

Jaro Nieminen & Farnoush Yarmohammadi Samani

PRODUCTIFICATION AND ITS BENEFITS IN STUDENT-RUN  
CONSULTING BUSINESSES

Degree Programme in Innovative Business Services  
2015

# TUOTTEISTAMINEN JA SEN HYÖDYT OPISKELIJAN JOHTAMASSA KONSULTOINTIYRITYSTOIMINNASSA

Nieminen, Jaro & Yarmohammadi Samani, Farnoush  
Satakunnan ammattikorkeakoulu  
Innovative Business Services koulutusohjelma  
May 2015  
Ohjaaja: Salahub, Jeffrey  
Sivumäärä: 53

Asiasanat: Tuotteistaminen, opiskelijayritys, konsultointi

---

Tämän opinnäytetyön käsittelee ”tuotteistamista”; Mikä se on, mitkä ovat sen tarkoitukset ja miten soveltaa sitä. Tutkimus keskittyi erityisesti tuotteistamisen käyttöön konsultoinnissa. Kuinka sitä käytetään tällä hetkellä ja onko tarvetta tuotteistaa enemmän?

Me saimme vastauksia näihin kysymyksiin käyttämällä kyselykaavaketta. Kohderyhmä kyselylle oli Suomen yrittäjät. Kyselykaavakkeessa selvitimme heidän mieltymyksiään tuotteistettujen ja tuotteistamattomien konsultointipalvelujen välillä, ja tämän lisäksi heidän mielikuvaansa opiskelijoiden johtamasta konsultointiyrityksestä. Tulokset osoittivat että suurin osa vastaajista suosii tuotteistettuja palveluja tuotteistamattomien ylitse.

Näiden vastausten jälkeen tutkimme tuotteistamiseen ja konsultointiin liittyvää kirjallisuutta. Näiden tietojen pohjalta päätimme tuotteistaa opiskelijayritys Konsultointi J. Niemisen. Käytimme tähän kuuden-askeleen mallia, joka on tarkoitettu tuotteistamaan yrityksen sisäiset ja ulkoiset prosessit. Tässä opimme että tuotteistaminen on paljon enemmän kuin tuotteen parantamista. Se on yrityksen sisäisten toimintojen vakiointia ja konkretisointia niin että ne voidaan toistaa ilman prosessien uudelleen aloittamista.

Lisäksi me teimme kyselykaavakkeen vastaajien mieltymystä vastaavan kokeilutuotteen Konsultointi J. Niemiselle. Tämä palvelutuote: Markkina-analyysi pitää sisällään kilpailija-analyysin, asiakasanalyysin ja tuoteanalyysin.

# PRODUCTIFICATION AND ITS BENEFITS IN STUDENT-RUN CONSULTING BUSINESSES

Nieminen, Jaro & Yarmohammadi Samani, Farnoush  
Satakunta University of Applied Sciences  
Degree Programme in Innovative Business Services  
May 2015  
Supervisor: Salahub, Jeffrey  
Number of pages: 53

Keywords: Productification, student-run, consulting

---

This thesis deals with the concept of “productification”; what it is, what are its goals, what tools it uses and how to apply it. The study looked especially at the uses of productification in the field of consulting. How it is applied at the moment and is there a need to productify more?

We gained answers to these questions using questionnaire. The target group for this was entrepreneurs of Finland. In the questionnaire we asked their preferences between productified consulting services and unproductified ones, and what their image is concerning student-run consulting companies. Results pointed out that most of the respondents would prefer productified services over unproductified ones. Approximately 7 out of 10 prefer productified services more than unproductified ones.

After the answers we studied literature concerning productification and consulting. Based on information gathered we decided to use productification for the student-run case company Konsultointi J. Nieminen. We did this by using six-step’ model meant to productify company’s internal and external processes. In this we learned that productification is more than improving a product. It is standardizing and concreting actions within the company so they can be repeated without having to start over again and again.

Also we created a test product for Konsultointi J. Nieminen based on the preferences of the respondents in the questionnaire. This service package: Market analysis consisted of competitors analysis, customers’ analysis and product analysis modules.

## CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION.....	6
1.1	Case company .....	6
2	METHODOLOGY .....	7
2.1	Theoretical literature and meta-analysis .....	7
2.2	Questionnaire and its data analysis .....	7
2.3	Case student-run consulting company .....	8
3	WHAT IS PRODUCTIFICATION?.....	8
3.1	Meaning of productification .....	8
3.2	Productification concept .....	9
3.3	The goal of productification.....	10
3.4	Internal and external productification.....	11
3.4.1	Internal productification .....	11
3.4.2	External productification .....	11
3.5	Productification in consulting.....	12
3.5.1	Normal consulting .....	12
3.5.2	Productified consulting.....	13
4	PRODUCTIFICATION FOR THE CASE COMPANY.....	13
4.1	World of uncertainties.....	13
4.1.1	Overview.....	13
4.1.2	Performance uncertainty.....	14
4.1.3	Relational uncertainty.....	15
4.1.4	Psychosocial uncertainty .....	15
4.2	Phases of productification.....	16
4.2.1	Defining the service.....	17
4.2.2	Standardizing the service.....	22
4.2.3	Concreting the service .....	26
4.2.4	Pricing the service .....	28
4.2.5	Monitoring and measuring the service .....	30
4.3	The test product.....	32
4.3.1	Test product in company's webpage .....	32
5	DATA GATHERING.....	33
5.1	Questionnaire .....	33
5.1.1	Description.....	33
5.1.2	Questions' analysis.....	34
5.1.3	Results and analysis.....	37
5.2	Test product questionnaire.....	43

5.2.1 Description.....	43
5.2.2 Questionnaire analysis.....	44
5.2.3 Result and analysis .....	44
5.3 Conclusion .....	45
5.4 Approach and limitations .....	46
5.4.1 The idea.....	46
5.4.2 Creating the questionnaire.....	47
5.4.3 Sending the questionnaire.....	47
5.4.4 Gathering and analyzing the results .....	48
6 LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH .....	48
6.1 Case company .....	49
6.2 Concept of productification .....	49
6.3 Test product .....	50
6.4 Data gathering.....	50
REFERENCES.....	52

# 1 INTRODUCTION

In this thesis we provide information for better understanding the concept of productification and continue with subjects that are relevant and support the main question that we have had from the beginning:

*“Do potential customers really prefer productified consulting services?”*

To solve this we conducted a questionnaire, researched information on consulting business and productification, helped a case company to productify itself and created a test product.

## 1.1 Case company

An important part of the thesis is helping a case company to improve its business using productification. We chose our case company to be Konsultointi J. Nieminen as it is owned by one of this thesis' writers and we saw the value productification could bring for leading the firm. It is also active consulting company and it has some experiences in this field. Now the company only has Jaro Nieminen working but last year the company had two trainees working for the summer and very possibly will have trainees again next summer. The small number of employees makes synchronizing productification actions for the company easy and fast. The trade activity has being small scale for the last half a year as the owner has being finishing his bachelor's degree. This way the company has time to insert suggested steps for its operations without delay.

Another reason for choosing Konsultointi J. Nieminen is that it is a consulting firm, and consulting is an excellent example of a line of business that desperately needs productification. Later on we go through some challenges and reason why productification is not widely used consulting but really it needs only an open mind and willingness to let your expertise to be productified.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Theoretical literature and meta-analysis

Our theoretical section included variations of books and articles in two different languages: Finnish and English. We gathered our literature from our university's both physical and digital library, using internet search engines and bibliographic databases. Most of our theoretical sources are articles, journals, theses and books in digital form. The information from all these sources was gathered and meta-analyzed to fit your predesigned limitations. As your sources did not contradict with each other but instead supported one another, there was no need to compare the reliability of information presented in different sources.

During this process, as the subject of our thesis is not a common knowledge we mainly used our sources to give us indirect answers which would give us the most accurate information as possible. To make it happen, in each stage we have analyzed all the data before we add them to our thesis to make sure firstly they are compatible with our case company and secondly can give us relevant and valuable research material in our thesis.

### 2.2 Questionnaire and its data analysis

To get to know the opinion of the entrepreneurs we conducted an online questionnaire that was presented for the random entrepreneurs of Finland. The questionnaire is the easiest and fastest way of getting information from huge number of people.

After taking many steps from the beginning of the whole process of making our thesis until getting to the main conclusions, we came up with 6 main questions which mostly were focused on being efficient and consistent in order to give us the best and most valuable results for our research. After some days, we analysed their answers based on the statistical information received. Most of the analysis was quantitative, but two of the questions included qualitative "if yes, specify more" type of an approach.

### 2.3 Case student-run consulting company

As we have introduced our case company in the introduction, we have used this company as the company which we create the productified services for. Since Konsultointi J. Nieminen is student-run and has experiences in consulting companies, it is a perfect case for our thesis and for us to focus on finding out the customer preferences.

During the process of making our thesis, we have used this company as our main example and tried to compatible the suggestions and steps to this real company so that our conclusions would be a lot more tangible and reliable.

## 3 WHAT IS PRODUCTIFICATION?

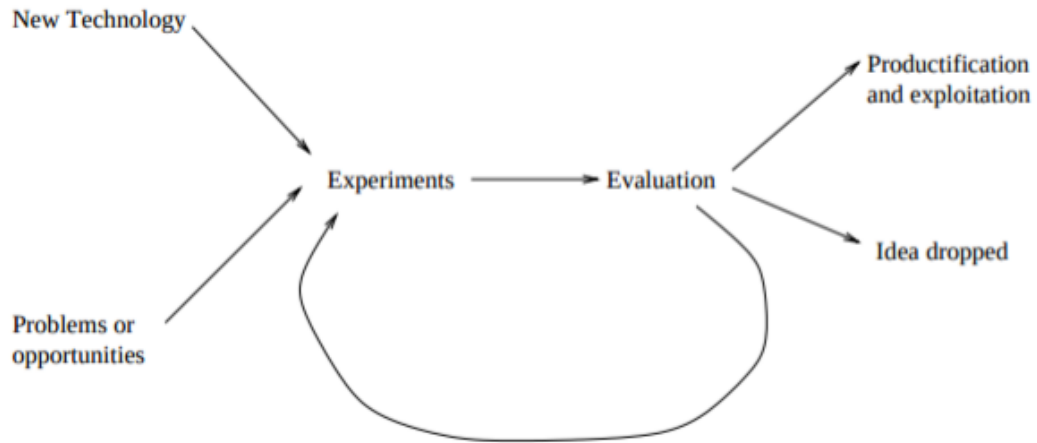
### 3.1 Meaning of productification

Productification in simple words refers to creating something out of nothing or modifying something using tools to make it into a commercial product. In other words; productification means bundling a service into an existence that is easy to understand, sell, buy, multiply or manipulate that make the service unique enough to separate it from its competitors. (Rekola & Haapio 2009, 94-97)

In Model 1; Productification is transferring technology into a product and widening the use of it in application systems for the market. (Nykänen 2014)

Model 1. Technology into a product





Finnish pioneer of productification Jorma Sipilä defined productification as defining, designing, improving, illustrating and producing a service for the customer in the way that profit objectives are fulfilled and customer benefits are maximized. A service product is productified when its usage and ownership can be sold. (Sipilä 1995, 12.)

### 3.2 Productification concept

Productification suggests transforming some specific application tasks into the ones that use common purpose authoring tools and systems. This means using generic tools in a specific way and making or using necessary software to access the results. The main use cases of productification include:

- a) When specific tools for applications do not exist, productification can introduce low cost authoring tools.
- b) Productification can simplify specific parts of the process using the tools that are more familiar or common.
- c) It can also make it easier to get enough experience and feedback to ease the process of analyzing and understanding.
- d) It provides easy access to the bureaucratic framework of the data
- e) Productification suggests how the planning efforts can be improved without actually involving so much of the expert design systems.

- f) Productified packages can be used again even after the system has been closed for a while.

To be able to evaluate and control the process of productification; the objectives, scope, and success criteria for productification must be defined carefully. (Nykänen 2014)

### 3.3 The goal of productification

The goal of the productification is to simplify the process of contracting and reducing the need for many different sorts of contracts. Providing services or products requires several connections with suppliers, business partners, local operators and etc. In other words, for a company to successfully provide such services or products generally has to receive services or products from other suppliers itself.

Since the process of providing productified services or products is highly dependent on the contracts that are made with other suppliers, it is extremely important to have good connections and efficient plus reliable contracts with them. Defining responsibilities and certain promises in the contract is also essential not only to prevent unnecessary complications and problems but also to help with successful service recovery. (Rekola & Haapio 2009, 94-97)

Too many choices can be overwhelming. As the internet is full of consulting firms it is hard for consumers to find one they like. In a study done for the Columbian University, group of chocolate lovers were divided to two test-groups. First group were given six different kinds of chocolates while second group got 30 different flavors. People in the second group rated their chocolates less tasty, less satisfying and less enjoyable than people in the first group. People in the second group experienced something Barry Schwartz calls “the tyranny of freedom”. If you can make yourself different and simpler than the rest, people are more likely to remember you. (Levine 2006, 138)

### 3.4 Internal and external productification

Productification can be divided to internal and external productification depending is it visible to the customer or not. External productified actions that the customer sees are called Front office actions and internal productified actions are called Back office actions.

#### 3.4.1 Internal productification

Internal productification is when the company improves its internal operations by trying to make sure that things that can be repeated will not be made multiple times from the beginning. This is called standardizing the internal actions. Internal productification includes work processes and instructions, databases, development systems as well as internal product and process descriptions etc. Internal productification must be systematic for external productification to work. (Sipilä 1995, 47-48)

Generally internal productification is harder for services as seeing them as products is harder and thus producing it is less efficient. One stepping stone for company wanting to productify is the lack of productification internally. External productification is marvelous but without internal actions working as the backbone, the service product will not improve. With internal productification the company can solve for example how much resources it uses for producing service, how much time it takes to make it happen and who takes care of the producing.

#### 3.4.2 External productification

External productification is done in the Front office actions which the customer can see. This creates a visible communication for the customer and is designed to point out what the company represents and what benefits it can give for the customer. (Lehtinen & Niinimäki 2005, 43)

Part of the external productification is concreting the service through physical symbols like pamphlets, references and other supportive materials (Sipilä 1995, 48)

We go more to different internal and external productification actions later in the thesis under headline “Phases of productification” when we look to actions we are suggesting for the case company Konsultointi J. Nieminen.

### 3.5 Productification in consulting

Service provided by the experts or artist are generally not considered as products. Even the consultants or artists whose service could be called a product could get insulted if their expertise is called a product. These kinds of people feel that their work is so close to them that calling it a product would shift that name to define themselves. (Sipilä 1995, 14)

#### 3.5.1 Normal consulting

A consult is basically defined as an expert in a particular field who works as an adviser to a company or to an individual. The consulting companies are mainly knowledge based companies and the reason is that their main asset is the experience and the knowledge of their personnel. The companies are highly dependent on their staff for their success and also gaining competitive advantages. Usually the clients need consultants in the areas that they feel huge lacks of knowledge in which the consultants should have enough knowledge to offer in order to be successful. (Riddle 2001, 5-10)

In normal consulting companies it is essential to reuse their knowledge because the company is dealing with the similar problems over and over again. The service that these companies offer is very clear since the customer buys more of their services as long as the consultants can build a reliable and high-quality information system which is fast and it has many ways to help the client’s company even with special circumstances. (Woods & Cortada 2001, 55-60)

In these companies the client can ask for information, advices or analysis in any matter that the consultant accepts to offer which means that it can be from any aspect of

the business situation of the client's organization even if it is not related to what he asked for in the first place.

### 3.5.2 Productified consulting

Unlike the companies that we explained about in the last section, the companies that offer productified services offer ready packages of services that they are going to deliver to the client customer. Each of these packages cover separate areas of the business of the client's organization. Most of the time these products will not include any extra services or they include very few on top of what is cleared out in their initial description. This kind of service package productification is external and should not be mixed up with internal productification actions.

Productified packages are much easier to produce than normal consulting services. Modifying based on ready idea is easier and faster than starting from zero. This is especially true for student run companies who do not have years of experience. Seller has already idea and experience on what he will be consulting even before any talk has being done. In the end productification is nothing but a beautiful wrapper for the customer, if the product is not in shape it will not succeed.

## 4 PRODUCTIFICATION FOR THE CASE COMPANY

### 4.1 World of uncertainties

#### 4.1.1 Overview

Studies have shown that there are three categories of uncertainties involved in the consulting firm's management. While we have seen that risks are counted as a lot more important than uncertainties, in this part we count on the common understanding of "risk is equal to uncertainty multiplied by consequences" and point out the uncertainties that can hurt the company. (Gluckler & Armbruster 2003, 269-270)

In the Konsultointi J. Nieminen that provides innovative and new services, it is not uncommon that the concept of the idea would be harder for possible customers to understand. Other than understanding, it would be also harder for them to accept the service in the way that they would be willing to buy it without thinking they are taking a huge risk. Because of these reasons, it is really important for Konsultointi J. Nieminen to invest on improving the customer's value in the company's service offering and further actions in relation with the clients. (Näslund & Olsson & Karlsson 2006)

Uncertainties that we are explaining here are defined as the difficulties that Konsultointi J. Nieminen, its manager or its staff have in predicting the future about the company, clients and many other matters due to incomplete knowledge.

#### 4.1.2 Performance uncertainty

Performance uncertainty is about clients having difficulties in judging the performance of the management of the consulting company. In this case, the evaluation of the future and the current performance of the company is a challenge for the client who affects the satisfaction or at least a temporary satisfaction of the client. (Brashers 2001, 479-480)

The source of most of these uncertainties is in the areas that are not clear to the client like the unclear areas of expertise, professional boundaries and standards. In the Konsultointi J. Nieminen that offers productified services this uncertainty may be really important to focus on because even if the packages clear the job out, but they may contain a lot less details than normal. The less the client knows about the matters that are important to him, the more difficult it is for him to know what to expect from the management consultant and how the quality of the result of the consulting would be.

The biggest problem of the performance uncertainties is that most of the uncertainties do not show themselves until the very end of the project. In one of the worst cas-

es the client would be confused in the whole process and the consultant would not have a clue. In this case the client does not know how much to expect from the Konsultointi J. Nieminen's performance and may quit before knowing that the consultant could help him make his ideas happen. So this is important for the consulting schedules and productified packages to be as clear and as detailed as they can be to the clients to minimize the performance uncertainties.

#### 4.1.3 Relational uncertainty

The source of relational uncertainty is mainly the consultants desire to take opportunities and how far it can go to the ones related to the client's company. When to clients want to hire a consultant, they are often afraid if the primary information that they are sharing with the possible consultant can be misused. They are afraid if they have trusted the right person or he or she is going to sell the information to their competitors or give bad advices to the client in order to gain his/her own interests. (Gluckler & Armbruster 2003, 275-276)

This uncertainty even gets worse when clients are uncertain about what their problem really is and how to solve it. As this issue is really common in most of the consulting firms including Konsultointi J. Nieminen that need important information of their clients' company, it needs the management's attention and focus in order to gain more trust from the client. As it has said in many sources, trust has to be earned and it just does not come automatically. Basically the client and Konsultointi J. Nieminen's personnel have to spend some time together before they both learn to trust each other and have a better relationship in order to reduce this uncertainty.

#### 4.1.4 Psychosocial uncertainty

While the performance and relational uncertainties are mainly caused by the potential behavior of the consultant, psychosocial uncertainties are more related to clients' behavior and their staffs' reactions towards the use of consultants. In many cases, managers' sharing information with consultants and involving them in important decision makings create anxiety within the client's organization. In other cases, it goes further

than just a fear from the client's staff and colleagues and the consultant's ideas cause critical reactions in the client's organization. For example they may refuse to cooperate, criticize even improving changes, hide information, and many other examples.

Other than the impacts on the client's organization, Konsultointi J. Nieminen and its personnel's ideas and behaviours can also affect the client's mentality. For example affect manager's self-image of being responsible, power to control the situation, self-esteem, making big decisions on his own or with the help of consultant and many others. Psychosocial uncertainties may not be the most important one but it is the hardest one to control and affect as it can cover a larger and distant area of minds.

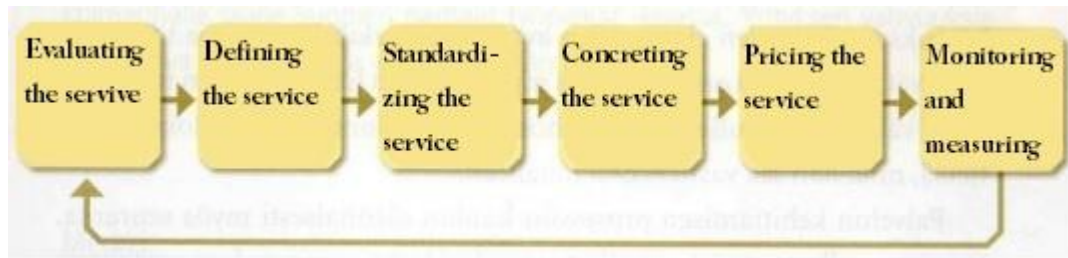
In dealing with psychosocial uncertainties; firstly the client himself has to be open and clarify the position of the consultant for himself and his organization, and secondly the Konsultointi J. Nieminen's consultant has to be able to clarify his position and areas of expertise the client so he would know what to expect and what to concentrate on getting ideas from. Of course many parts of the area of expertise in the Konsultointi J. Nieminen's services would be cleared out in the packages during the first meetings, but as we mentioned before, there would always be some details that are more important for different clients to know about. To avoid having or causing psychosocial uncertainties, Konsultointi J. Nieminen's consultant has to focus on his advices and his behavior in order not to affect the client and client's organization's reaction to him in bad ways. (Toppin & Czerniawska 2005, 2017)

#### 4.2 Phases of productification

Productification normally starts when the company needs to develop their service. In the model 2 done by Bergerstöm & Leppänen the company first looks into their offered services and estimates which of them should be improved. Konsultointi J. Nieminen does not have services that could be considered as products so instead of valuing what existed, we have to decide one consulting area and focus on that.

Model 2. Phases of productification. Translated from (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, 221)





Based on the possible fields of knowledge of the employees of Konsultointi J. Nieminen, we chose market analysis for our offered service to be productified. After the decision of potential services has been made, they need to be defined to core, support and extra services. In the standardizing stage company creates processes and parts of product that will be replicated whenever the service is provided to the customer. When the product itself and the process of making the product have been stabilized, concreting the service is required. In this stage everything else around the product; like naming, branding, outlook of the customer service etc are decided. In the end of the productifying process the product will be priced. But the work does not end there and continuing, monitoring and measuring should be conducted so that the product can be improved on the go.

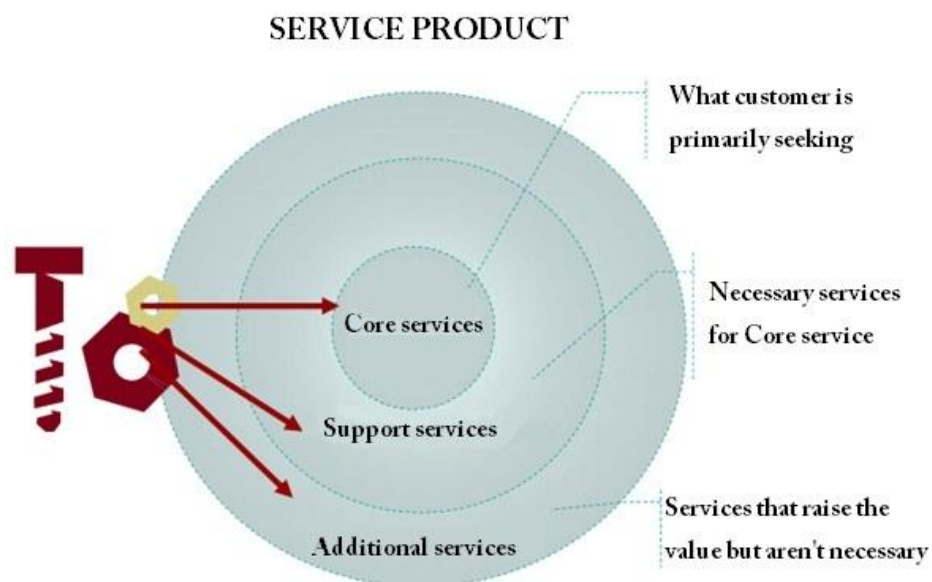
#### 4.2.1 Defining the service

Defining the service starts by looking into the product, realizing its content, essential qualities and service process. It is essential to know what benefits the customer expects to receive from the product. Based on the findings it is easier to make the intangible promises more tangible so the customer knows what he is paying for and how much. This way the customer feels safer because he knows what he will be getting and with what price even before anything is negotiated. Defining the product well helps to create marketing promises and the process is created actually to help the customer. (Parantainen 2009, 9; Jaakkola, Orava & Varjonen 2009, 11)

#### 4.2.1.1 Core, support and additional services

One way to define the product is to divide it to core, support and additional service as seen on model 3. Core service is the reason why customer wants to buy your product as it solves the problem customer has. Generally core service should be able to be summarized to one, two or three sentences. For example the core service for the test product, market analysis, for Konsultointi J. Nieminen would be consulting to the customer the existing market data and will their company or product succeed in existing market conditions.

Model 3. Service product. Translated from (Grönroos, 2000)



Supporting services are necessary services for the core service to be usable. Konsultointi J. Nieminen needs to be able to contact the customer by email or phone and have sufficient meeting environment. The company also needs to do contract plus billing for the customer. These supporting services are generally not considered as part of the product nor does the customer generally even realise these exist, but by recognizing these processes we can make accurate estimations for the resources and costs for producing the service product.

Additional services are valuable services that give extra value to the product that are given or sold to the customer. These services bring more selection and create original image for the product. As the additional services are not the core of your product you can sell them without or with minimal profit as they might draw customers to you. Another use could be to offer exotic service to raise the image or quality of the product in the customer's eyes. (Jaakkola, Orava & Varjonen 2009, 11-12)

Before this thesis Konsultointi J. Nieminen had not considered how the service products are packaged, so it could not have even thought what aspects would increase the value and what would create the core. Additional services for the market analysis could be variety of optional research subjects as well as tailored solutions.

#### 4.2.1.2 Service package

Combination of core, support and additional services can be called service package. Especially in consulting making, a concrete service package will help selling your intangible and abstract service. This way the customer can see what parts the service consists of, and he can choose the additional services he likes. Also having all the components ready it is easy to deal with bargaining customer; just make him drop some additional services off, so the whole value drops while company does not lose any contributing margin.

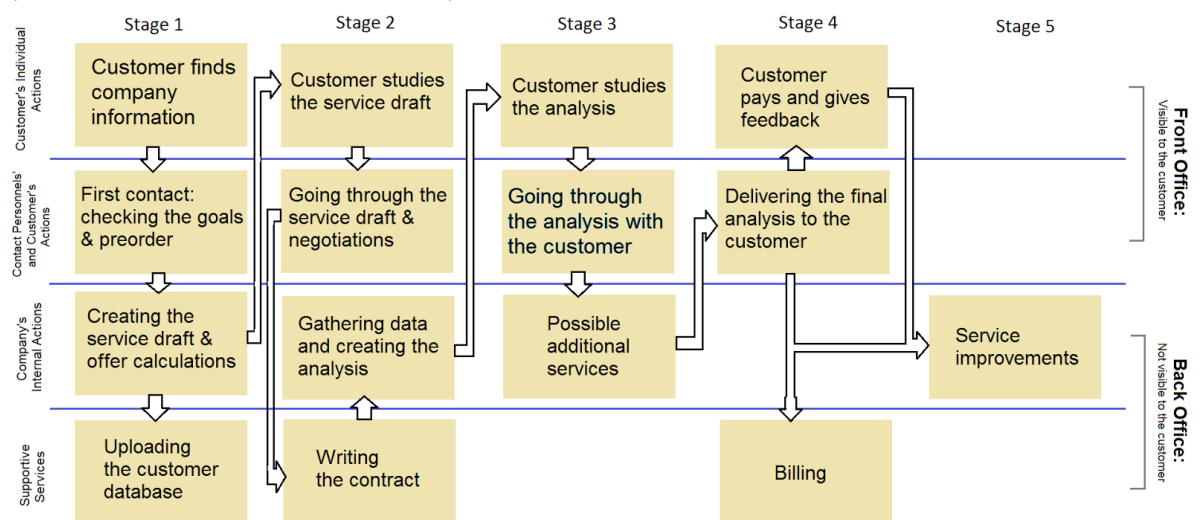
#### 4.2.1.3 Service process

Service process can be used to describe the whole interaction of making the service package including also communication and actions between customer and the company. Generally service process can be divided to front and back office processes. The back office processes are company's internal, while front office processes are parts done in cooperation with the customer. Some operations can happen outside of the company and the employees must be in control of these operations to an extent that they do not hinder the whole service process. This also guarantees a good customer experience.

Defining the service process should be started by defining the stages needed for the intended service. Service process can be represented by multiple different tools. Most important information's that the tool should answer are: What part of the process is it, who are the people participating for this stage and for how long. After this it is easier to decide the necessary resources and find out the critical stages of the service. As the process is similar all the time determining the price for the service package is easier as more projects have passed. The company can look back to what surprise costs have come up. (Jaakkola, Orava & Varjonen 2009, 15-16)

For Konsultointi J. Nieminen we decided to use blueprinting as a tool to describe their service process with market analysis (Blueprint 1). Blueprinting can be extremely accurate or just a simplified version of what stages are required and where does meeting with customer happen. Blueprinting also lets us see when support processes are used or if the company has contacted with subcontractor.

Blueprint 1. Konsultointi J. Nieminen's service process blueprint. Modified from (Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler 2006)



According to Blueprint 1 we have divided the blueprint into two main sections of Front office and Back office. Front office contains of all the actions that are visible to the customer, meaning that either they are customer's individual actions or the ones that they do in relation with the consultant. The Back office actions are the ones that are mainly invisible to the customer and they are either the company's internal actions or are done by supportive services. Below the actions are explained in detail:

#### 4.2.1.3.1 Stage 1

In the stage one the first action is done is by customer. The customer feels the need for a consulting service, finds the company and contacts. During the first contact; the customer and the consultant would check the goals and the customer would either deny or accept to preorder the service.

Then the staff inside Konsultointi J. Nieminen would add the customer's information in the company's database and continue updating it until the ending stage. At the same time they start creating the service draft and make the calculations of the results ready to be offered to the customer on stage 2.

#### 4.2.1.3.2 Stage 2

On this stage, the customer would study the offered service draft, discuss and negotiate the results with the consultant. When both parties have decided about the content and extra actions, they write the contract and Konsultointi J. Nieminen will start doing the actual job.

The company's staff starts gathering data using different tools and sources do calculations and whatever the service they are offering needs, to make the best analysis they can. On this part the tasks that the customer needed Konsultointi J. Nieminen to do are mainly done.

#### 4.2.1.3.3 Stage 3

The stage 3 starts with the customer studying results of the analysis and checking if anything is needed to be changed, fixed or modified. Then the customer would go through the whole data with the consultant and share their vision of the work done with the consultant. Then Konsultointi J. Nieminen applies the changes and improvements and creates the final version of the analysis.

#### 4.2.1.3.4 Stage 4

On this stage Konsultointi J. Nieminen would deliver the final version of the analysis to the customer and basically finish the service. The customer pays for the service and gives feedbacks about it. The company would use the billing system as the supportive action on this stage.

#### 4.2.1.3.5 Stage 5

On the last stage Konsultointi J. Nieminen uses all the feedback material from the customer or from the personnel inside the company to improve the services as much as possible. These improvements would be used on the next offered services.

### 4.2.2 Standardizing the service

In productification standardizing the service means to standardize certain parts of the service package; price, timetable, parts of product content or certain processes so that they can be repeated with multiple customers. When talking about consulting the whole service package is impossible to be standardized, but by creating as many standardized areas possible company makes its service production more efficient and profitable. When the process is clear it is easy to decide the resources and time required. Of course standardizing has negative sides as it creates inflexibility for the service process and this might create pressure for the customer. Still the benefits greatly outweigh the disadvantages as it also helps the customer to keep the timetable and most likely save money. (Jaakkola, Orava & Varjonen 2009, 19; Parantainen 2007, 129-131)

#### 4.2.2.1 Focus on designed service

Many companies that want to use their knowledge effectively, follow one strategy as their main and another to support the main one or even as the backup strategy. There has been many cases that the firms that divide their focus and try to improve both

strategies at the same time, may fail in both since they may not be able to stick with one approach. (Woods & Cortada 2001, 64)

The companies like Konsultointi J. Nieminen that prefer to deliver standardized or productified services face a lot of situations when the client wants to pay for highly customized services. In these cases some companies misuses their own system trying to figure out ways to satisfy the customers and at the end, they fail.

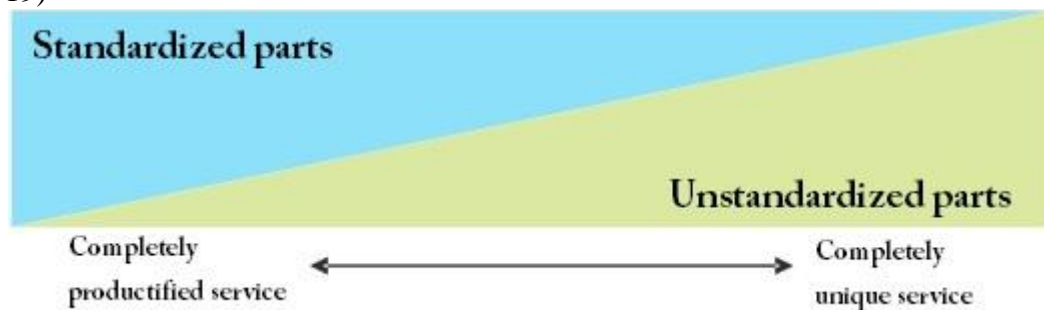
It is not always easy to stick with the plan and follow the exact strategy in different situations especially if we are dealing with a productified service which has its own structure. But for Konsultointi J. Nieminen if the structure of the process of delivering consulting service to the client is clarified in the contract meetings it will be successful. This way the company finds the best ways to pursue the plan and satisfies the customer's needs.

#### 4.2.2.2 Productification rate

Productification rate means the amount of standardized processes from the whole service and is decided by the company strategy. At one extremity there are completely standardized services like factoring toothpicks. You can really do the product in one way and that works. On the other end there is completely unique service like innovating new product or service, while not using any systematic tools. (Picture XXX). One extremity is versatile and flexible but slow and not so cost-efficient, while the other is completely opposite of it. The company must choose what productification rate brings most value to the customer and thus most customers to the company. On the field of consulting it is impossible to standardize everything as customers never want exactly the same thing. What is important is that they want something similar and this provides a way to productify a package as we did for Konsultointi J. Nieminen. Of course the service package must be able to be customized for customers' certain needs, and we see our test product does this by packaging the service. This way the customer can choose what part of the market analysis he wants.

The initial packaging was done by dividing the market analysis to three parts: competitors, consumer and product analysis. Each of these three parts can be bought separately or combined. This mass customizing is a way to create tailored services for customers without making changes to the core service. What exactly and how the information within these three parts are gathered can be negotiated and tailored to fit the customers' special needs. Best example of something similar could be how ice-cream sellers let you choose from different flavours and toppings to fit your needs, but the service process and resources are productified for maximum cost-efficiency. (Jaakkola, Orava & Varjonen 2009, 19; Parantainen 2007, 53)

Model 4. Productification rate. Translated from (Jaakkola, Orava & Varjonen 2009, 19)



#### 4.2.2.3 Standardizing the procedures and methods

To standardize the procedures and the methods company needs a systematic system that lets it to standardize the service process to be the same with each customer. For consulting firm it is important so that the experts within the organization can focus to tailor new solutions while more inexperienced employees handle standardized parts. This also reduces dependency on individual employees and increases productivity. (Jaakkola, Orava & Varjonen 2009, 21-22)

For Konsultointi J. Nieminen dependency on individual employees is not as important as in one-man company but as it has trainees working for time to time it is important that general procedures can be repeated without constant supervision. One idea is that trainees handle productified services while manager takes care mainly of customer meetings and consulting un-productified projects. This way the quality of the service is always similar even if new trainee comes to replace the old one.



#### 4.2.2.4 Standardizing the customer service

Customer meetings are always unique but certain steps can always be taken to prepare for them. Company should consider how and where to meet the customer, what steps and questions contact person goes through with him, what are next steps if meeting goes well and how to react to certain questions or problem situations. Other communication processes on the other hand can be standardized almost fully like receiving feedback through automated programs. All this communication should be marked down for later usage or for other employees to use it. This step is called standardizing the customer service. (Jaakkola, Orava & Varjonen 2009, 24-25)

Manager in Konsultointi J. Nieminen handles the customer relationships and all the customer meetings even if a trainee would take part in them. He also receives all the feedback and improvements from the customer. As the company is small there is no need or resources to create any automated systems. Each situation is handled individually and while it takes more time than ready answers, it makes sure the customer feels that his opinion or feedback is considered personally within the company.

#### 4.2.2.5 Distance training and working for trainees

As we mentioned before, Konsultointi J. Nieminen can focus on using trainees to mainly do the productified parts of the job until they become experts and new trainees take their places.

These trainees are trained by the company's manager, by other personnel or old trainees. In this case, both trainee and trainers have to dedicate times for scheduled sessions of training. Even if the trainee and trainer would decide the time tables, schedules, possible evaluations and practices, there has to be a standard general method for the trainers to use to train the trainees. Creating a standard method and improving it when the company's productified services improve would be a lot easier since the services and training schedule are both productified, meaning that they just have to use feedbacks to make the product better than before.

For a company like Konsultointi J. Nieminen where the manager mainly works in his home office, it would be highly preferred if the trainee would be able to be trained and work from distance. Meaning that there has to be good methods and schedules to make the training and working happen without reducing the efficiency of trainee's training and working, so we have decided to create a productified plan for trainee's distance training.

In all forms of distance training and learning, there is always a relatively high level of investment in the design and packaging of the course study including learner, tutor and supporting. Basically in distance training, standardization and instructional design factors have great importance.

In large organizations there are three main components in distance training (Keegan 2005, 221-223): development of suitable training materials, delivery and administration of the training materials in the organization and lastly the certifications of achievement by trainees. But as the process of making a proper distance training plan happen; the distance factor together with the trainee's responsibilities toward the training has led to a new emphasis on delivery of the information accompanied by suitable levels of psychological support for learning. As a result the focus on the engineering of the training products increased and training assembled from specified components with its own embedded design created.

In the Konsultointi J. Nieminen there is a need to use the knowledge and materials into actual plans, methods and strategies. In this case, using the productification in distance training would make it a lot easier to have a standardized and packaged distance training course. In this way, the trainee is trained efficiently. By being able to practice, and improve his/her skills and knowledge, the trainee can use the learned know-how in his everyday job for the company. (Keegan 2005, 221-223)

#### 4.2.3 Concreting the service

Concreting the service means making the intangible service or quality more tangible through concrete evidence. These include branding the service, naming it uniquely or

so it is connected to the company brand, making brochures and other physical supportive materials, using references and previous customers positive feedbacks, certificates, rewards and giving samples of the service. Environment surrounding the service is also linked to the quality. Clean meeting rooms, professional behaving employees and error-free communication boosts customer's confidence that the company can do what it promises. (Jaakkola, Orava & Varjonen 2009, 27-28)

#### 4.2.3.1 Value proposition and slogan

A consulting service must be productified even to a certain extent to market it. "Whatever you need" is not a very convincing motto. "Any kind of market research for your need" is already categorized even if just a little bit and can be used as a slogan. Value proposition is more than a slogan which consists generally of one sentence. Generally value proposition is few sentences long. They provide information to the customer about the service and give them a clear reason to buy their products. (Parantainen 2007, 164)

Value proposition for Konsultointi J. Nieminen could be following: "Konsultointi J. Nieminen promises to deliver cheap and concrete market analyses customized from our core services for your needs. For us it is clear that the customer has to know exactly what he is buying from us before any work is done. This way we can help the customer to avoid any missteps when choosing the right consulting."

With this value proposition Konsultointi J. Nieminen can point out its strengths: Cheap price, clear products and moderate tailoring for the customer's needs. A promise to be clear and informative helps customer get over his fear of making a mistake by buying the consulting.

#### 4.2.3.2 Company's internet website

For a company in any size internet is a really good marketing channel as the size and availability of marketing demands do not affect the volume of visibility of the company in www. In making an internet website for the company, investing time on up-

dating the data in the site is one of the most important matters to keep in mind as viewers will stop checking the site when there are no updates for a long while. (Riddle 2001, 26-27)

When the service is productified it can be marketed more efficiently. There is no use to have nice tangible service product if no one can see it. In the test product section we go more into the appearance of the product and what kind of layout it could have in the company's webpage.

#### 4.2.4 Pricing the service

Pricing the service is one of the most important factors when the customer is forming his mental image of the quality. A company should never underestimate the affect the pricing has on the company's image. By standardizing the service the company can efficiently estimate the price and thus make sure a certain profit is always received. A clear price also helps the customer to see what he gets and with what price. (Jaakkola, Orava & Varjonen 2009, 29)

Productification plays a huge role in this as it is the base why Konsultointi J. Niemi-nen could consider using fixed prices for something intangible like consulting. If the price is already visible the company can avoid unnecessary customers who are surprised when your price is higher than they expected. Consulting is never cheap and most of the time is way more expensive than people estimate. Konsultointi J. Niemi-nen has the benefit that at this point the company profits are not the owners' primary source of revenue, so they can sell their services in cheaper prices than competitors that live with the revenue gained from their consulting business.

On its core pricing is based on production costs and it is clear that a consulting company needs to make profit with their projects. Still this is not the only criteria. If bosses only look at the basic *income - expenses = profit* formula the company will never succeed as well as it should have.

An example about looking outside of basic profit based offering can be found from the security guard world in Finland. Company A offering security in Tampere had a shopping mall as a client, employing 2 guards every day when the mall was open. On top of that the Company A provided security for 90% of the shops inside the shopping mall. When the shopping mall security was put out to tender, Company A's bosses in Helsinki decided that they would be the ones to make the offer as the client was big enough to employ multiple people. Bosses in Helsinki calculated and made an offer where the company would make profit for each employee they have working for the client. At the same time Company B's local office made an offer where they would not make any profit by providing the security to the client. As you might guess, the mall chose Company B to be their provider. Within the next 2 years as the contracts with the shops inside the shopping mall ended, all of them changed their provider to Company B, who could make tens of profitable contracts with ease as they already had guards working in the same building anyways. We estimated that by not looking at the *market situation* Company A lost revenue worth +5 employees.

As this example proves a company must look at the situation it is in before making offers; Other affecting things are goals of the offer, customer value for the company and vice versa, competitor prices and customers expectations of the service when compared to the price. After these factors have been considered the company should price each product and service individually. Finally potential changes in the price based on seasonal markets, customer group discounts and special goals, like coming to new markets.

General rule is that expenses create lowest possible price and market situation set the highest. Konsultointi J. Nieminen should be using a mixture of resource based and fixed pricing. Our test product for market analysis as it is should have fixed prices, but in case customer wants something out of the list, the pricing should be based on the expenses it creates. Each additional module adds value, meaning price for the core service. (Jaakkola, Orava & Varjonen 2009, 29-30)

Calculating each module for your test product for Konsultointi J. Nieminen is impossible as we do not know accurately how much resources or time it would take to

create market research. Fixing the price is important part but even without it, the productified service is greatly more tangible.

#### 4.2.4.1 Launching and market situation

Konsultointi J. Nieminen is a one man company so implementing what we have designed here should not take long. It might take months for a normal company to completely productify their operations but for Konsultointi J. Nieminen it is a simple matter of changing his own way of working and launching a productified service. Noticeable thing is that very small percentages of consulting services have productified their products. Some companies, like CreaMentors Oy, have productified their services to the point we did for Konsultointi J. Nieminen in this thesis. (Website of CreaMentors Oy 2015). Still we could not find a single consulting firm who would offer highly productified market analyses or who would have some price level already visible. This is the field Konsultointi J. Nieminen can beat its competitors if the company decides to market its productified service packages.

#### 4.2.5 Monitoring and measuring the service

Monitoring and measuring the existing service is a natural next step after the service is created. Following the service through its lifespan is important in long term. All the projects designed to improve the service should have clear goals and systems how to acquire information. Endlessly gathering data without a purpose is as useless as gathering unusable data. Company should be monitoring information that are decided before hand and work as indicators of success. Main point is that the information gathered is used to improve the service systematically and indicators generally change depending on the lifespan of the service.

In the beginning company could monitor not only the customer relationships and used resources, but also the work speed and the knowledge of the employees. Later on focus will naturally shift to keeping track on the profits. Measuring the profit itself is more complicated than the money left to the company's bank account. The money received should always be compared to the spent time, efficiency and special

requests made for the service. If a company has a lot or in the best case too much customers, maybe it can let go of the consumers that do not produce profit. This should be considered carefully for the negative impact that this could have on the image of the company. (Jaakkola, Orava & Varjonen 2009, 33-34 & 36-37)

Measuring the quality of the service is often hard as consulting is intangible. Because of this, the quality of the service is generally measured by customer satisfaction. This satisfaction is gained by exceeding the customer's expectations from the service received and end product. To measure why customer is happy we should separate the actual product and the service process since oftenly the customers' true satisfaction comes from the service process. Of course if the product itself does not fulfill customers' needs they will not be contented to pay anything. In consulting customer feedback is a key channel of receiving information. (Jaakkola, Orava & Varjonen 2009, 34)

Real challenge for Konsultointi J. Nieminen is productifying its company and start working with the test product for the first time. In the first time, time required and money spent on different things is hard to estimate but after that it gets easier to estimate changes as procedures are repeated. Also adjustments increase profitability and simplify steps. Key to successful monitoring comes from following resource usages and keeping tabs on the trainees. As it was mentioned before, measuring the quality is rather hard. So Konsultointi J. Nieminen must insist customers to give comprehensive feedback and their opinions of the provided service.

We have received a feedback from entrepreneur Kirsi Mustalahti concerning the test product and fixed pricing. Apparently she had faced issues with some companies who offer fixed priced services, regarding what actually included to agreed contract and what did not. Here is an issue Konsultointi J. Nieminen must be alerted at all times. Following the contract creation is crucial so that a situation where customer is not on the same page as consulting does not happen. If that situation does happen, Konsultointi J. Nieminen must have a plan on how to solve the issue even before it happens.

### 4.3 The test product

We have explained about how to make the productified consulting service in Konsultointi J. Nieminen and similar student-run consulting companies. Now it is the time to give a tangible service product example to see what the product would actually look like.

On the Model 5 is the test product that we have made using the methods and techniques that were explained in detail before. This product contains three simplified packages with clear information about their function and the methods how that information is gathered.

#### Model 5. Market analysis

<b>Market Analysis</b>		
<b>Competitors Analysis</b>	<b>Consumer Analysis</b>	<b>Product Analysis</b>
1. Market relevant numbers from your 10 biggest competitors within 5 years 2. Competitors SWOT 3. Their marketing & advertising strategies 4. Market niche for your company or project	1. Customer preferences 2. Number of "potential" customers 3. Production & brand comparisons 4. Market niche based on the potential customers	1. Customer reaction to your products 2. Qualitative comparison to other similar products from competitors 3. Pricing of similar products in the markets 4. Market niche for your products
<b>Tool used to gain Quantitative &amp; Qualitative studies</b>		
<i>Websites &amp; locations, corporate economical databases, questionnaires and surveys</i>	<i>Questionnaires in location, numerical analysis of the market and letter, email, calling &amp; web inquiries</i>	<i>Websites, questionnaires in location and letter, email, calling &amp; web inquiries</i>

#### 4.3.1 Test product in company's webpage

More detailed descriptions should be added inside the packages. A hyperlink inside each headline could be gate to more detailed information about each product. Potential webpage that the test product is in could include information seen below.

Picture 1. Webpage sample for market analysis



Comprehensive research to gain data to develop your business by gaining insight about your competitors, customers or their products. Market analysis includes three different sections from which you can choose one or more based on your needs. As every customer is special, modifications for each package is available so the analysis will always match what the customer wants. Don't hesitate to contact our email or call us to ask how will we be able to satisfy your needs.

[Back to Service Packages](#)

Share this page



## Key Contacts

**Jaro Nieminen**  
Entrepreneur and Director

**Farnoush Samani**  
Design Consultant

## Customer Analysis

Customer analysis gives vital information about your customers in the markets of your choosing. Either you want to know more about your existing customers taste or are about to go to whole new markets and are not sure whether or not there's enough consumers for you.

**With customer analysis you could receive among other things:**

- Customer preferences on
  - Brands
  - Marketing tactics
  - Marketing location
  - Slogans
- Number of potential customers
- Existing or potential customers opinion of your company
- Customer habits
- Market niche based on potential customers

**Quantitative information gathering tools:**

- Questionnaires and surveys
  - In location
  - Letters
  - Emails
  - Phoning
  - Web tools
- Monitoring with recorders or by person

**Qualitative information gathering tools:**

- Numerical analysation of the markets

## 5 DATA GATHERING

### 5.1 Questionnaire

#### 5.1.1 Description

The main point of this questionnaire is to clarify and answer to the main question that our whole thesis is based on:

*“Do potential customers really prefer productified consulting services?”*

In order for us to get as much information as we could from the respondents and at the same time attract more of them to join the survey, we have focused on the questions that give us the answers that we need to the question above.

### 5.1.2 Questions' analysis

In this section we explain our reasons for asking each of the questions, what we aimed to get from them and how they can help us in our thesis. As our target group for the questionnaire was entrepreneurs in Finland, we provided questions in Finnish for them. Below are the most accurate translates in English for each question:

#### 1. What is your company size?

The first question mainly concerns about the target group and the current situation of their company. By asking this question we have aimed to get honest answers from the respondents and getting information about how many of people they have to manage in order to have a clearer picture in analysing the rest of the results for our thesis.

#### 2. Have you ever used consulting services? (Excluding accounting services)

This question asks about the knowledge and experience of the respondents in using consulting services for their companies. As our case company does not offer accounting and most companies use accounting services plus consulting drastically more than any other business consulting services, we have preferred to narrow down this question by excluding accounting services. Also for the respondents that have answered “yes” we have added the possibility to comment under this question about what kinds of consulting services they have used.

By asking this question we aim to figure out how much of the respondents have used consulting services and basically find out how valid their knowledge is about con-

sulting services in supporting the results of the next questions. In our thesis, the more the respondents have knowledge and experience in consulting companies, the more valid their answers and as the result our conclusions and analysis would be.

3. Do you prefer fixed prices or hourly rates?

Since one of the most important reasons to offer productified consulting services is their fixed or at least clear prices, we can easily say that this question is the most important question compared to others. If the clients of the consulting company highly prefer fixed prices, then most likely they would prefer productified services compared to intangible services that other consulting companies offer. With this question we hoped to get as many “yes” answers as possible to support our research and the materials that expected this answer.

4. Do you know what does productification mean?

This question mainly concerns about the knowledge of respondents about the productification. In this question they did not have to know anything about productified services or productification in consulting, but just basic acquaintance with the concept and meaning of productifying. Also for the respondents who answered “yes” to this question, we added the option to explain what kinds of productified services they have used.

The result of asking this question, mainly gives us a clearer picture of the knowledge of productification among the entrepreneurs and gives us a hint on knowing how deeper we have to go in basics and also the concept of productification during our thesis. This question also would support our research in the way that the respondents would know what is productified services before they consider thinking about if they prefer it or not.

5. Which one of these sentences describes your image of the student-run consulting companies the best? (Two options)

For respondents to answer this question, they were supposed to choose two of these choices:

- Cheaper prices
- Inexperienced staff
- Enthusiastic and innovative personnel
- Weak supply of information channels
- Uncertain supplier
- Other (in which they had a comment option to say what)

The point of asking this question was to figure out the main definitions that entrepreneurial companies would make from student-run consulting companies. The answers that we get from this question would show that either they expect the student-run consulting companies to have those qualities or they have experienced and witnessed them to have those features. The results of this question mainly give us better information in explaining the steps that must be taken in order to create productified consulting services in student-run consulting companies like our case company.

6. For the same job description how much the student-run consulting companies' services have to be cheaper compared to know consulting company?

This question basically supports one of the choices in question 5 and the reason is that this matter itself supports the idea of having productified consulting services and productified services in student-run consulting companies as at the end they would be cheaper than unproductified consulting services.

By this question we have aimed to figure out if the respondents expect the services from student-run consulting companies to be cheaper and how much. Of course we could add more percentages to the choices but expecting the respondents to answer around 70% would mean that the services of student-run consulting companies would not be trustworthy in their minds. More so it is impossible to create a proper service that is 70% cheaper even if you would compare the price to a more expensive one.

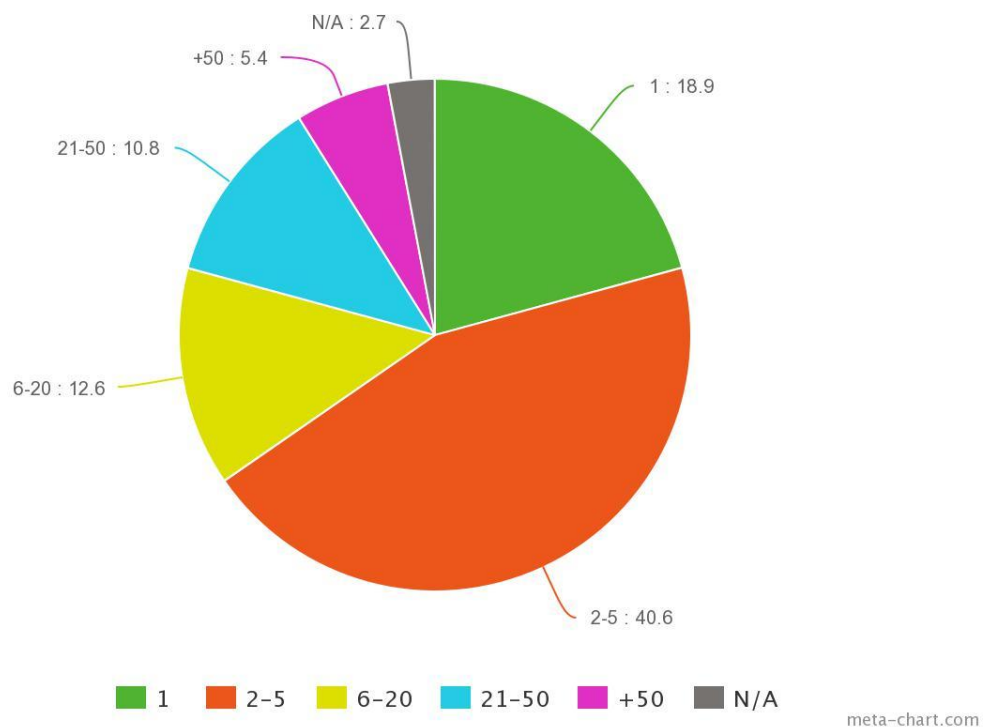
### 5.1.3 Results and analysis

We have gotten answers from 37 respondents among our target group - the entrepreneurs in Finland.

#### 1. What is your company size?

According to the pie chart 1, 18.9% of the respondents had 1 employee size company, 40.6% had 2-5 employee size company, 12.6 of them had 6-20 employee company, 4 (10,8%) had 21-50 employee size company and 5.4% had +50 employees in their company. 2.7% of the respondents skipped this part.

Pie chart 1. Company size

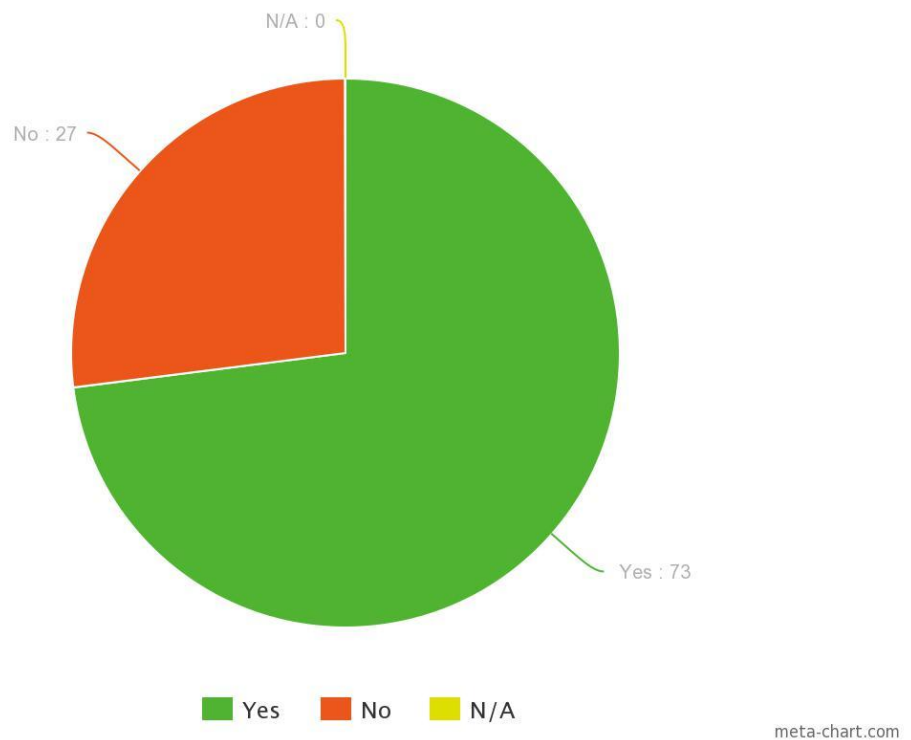


The results of this question show that most of the entrepreneurs that have answered to our questionnaire have companies with 2-5 employees and the least of them had +50 employees working for them. One of the main points that we got from the answers is that most of the answered did not have more than 21 employees in their company as we would have expected the entrepreneur-run companies to be like.

2. Have you ever used consulting services? (excluding accounting services)

As the pie chart 2 shows, 73% of the respondents have used consulting services excluding accounting services and 27% have not used.

Pie chart 2. Consulting services used



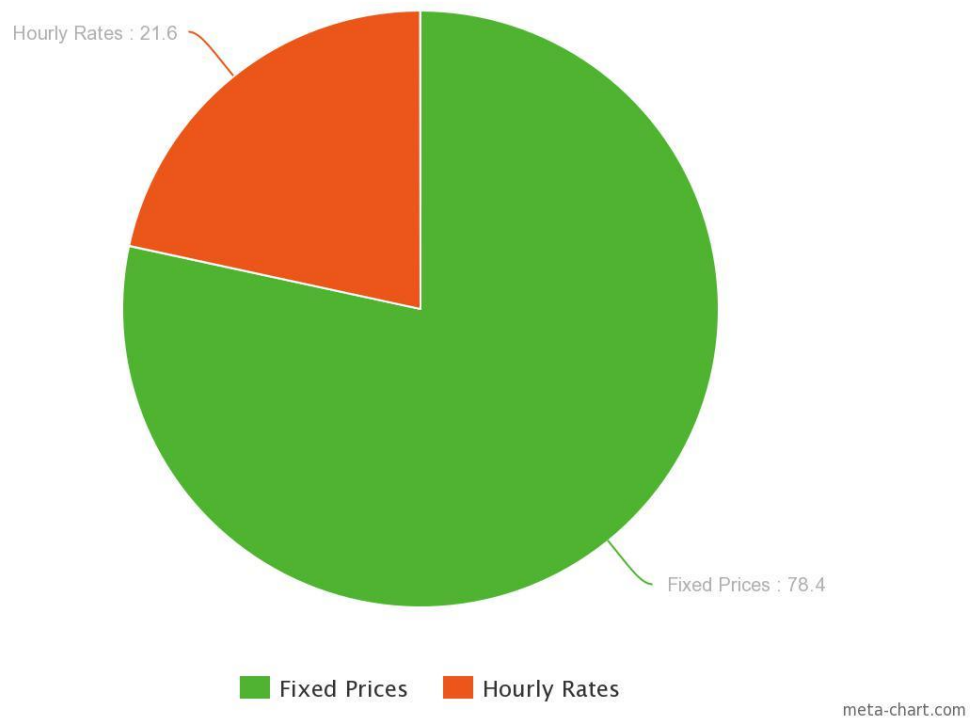
Under the results there was some answers telling what consulting services the respondents had used. Few of the answers given were repeated. Answers were: IT, security, R&D, design for company logo and appearance, leadership and employee training, law and regulations, and lastly different programs that would explain how to start a company like: Uusyrityskeskus, Ensimetri and Enter.

The result of this question shows that around three fourth of the entrepreneurs use the consulting services which shows their usage is pretty high. As the result, we can say that the need of consulting services would be more than half of the number of entrepreneurs' companies.

3. Do you prefer fixed prices or hourly rates?

In the pie chart 3, 78.4 of the respondents prefer fixed prices and the rest (21.6%) preferred hourly rates.

Pie chart 3. Fixed process and hourly rates



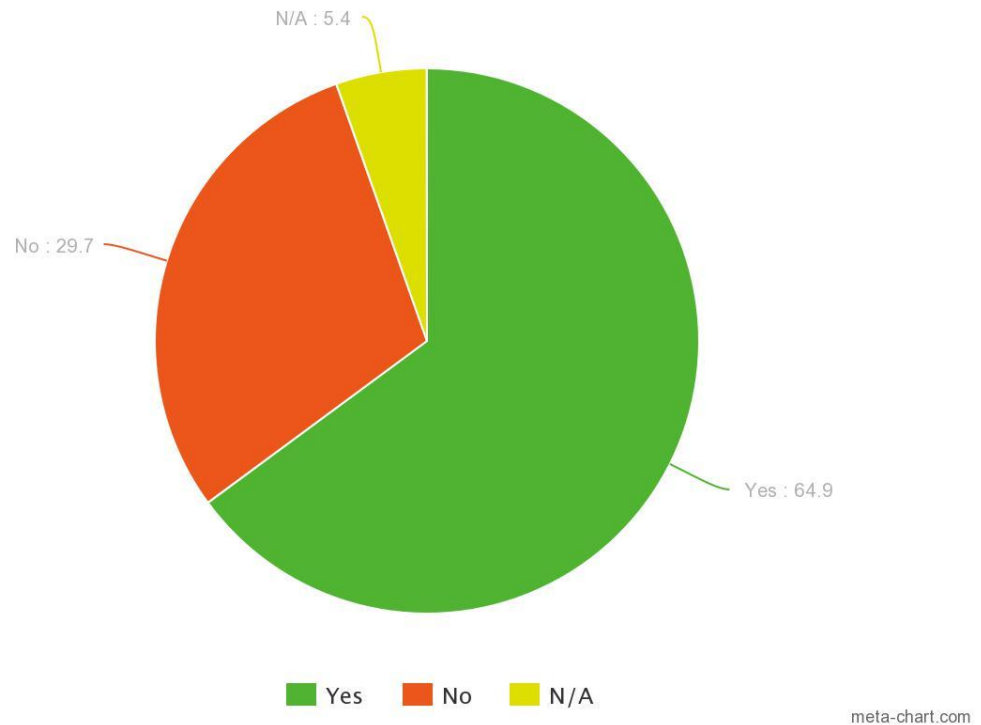
As we have explained in the question's analysis, this question was the most important question that we have asked in our questionnaire. As nearly 80% of the respondents have preferred fixed prices from the consulting services than hourly rates, it gives us a really good result for our research.

Preferring fixed prices in order to get services from consulting services highly leads us to learn that the respondents will prefer productified consulting services over unproductified ones as the prices are mainly fixed. It may reduce their uncertainties and increase their trust in the consultant and as the result they would feel more comfortable to get services that have fixed prices or productified.

4. Do you know what productification means?

According to the pie chart 4, 64.9% of the respondents knew what productification means, 29.7% did not know and the rest of 5.4% did not have any opinion on this matter.

Pie chart 4. Meaning of productification



Under the results of this question there was some comments from the respondents which some were repeated. The answers to the question “what productified service you have used” are: Security services, IT services like Webhotel, consulting firms and accounting agencies.

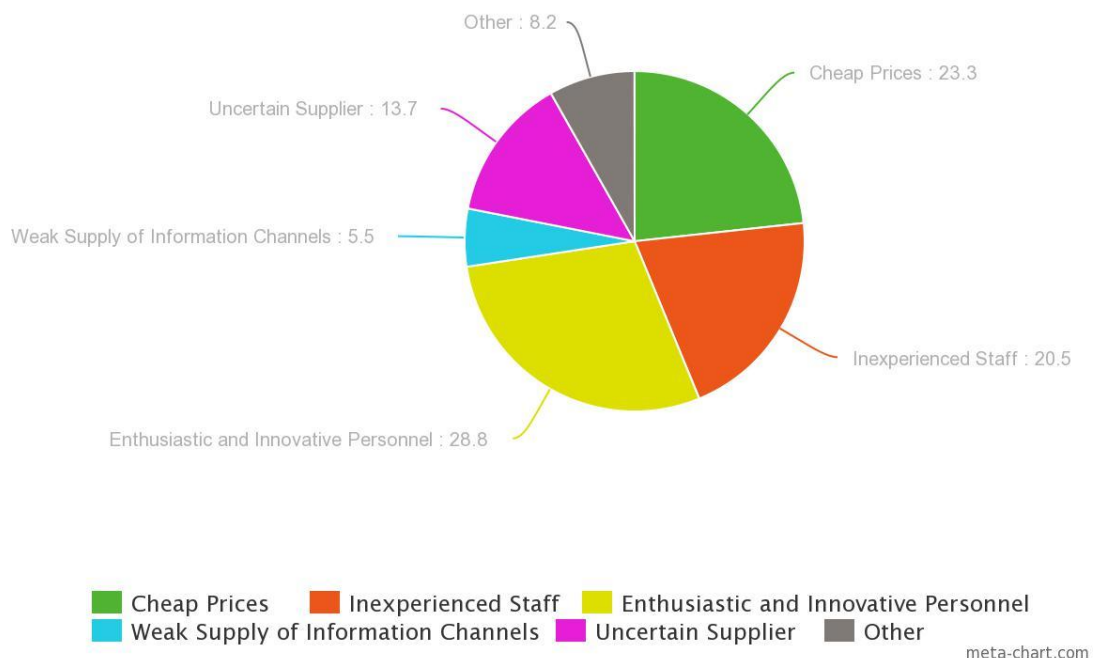
As most of the respondents have ideas about the meaning and the concept of productification, it can mean that first they know the strategy of using productification in general and secondly innovation of productified services. As the result, they would know what productification is and what its concept is before deciding they prefer productified services or not.

5. Which one of these describes the student-run consulting companies the best?  
(two options)



In the pie chart 5 it is shown that as each of the respondents chose two options; 23.3% preferred to describe the student-run consulting companies with their cheap prices, 20.5% described them with their inexperienced staff, 28.8% described their companies with their enthusiastic and innovative personnel, 13.7% for their description of their uncertain suppliers and finally, 5.5% of the respondents referred to describing them with their weak supply of information channels and 8.2% described them with other descriptions. In answering this question, one of the respondents forgot to choose the second option so we just got 73 points selected by respondents.

Pie chart 5. Student-run consulting company's descriptions



Some of the respondents answered under this question “Other” option telling their own descriptions that they would think of. These answers, that some were also repeated, are: Flexible (repeated once), willing to take risks, wants to please the customer and are small sized (repeated once).

According to the results, firstly, most of the respondents defined the student-run companies with their enthusiastic and innovative personnel. This result gives positive answers for student-run companies as entrepreneurs believe they would be innova-

tive and enthusiastic so if the student-run company has a new and good idea, even if it would not have been tested so much or it is not so common, they would at least trust to try it.

Secondly this question has shown that entrepreneurs would define the student-run consulting companies with their cheap prices as their second preferred choice. As the common knowledge of people might have supported the idea of student-run companies being cheaper than others, the entrepreneurs answers about preferring to chose this choice as the second best definition means in choosing student-run consulting services they actually would not focus too much on the price, even if on the question 6 they have chose 30% and 50%.

Thirdly the entrepreneurs that we have targeted have preferred to define the student-run consulting companies by their inexperienced staff and the result shows it got the third highest place of the choices. This result is not positive for the student-run companies as inexperienced staff becomes one of the biggest reasons for entrepreneurs not to choose student-run companies for their consulting.

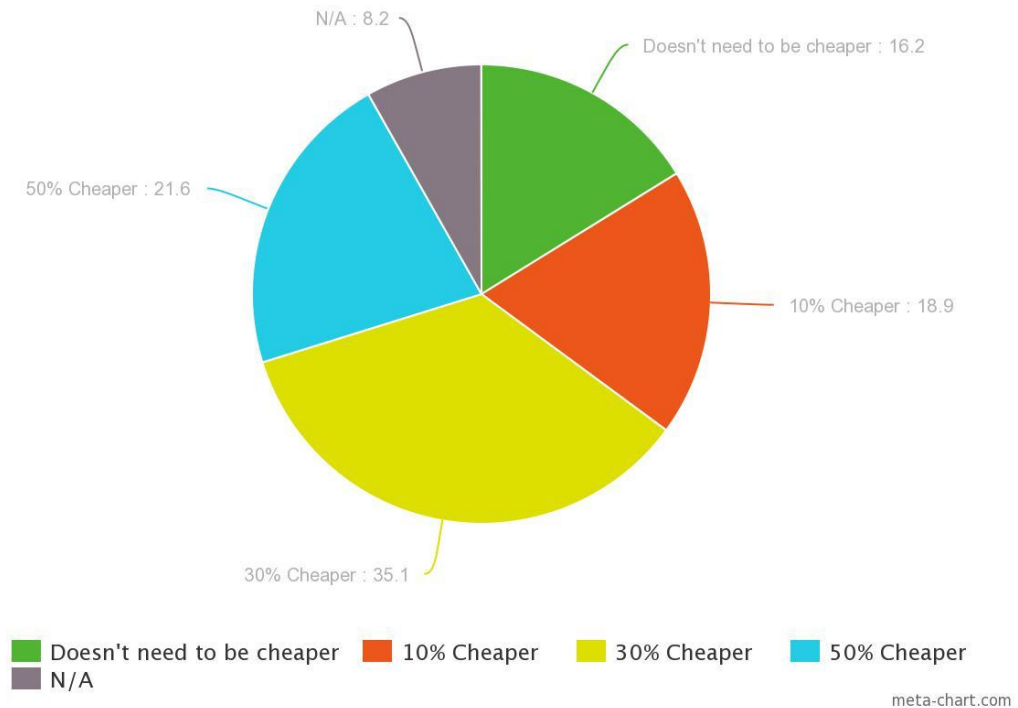
And Lastly, least amount of the entrepreneurs have preferred to define the student-run consulting companies with their weak supply of information channels but more than twice amount have defined them with being uncertain suppliers. Basically, entrepreneurs do not believe so much that the student-run consulting companies would have weak supply of information channels meaning that in accessing information they are almost as good as every other consulting firm but they are uncertain about their performance. This uncertainty is actually one of the uncertainties that we have explained in our thesis and this result highly supports our research results.

6. For the same job description how much the student-run consulting company's services have to be cheaper?

In the pie chart 6, it has shown that 16.2% of the respondents had the idea that the student-run consulting companies' services do not need to be cheaper, 18.9% answered that they have to be 10% cheaper, 35.1% responded for the 30% cheaper,

21.6% preferred them to be 50% cheaper and the last 8.2% did not have any opinion on this matter.

Pie chart 6. Cheaper student-run consulting companies



According to the results of this question, around 20% of the respondents either did not think the services of student-run consulting companies have to be cheaper or did not have any opinion on the matter. But among the rest that expected or preferred these services to be cheaper than in other consulting companies, most of them preferred 30 or 50 percent which shows that either they just follow the common knowledge of cheap student-run companies or they have the definition in mind that they are not as good as the other consulting companies.

## 5.2 Test product questionnaire

### 5.2.1 Description

As the last piece added to our thesis we have chose another target group and asked them about their preference between our productified test product and another un-productified product with similar services. Basically we asked which one you would prefer to buy based on the initial look. This part of our questionnaire mainly aims to

show the entrepreneurs a tangible sample of a productified service and get the result of their preference.

### 5.2.2 Questionnaire analysis

We have made a Finnish version of our test product which we have explained above in section 4.3 of this thesis. The main concept of the test product was market analysis and contained three parts: competitor analysis, customer analysis and product analysis. In each part it was explained what Konsultointi J. Nieminen offer to customers and what tools it would use. As we were showing the sample services to the respondents, we did not comment without own preferences until they made their choice.

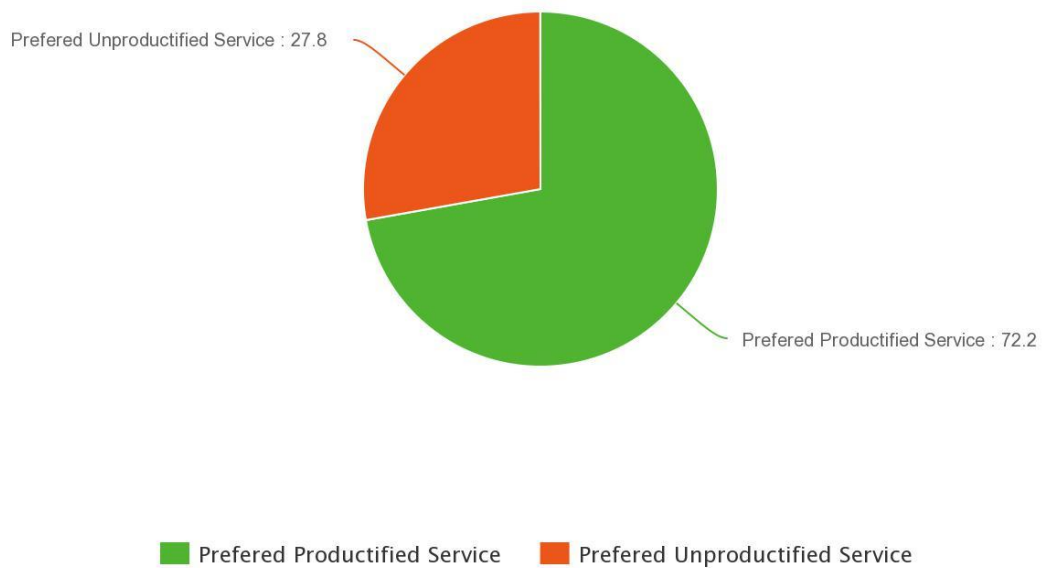
As our test product was in market analysis, we have chosen a service offered by another company as an example of an unproductified service in similar field. Our main source was market analysis done by an American company named Copernicus. This company offers variety of services and it had the service area that we would need to be similar to our test product's ones (Website of Copernicus Marketing 2015). We have made a service sample from the company's market analysis section, translated to Finnish and made it ready to be compared to our test product.

### 5.2.3 Result and analysis

We have got 18 answers from the entrepreneurs in Finland. The result that we have got from their answers is shown in the pie chart below:

As it is shown in the pie chart 7, 72.2% of the respondents preferred the productified service and 27.8% chose the unproductified service.

Pie chart 7. Productified and unproductified service comparison



According to the results that we have got from the 6 questions that 37 entrepreneurs answered, the result of this comparison would have been expected. At this point we can say that according to this result, seven out of ten of the entrepreneurs in our target group would prefer the productified service over the unproductified one.

### 5.3 Conclusion

The main points that we have gathered from the questionnaire results and used in the process of writing our thesis have lead us closer to know the customers' knowledge about and reaction to productified services. These main points that have been explained in the analysis section earlier are also briefly explained in here for easier viewing:

- No matter what the size of the entrepreneurial company, about quarter of them does not use services from consulting companies. (Excluded accounting services)
- One of the biggest reasons that entrepreneurs would be attracted to productified consulting services would be their fixed prices.
- One of the biggest reasons for entrepreneurs not to choose student-run consulting services would be their inexperienced staff.

- As the entrepreneurs believe that the student-run companies are more innovative, they might trust to try the new innovations offered by them.
- The cheap price in student-run consulting services is not the first definition of these companies by entrepreneurs, but the second.
- Entrepreneurs do not believe that consulting companies would have really strong supply of information channels compared to student-run consulting companies.
- The performance uncertainty is one of the biggest reasons for entrepreneurs not to choose student-run consulting services.
- More than half of the entrepreneurs expect the student-run consulting companies to be 30-50% cheaper than other consulting companies.
- About 70% of entrepreneurs actually would prefer the productified services over similar but unproductified ones.

## 5.4 Approach and limitations

### 5.4.1 The idea

On the first stage of our questionnaire, we had to decide what are the main points that we need to find out by using the questionnaire and would the possible results support the subject of our research.

During this stage, we have tried to narrow the expected results down as possible so that firstly we would ask less questions but highly important and secondly we get as straight forward results as possible. As the result during creating the questions we have focused on the relevance of the questions to get us closer to the result we needed to find out: Preferences of the potential customers.

In this stage, one of the most important limitations was considering the knowledge that the respondents would already have and use that to get to the answers that we needed even if it was not shown exactly what the point of that question to the respondent was. For example when we wanted to know would they really prefer productified services, we have asked if they would prefer fixed prices. In this case, they

would give us the most valuable result that we needed even if some of them did not know what productified consulting services are.

#### 5.4.2 Creating the questionnaire

As we focused on the highly relevant questions to our thesis, we had to remove many of the possibly irrelevant ones so that we could make an efficient questionnaire. As we have explained in the questions' analysis, each of the questions' results would give us answers to support our research material or give us a better and deeper point of view over the whole subject.

During this process, choosing the best questions that directly or indirectly would lead us to the result we needed and research was one of the limitations as many of the respondents did not know the main subject of our thesis. For example some they did not know what was productification and most of them could not imagine what a competitor's analysis' package would look like.

#### 5.4.3 Sending the questionnaire

On this section, uploading the questionnaire was mainly an easy process as we chose [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com) as our channel (Website of SurveyMonkey 2015). In the site it is easy to make the questionnaire, make possible answers and give choices to the respondents to choose from, and it also has a place for feedbacks and extra comments which mainly helped us to get to more specific details in the results.

On the other hand, sending the questionnaire to our target group (entrepreneurs) was a harder process as most of them do not even have websites or do not share their contact information on [www](http://www) or other places that we would be able to reach.

As the result, beside other sources like e-mails and meetings our main area to find entrepreneurs willing to answer to our questionnaire was some of the [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com)'s groups and pages that were full of entrepreneurs. This led us to get around 37 answers just in about a week.

#### 5.4.4 Gathering and analyzing the results

On this stage, as we gathered the questionnaire results from the surveymonkey.com, we analyzed the answers mainly depending on what we have expected and what we needed to get on the questions' analysis. Many of the results were as we expected as we gathered information about the matters from our references and some others opened our minds about the situation and entrepreneurs' expectations from student-run consulting companies.

As it was explained before in the creating questions part, we had to choose the ones that could give us the critical answers that we needed to get to the best and valid results as possible for our thesis even if they did not give the answers directly; so on this section, we have analyzed many of the questions deeper to explain how we got to our conclusions based on the questionnaire results.

The biggest limitation on this part was the limited number of entrepreneurs we were able to reach and get them to answer the questions in the questionnaire. Like in many questionnaires the more results gathered from the target groups, the better and more valid the conclusions would be.

By making sure the respondents were mostly only entrepreneurs we lost respondents. Even if we sent the questionnaire to the areas that mainly had entrepreneurs, we could not know for sure how many of the respondents were actually entrepreneurs as we expected. So we can actually say that this was another big limitation that we faced on this part.

## 6 LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH

This thesis contains many sections and areas that we have used to gather the information and data that we needed to support our research. Each of the stages of making the thesis had their own limitations which we explain separately below.



## 6.1 Case company

Choosing Konsultointi J. Nieminen as our case company had a lot of benefits as firstly it is a student-run consulting company and the most related to our thesis research and secondly the owner of the company is one of the two writers of this thesis. Even though it has more benefits than limitations, we decided to refer to it as one of the limitations of our research.

- Firstly the case company is small and it does not have so many clients. Thus there is not much processes to be changed and mainly we were limited to creating new ones.
- The company has limited number of companies consulted so it has not gained much of experiences that we could have used in this thesis
- This company does not have trainees at the moment so the new instructions and suggestions during writing this thesis could not be tested.
- Before doing this thesis the company has not have any experience in making productified services that could be used on this research.
- Limited number of clients that have used Konsultointi J. Nieminen's consulting services did not give us enough feedback sources to be used in the thesis.

As the company attracts more and more clients, earns more experiences, hires more employees and gets more trainees these limitations reduce. If this thesis would have being done in the near future, the limitations that were mentioned above would be reduced or even resolved.

## 6.2 Concept of productification

The main concept that has been used in this thesis; productification, does not have an exact translated meaning in Finnish or Persian/Farsi. Because of this the writers of this thesis could not fully use the data found in their own native languages.

Finnish translation “tuotteistaminen” includes the same things productification but is also wider with more things included. This limitation would not be resolved until there would be a possibility for these languages to either import exact “productification” word to their languages or use another word that has a lot closer meaning to it.

### 6.3 Test product

The test product that was made during the process of writing the thesis using instructions and suggestions was just created and has not been tested by any consultant or offered to any possible customers.

In the future when the test product has been tested and gotten a lot of feedbacks, the gathered information about it would be really valuable and more reliable. Then the packages would be introduced as products that have been used and received results.

### 6.4 Data gathering

During the research and gathering data excluded from the points that we have already mentioned, there have been some more general limitations that we have faced. They can be seen below:

- In order to increase the quality of our research, we have tried to keep extra subjects as short as possible and only mentioned the parts that were more related or more interesting.
- We had to put away many of the search results that we found valuable because the subject of our thesis needed a lot narrower material
- We have had to modify everything we found from productification point of view because most of the material could not be used in the way they were.
- We did this thesis as a duo. It was strength but also created diversity for writing styles compared to the documents that are written by one person.
- One limitation that we faced during the last days of doing our thesis was the system problems that occurred in ebscohost.com. This address was one of the

main sources that we used for many of our research as it had many valuable publications in the field of our studies. As the result, we were not able to modify the source links from ebscohost.com to their right format and add them to our references.

If the subject of the thesis was wider and could contain more related topics, most of the valuable information could be used and they would not have to be left out. Gaining more experience about productification would increase the quality of the material that had to be changed in order to have the theme of productification in them. Also if all the text was modified only by one person or if the thesis would have been done by one person, the whole material would have decreased the diversity of the thesis.

## REFERENCES

- Bergström, S. & Leppänen, A. 2009. Yrityksen asiakasmarkkinointi. Helsinki: Edita Publishing Oy.
- Brashers, D.E. 2001. Communication and Uncertainty Management. Illinois: International Communication Association. Referred 25.5.2015.  
<http://www.glerl.noaa.gov/seagrant/ClimateChangeWhiteboard/Resources/Uncertainty/Mac1/brashers01.pdf>
- Gluckler, J. & Armbruster, T. 2003. Bridging Uncertainty in Management Consulting: The Mechanism of Trust and Networked Reputation. London: SAGE Publications. Referred 25.5.2015. <http://ejournal.narotama.ac.id/files/269.pdf>
- Grönroos, C. 2000. Nyt kilpaillaan palveluilla. Porvoo: WSOY.
- Jaakkola, E., Orava, M. & Varjonen, V. 2009. Palvelujen tuotteistamisesta kilpailuetua. Helsinki: Tekes.
- Keegan, D. 2005. Theoretical Principles of Distance Education. USA: Taylor & Francis e-Library. Referred 25.5.2015.  
<http://ir.nmu.org.ua/bitstream/handle/123456789/128021/2006a197b9fbef39fc1838765d7087bf.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y#page=232>
- Levine, R. 2006. The Power of Persuasion: How We're Bought and Sold. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.
- Lehtinen, U. & Niinimäki, S. 2005. Asiantuntijapalvelut: Tuotteistamisen ja markkinoinnin suunnittelu. Helsinki: WSOY.
- Nykanen, O.A. 2014. Productification for Collaborative Semantic Modeling. Thesis. Tampere: Tampere University of Technology. Referred 25.5.2015  
<https://peda.net/y1%C3%B6j%C3%A4rvi/eops/materiaalia/no2pfscsm:file/download/5b1a6cb4da56294ef1c355cae210186d60bb9d38/2014-nykanen-productif-collab-sem-mod-cr.pdf>
- Näslund, D. & Olsson, A. & Karlsson, S. 2006. Organizing the Concept of Value - An action research-based model. In: Emeraldinsight. Referred 25.5.2015.  
<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/pdfplus/10.1108/09696470610661135>
- Parantainen, J. 2007. Tuotteistaminen. Helsinki: Talentum Media Oy.
- Parantainen, J. 2008. Tuotteistajan pikaopas 3.0. Espoo: Noste Oy.  
[https://tiimiakatemia.files.wordpress.com/2009/10/tuotteistajan\\_pikaopas3.pdf](https://tiimiakatemia.files.wordpress.com/2009/10/tuotteistajan_pikaopas3.pdf)
- Parantainen, J. 2009. Tuotteistaminen. Helsinki: Talentum Media Oy.
- Rekola, K & Haapio, H. 2009. Industrial Services and Service Contracts. Helsinki: Teknologiatieto Teknova Oy.

Riddle, J. 2001. Consulting Business. ebrary.com: Entrepreneur Press. Referred 25.5.2015. <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/SAMK/reader.action?docID=10014748>

Sipilä, J. 1995. Asiantuntijapalveluiden tuotteistaminen. Helsinki: WSOY.

Toppin, G & Czerniawska, F. 2005. Business Consulting: A Guide to How It Works and How to Make It Work. ebrary.com: Bloomberg Press. Referred 25.5.2015. <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/SAMK/reader.action?docID=10210688>

Website of Copernicus Marketing. Referred 25.5.2015. <http://copernicusmarketing.com/>

Website of Creamentors Oy. Referred 25.5.2015 <http://www.creamentors.fi/>

Website of SurveyMonkey. Referred 25.5.2015. <https://fi.surveymonkey.com/>

Woods, J.A & Cortada, J. 2001. The Knowledge Management Yearbook 2000-2001. Google Books. Referred 25.5.2015. <https://books.google.fi/books?id=rCGH3EvRwnUC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Zeithaml, V., Bitner, M. & Gremler, D. 2006. Services Marketing: Integrating Customer Focus Across the Firm. Singapore: McGraw-Hill.