nature of customer experience and take any and many service elements and touch points into consideration (Berry, Carbone and Haeckel, 2002).

2. Knowledge assets required for service co-production should be specified in the design stage, as well as the issue of how this obtained knowledge must be found in the scope of service design.

Knowledge, understood in a broad manner, has probably the widest utilisation while discovering service requirements when co-producing a service with the customer. And this should be a prime field of interest in service design. Knowledge has many faces: it can be taken from experience, or from broad market sophistication, or insight into various technical aspects, or others. Appropriate training schemes for service staff should be designed, including those based on simulations of possible situations of co-production in the service encounter. According to the literature tacit knowledge management practices rather than explicit ones are of primary importance in the service encounter, and they are more closely tied to customer satisfaction (Guchait, Namasivayam and Lei, 2011). Another issue of service design is to determine how to assess whether appropriate knowledge assets are assimilated among service encounter personnel.

3. Service design should predict conditions for unhindered two-way communication with the customer in the service encounter.

The communication must take into consideration much space for free expression for the customer, and this information should be carefully adopted and thoroughly understood by the provider. Many possible communication channels should be considered, including non-verbal communication. This communication must be predicted and determined in the design stage. Communication facilitating effective requirement recognition is also a matter of the trained personal skills of service staff. The literature also points out the importance of well-fitting communication in achieving customer perceived service quality (Sparks and Callan, 1992; Park et al., 2012).

4. The factors being prepared for serving the co-produced quality component should be integrated into the built service climate.

Service requirements recognition needs, first of all, the proper attitude of service staff. They should be able to perform situationally, each time differently, because each service co-production is a collection of unique episodes. Service staff should have inner guidance leading them to achieving excellent service. This inner guidance provides the service climate. It consists of employees' perceptions of the policies, practices, and procedures (Schneider, Salvaggio and Subirats, 2002). This is a summary of impressions employees have about 'how we do things around here' or 'what we focus on around here' (Schneider, Macey and Young, 2006, p. 117). Some authors confirm this postulate, stating that a service climate established within the service provider influences the effectiveness of the service design process (Kostopoulos et al., 2012).

5. Service design tools and techniques inadequately support the service design process in preparing a service to deliver excellent quality in its co-produced component.

The tools intended for service design help, first of all, in planning service sequences, and allow the definition of activities performed by service staff and by customers. However, to achieve co-produced service quality it is not enough to define the quality in advance. What is needed to perform – requirements, are obtained during the individual service process. Currently used tools are appropriate for defining service standards in advance, but they have limited usefulness in supporting staff actions in service encounters provided they have to cooperate simultaneously with the customer. The staff should know how to follow the emerging service requirements which are not fully predictable before an individual service process starts. Morelli (2009, p. 583) also underlines a similar issue, saying that design discipline's focus on product design does not provide enough valid tools to deal with features such as time and interaction.

Conclusions

Service design is so often mentioned as dealing with a static service product, similar to tools and techniques supporting service design. Service design is based on

determining the flow of services in advance, and thanks to this problems and drawbacks can be avoided during service delivery (Gummesson, 1994). The study implies the necessity to turn the attention to the dynamism and uniqueness occurring in each service process. Service design should consider more seriously service co-production and excellence in this field. This study tries to show that while designing the service the fields of 'freedom' should be left. But these are not untapped fields; these are fields for co-production, when service requirements emerge during each individual service processes. The study implies that these fields should be carefully identified during the service design stage. Moreover, these fields should be exhaustively prepared for effective requirement determination and their fulfilment by service staff. This preparation is carried out not by preparation of the next standard, but by preparation within a service organization of particular factors crucial for serving the co-produced quality component. All these enable the service system to achieve excellent service quality in the broad sense of this term.

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W. Urban

Paslaugų dizaino svarba bendrai kuriant aukščiausių paslaugų kokybę

Santrauka

Bendra paslaugų kūrimo įtaka paslaugų dizainui labai retai analizuojama mokslinėje paslaugų srities literatūroje.

Straipsnyje remiamasi prielaida, kad klientas taip pat yra paslaugos kūrėjas, ypač jos teikimo metu. Straipsnyje analizuojamas klientų įsitraukimas bendrai kuriant paslaugas, ypač įsitraukimas į paslaugų kokybės vystymą paslaugų teikėjo organizacinėje sistemoje. Straipsnyje siekiama išskirti veiksnius, kurie veikia kokybę ir klientą kaip darantį tiesioginį poveikį paslaugos teikimo metu, vėliau siekiama apibrėžti jų implikacijas paslaugų dizainui.

Straipsnyje pristatomi giluminių interviu su paslaugų srities darbuotojais rezultatai. Interviu metu buvo apklausiami darbuotojai, turintys tiesioginį kontaktą su vartotojais. Respondentai atstovavo įvairias paslaugų sritis. Aptarnavimo vietas buvo pasirinktos atsitiktinai iš paslaugų kompanijų duomenų bazės. Vieno kiekvienos kompanijos atstovo buvo prašoma dalyvauti interviu. Iš viso buvo apklausti 168 paslaugų teikėjai.

Straipsnyje daromos penkios pagrindinės išvados:

- paslaugų dizaino fazėje reikia atsižvelgti į pasirengimą paslaugai teikti, jo metu turi būti identifikuoti reikalavimai paslaugai trumpų ciklų požiūriu ir tai turi būti atliekama kiekvieno individualaus paslaugų proceso metu;
- dizaino stadijoje turi būti įvardinti bendram paslaugų kūrimui reikalingi žinių išteklių; šios žinios taip pat turi būti generuojamos ir paslaugų dizaino srityje;
- paslaugų dizainas turi numatyti sąlygas netrukdomai dvipusei komunikacijai su klientu paslaugų teikimo metu;
- veiksniai, rengiant bendrą paslaugų kūrimo komponentą, turi būti integruoti į kuriamą paslaugos klimatą;
- paslaugų dizaino įrankiai ir technikos nėra lygiaverčiai paslaugų dizaino procese projektuojant aukščiausios kokybės paslaugą kaip bendro paslaugų kūrimo komponentą.

Paslaugų dizainas dažnai minimas kaip orientuotas į statišką paslaugų produktą, panašų į paslaugų dizaino įrankius ir technikas. Atliktas tyrimas implikuoja būtinybę atkreipti dėmesį į kiekvieno paslaugos proceso dinamiką ir unikalumą. Paslaugų dizaine didesnis dėmesys turi būti skiriamas bendram paslaugų kūrimui ir aukščiausiai kokybei.

Tyrimu siekta parodyti, kad kuriant paslaugas reikia palikti erdvės laisvei. Laisvė traktuojama kaip bendro paslaugos kūrimo laukas, kuriame reikalavimai paslaugai atsiranda suteikiant individualią paslaugą. Tyrimo rezultatai rodo, kad šios erdvės turi būti kruopščiai identifikuotos paslaugos dizaino stadijoje. Be to, jos turi leisti nustatyti efektyvius reikalavimus paslaugų sektoriaus personalui; taip pat jų laikymosi procedūras. Pasirengimas vykdomas ne rengiant dar vieną standartą, bet paslaugų organizacijoje identifikuojant esminius veiksnius, lemiančius bendrą paslaugų kūrimą. Visa tai įgalina paslaugų sistemą siekti aukščiausios kokybės plačiąja šio žodžio prasme.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: paslaugų dizainas, bendras paslaugų kūrimas, aukščiausia paslaugų kokybė.

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