

Service design and productization for small service company

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Elina Leppä

Abstract

Author Leppä, Elina Amanda	Publication type Bachelor's Thesis, UAS	Completion year 2020
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Name, title and organisation of the client Mika Tonder, CEO, MindBlow Oy		
Abstract <p>The thesis study discussed about service design and productization of services. In addition to the main research topics this thesis also discussed briefly about strategies of service companies and the relevance of the blue ocean strategy. This thesis objective was to find out suitable service design solutions and productization models. The blue ocean strategy and the strategy's organization performance was also discussed. All the topics were connected to the case company which was part of this study.</p> <p>These topics were chosen due to their relevance to the case company. Service design, productization and blue ocean strategy can all bring major benefits to the company. The benefits of these topics were studied from literature sources. Interviews were also held to the case company's current customers. The interview focused mainly on the service design and offering. The interview included five semi structured questions.</p> <p>This thesis study followed deductive qualitative research methods. The theoretical framework included literature and theory of the main research topics. Main literature sources were books, studies, and academic articles. Empirical study included the customer interviews</p> <p>This study concluded a multiple different results and examples for the case company. Based on the interviews, all customers appreciated the service design and the length of service offerings in the case company. Customer interviews found out that the overall service model of the case company is good and needed. This thesis concluded several reasons of why service design, productization and blue ocean strategy are relevant to the case company. In the result chapter two examples were made for the case company concerning service processes.</p>		
Keywords Service productization, service design, blue ocean strategy, service standardization, service blueprinting		

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1 Introduction

This bachelor's thesis studies topics such as service design and productization of services. It also briefly discusses about service companies' strategies and is the blue ocean strategy suitable for a small service company. It uses real life examples by using a case company. Case company and its strategy, service design, and service productization are researched in this thesis. The case company operates in the management consulting field.

Establishing a consulting company is relatively easy, considering the small investments cost, material supplies and other starting activities. Finland has approximately 13 000 professional consultants. Considering the size of the country, the number of consultants is major. This means that also the competition in the field is hard. The value of consultant business in 2016 was 3,2 billion euros. (Liike-elämän ja johdon konsultit 2020.)

In a highly competitive field, a company should find itself a differentiation method. Finding this type of new, clear market segment is called blue ocean strategy. The blue ocean strategy is a method for strategic thinking in companies. The method is used for differentiating from the competitors and finding new, more innovating methods to compete. (Kim & Mauborgne, 2017.) Blue ocean strategy is discussed in this thesis. It is used for assessing competitive advantages in strategy, service design and service productization.

In a competitive field, designing and productizing services help companies to compete. Service design is a method for making services more user-friendly. It is a useful method for companies to become more customer oriented and innovative. By allocating resources to customer experience and satisfaction, companies can benefit from more innovative processes, better understanding of services and happier customers. All these aspects lead to more profitable company. (Reason et al. 2015.)

Service productization can also help companies to reach their strategic goals better. Service productization is a method of systemizing and conceptualizing services. Productised services are more often easier to sell and promote to the customer. They are also easier for customer and employees to understand. Such aspects of service productization makes companies more innovative and competitive. (Jaakkola et al. 2008.)

Since this thesis is made for a case company it includes a lot of private information. Due to the secret company information, multiple chapters have been limited from this thesis. The completely hidden chapters are 2.4, 3.3, 3.4, 4.5, 4.6. The chapter 6, results, were hidden partially.

1.1 Case company introduction

This thesis includes study on a case company. The subject of this thesis has been discussed in the case company and formed by its needs. The case company, MindBlow Oy, was established in South Karelia in 2019. However, the main operations of the company started during the spring of 2020. The company's official area of business is management consulting. It employs four people. (Tonder 2020.)

The company's operations contain management consulting, other consulting, and project management. Its areas of expertise are developing customers business performance, developing marketing and sales, going global, leading projects, and applying and reporting funding. (Tonder 2020.)

The company operates mainly in Karelia, Savonia, and South-East Finland. Even though the company has just recently started its operations, it has several customers and partner companies in its area of operations. Its customer profiles are small companies and associations which employ between one to ten people and are in a development stage. (Tonder 2020.)

Currently, the case company's stage of service design and service productization are undefined. Since the company is in a starting point it has not yet defined all the stages and models which would be needed for the service design and service productization. However, based on the information from this thesis the company seeks to design and process their services better and more clearly. By making services clearer the company seeks to have more efficiency and profitability in their operations. This thesis is aimed to help the case company to model and productize their services better. (Tonder 2020.)

1.2 Thesis objective and research question

The objective of this thesis is established from the needs of the case company. The objective is to observe service design and productization of services in a small service company. The objective of this thesis is to provide principles in service design and service productization for the case company. The last objective concerns the blue ocean strategy. The objective concerns observing blue ocean strategy and its suitability to the service design and its framework. The variables in service strategy, blue ocean strategy, service design and service productization are presented at the end of this thesis. The case company will be provided with this information and the possibility to use it in their operations. This thesis can also provide information and help for other small and mid-size service companies in the future.

This thesis has one main research questions and two sub-questions. The questions are expected to provide good and valuable information of the topic concerned. Research questions are also expected to provide guidelines with the delimitations.

The main research question of this thesis:

- How service design and productization of services should be done in a small consulting company?

The sub-questions of this thesis:

- Is blue ocean strategy applicable for a small size consulting company?
- Can customer experience be increased by using service standardization and productization?

These research questions are expected to provide clear and comprehensive understanding and principles in the subject of variables in strategy, service design and service productization and how those subjects are also connected to each other's.

1.3 Research method

The chosen research method for this thesis is qualitative research. As this thesis uses academic literature as its main sources, qualitative method is the most suitable one. The thesis will follow qualitative research method by gathering data and information from multiple literature sources such as books, articles and other previous studies made of the subjects. The subjects and theoretical part which are studied from other authors are company strategy, service design and productization of services. The collected data is used to make conclusions and examples for the case company. (Kananen 2010.)

This thesis includes a case company. With the use of company case study, the purpose is to understand the case company more deeply. Qualitative approach enables a deeper understanding of the issues researched in this thesis. The needs of the case company are integrated into the theoretical framework of this thesis. The data collected from books, previous studies and articles are used to provide support for this thesis, its examples and to the case company. (Kananen 2010.)

The information concerning the case company is gathered by using open interview. The interview is executed between the author and the founder of the case company. The interview topics are the company strategy and different aspects and variables of it. Other topics that are discussed in the interview are the founder's opinions and thoughts on the current situation of the company's service design and productization of services.

This thesis will also discuss the customer opinions and viewpoints of case company's service design. As a source of information, a small-scale interview is held to the case company's customers. The interview will be short, semi structured interview where customers opinions on service design will be discussed. However, the names of the companies are kept as a secret to secure their participation into this study.

1.4 Delimitations

This thesis discusses different aspects of strategy in service companies and examines the theory behind a company strategy. However, writing and forming the strategy for the case company is included. This thesis only examines the existing variables in the current case company's strategy. This delimitation is made to narrow the subject. It is also made due to the case company's own responsibilities to form a strategy.

Blue ocean strategy is used as the main and only strategy guideline. With this delimitation this the author wants to test the suitability of blue ocean strategy to a small consulting company. According to the study of Alam and Islam the blue ocean strategy is a useful tool and guide for companies, and it can bring major benefits for them (Alam & Islam 2017). This delimitation is made since blue ocean strategy is relevant and useful strategy guide in business areas where exists a high competition. This delimitation also narrows the different strategy variables and different strategy models away which narrows the subject. Blue ocean strategy is also efficient and good strategy guidelines for small and medium-size service companies.

This thesis also discusses the aspects of service productization. One of the aspects in productization of services is price. This thesis only discusses the theory of service pricing however it does not provide the service prices for the case company. Pricing itself is a major aspect which would expand the area and the subject of this thesis. Narrowing the pricing subject only to theory is be more relevant to this thesis.

1.5 Limitations

Limitations in this thesis are combined from the aspects of gathering information, analysing it and making conclusions out of it. The first limitation in this thesis is the amount of case companies used in this thesis. As this thesis is made only by using one case company, it sets a limitation to the amount of information gathered and used. This limitation may bring one sided information and data into the thesis since the company viewpoints are only discussed by the viewpoint of one company.

Second limitation in this thesis is the amount of data sources. This thesis includes only a small-scale interview from case company's customers. Those interviews only include customer viewpoint. This thesis does not include any other interviews for example from non-customer organizations, potential customers, or competitors. Due to this, academic literature is a major data source and limitation.

Third limitation in this thesis is data analysing and drawing conclusions from the data. As this thesis is mainly based on the literature sources, the authors understanding and capability to draw conclusion out of the data is a limitation which may bring one sided opinion into the thesis. Different authors may conclude and find different results based on their conclusions of the findings and data.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into seven parts. The structure of this thesis is divided by theory and case company examples. First chapter is introduction chapter which includes the basic information of the thesis. The theoretical framework part begins from the second chapter with theory of strategy and different variables in service company's strategy. It also includes a theory of blue ocean strategy and how it can be used. This theory part is followed by examination of case company's strategy and its variables. The case company strategy is also examined here by using the blue ocean strategy and its strategic tool.

Strategy part is followed by the theory of service design. This third chapter includes the theory of basic principles in service design, service blue printing, and customer orientation in service design. Case company's service design is examined after the theory part. It is also examined by the theory of blue ocean strategy.

The fourth chapter concerns the productization of services. This chapter includes the theory of principles in service productization, its competitive advantages and service pricing. After the theory part, the fourth chapter includes case company's service productization principles. In this part blue ocean strategy is also used to look at the service productization.

The fifth part includes empirical part of the thesis. This part discusses the different approaches used in this thesis and its validity. The empirical part also includes the interview questions and answers. This part is followed by results. Result part summarizes the findings of the theory part and the case company examples and information. Seventh part of the thesis is summary and discussion. This part looks at the findings, their meanings and discuss the possibility of future studies.

2 Strategy

Strategy is a carefully planned document which states how a company should operate. It is very important for companies since it states different competitive advantages for the company. It examines the company's potential services, customers, and business environment. Strategy considers strongpoints and weaknesses of the company and examines how to benefit from them. Strategy states the future viewpoints of the company and uses them to become more competitive. Strategy also defines future goals and how to reach them. It defines the line and the direction for the company and states also mile points how to reach the direction. (Mintzberg et al. 2003.)

Strategy is formed inside of the company by the high-level officers. It is made to last for several years in time. The durations of the strategy can be defined together in the company. Strategy helps the high-level officers to guide the company in the correct direction. As the future steps and goals are defined it is easier for the management to follow it. Overall, it helps the company to focus on the correct aspects which bring them competitiveness, efficiency, and profit. (Mintzberg et al. 2005.)

2.1 Strategy for service company

According to OECD's research in 2005 the service sector is responsible of over 70% of total employment in the economies of OECD (OECD 2005). Based on this study, an analysis can be made that the service sector is greater than the manufacturing sector. Even though the service sector is massive in the developed countries, one can say it is hard to find sources and references to analyze strategies for service companies.

Strategies are commonly kept in secret due to the business information that they include. Due to this finding information concerning the strategies of service companies is hard. Due to the problem of finding sources concerning business strategies, the author has examined strategy highlights from three large consulting service companies. Strategy is a major part of organizations' operations. In business to business industry, gaining new customers and keeping existing customers is an important part of the strategy (Gould 2012).

The first service company is Rantalainen Oy. It is based in Finland and its operations are accounting, human resources, accounting consulting, auditing, and financial management. In the website of Rantalainen Oy the company states that their strategy's main priority areas are: The best customer service and experience through capable service team, The best

employer in the field of financial management and accounting, first-rate operation in everyday life to ensure customer smooth operations, and being the biggest operator in the Finnish sector by mergers and organic growth. (Rantalainen 2020.)

The second company included to this thesis study is PwC. PwC is a multinational company which headquarters are in United Kingdom. PwC operates in areas of advisory, taxation, strategy consulting, and management consulting. It has spread into 157 countries. One of the sub-divisions of PwC is PwC Finland. PwC Finland's strategy is based on building trust in society. This strategic objective is defined as the base of the strategy and uniting aspect of all operation. Other aspects of the strategy are creating the best work environment, understanding the customers and knowing their needs, servicing customers in the best way by uniting and combining competences and going together, recreating models of sales and leading customers, benefitting digital solutions and using data to support operation. PwC sums up their strategy by stating that at the end of their strategy term they want to be the happiest and the most wanted specialist organization. (PwC 2020.)

The third service company addressed is CGI. CGI is Canadian multinational organization which offers services in information technology, business process services, outsourcing services in IT department and management consulting. CGI states in their 2019 annual report four pillars of their strategy. These pillars are win, renew and extend contracts, new service contracts for business processes and IT, metro market acquisitions, and large transformational acquisition. These strategy aspects are expected to enable organic growth, increase the range of services and broaden the customer relationships. The strategy CGI also includes a section of executing their strategy. This part includes building a trusting relationship with their customers, reaching global network to enable customer full access, ensuring CGI's quality in processes, and ensuring the company's corporate social responsibility as core value. (CGI 2020.)

Buying and requiring services is different than buying and needing products in the manufacturing industry. Due to this reason in the service industry, customer orientation and pleasing the customer is very important. This can also be seen from each service company's strategy which are stated above. Customer satisfaction is important factor in keeping the customers within the services of the company. These types of high customer service enable companies to be competitive and hold on to their customers. All three example companies state customer service in their strategy. Another aspect which was mentioned in the strategies was developing the service teams and utilizing the best knowledges in house. This is also done to enable good customer service.

According to Michael Porter service companies' strategies need to highlight differentiation and customer service. By differentiating, companies can survive better against competitors. Differentiation helps all customers to choose between companies in the market. Customer service helps then company to gain new customers, serve their existing companies and keep them satisfied. (Porter 2000.) Customer service and differentiation are heavily highlighted in many service strategies or studies about service strategies. For companies it is important to stay different from the competitors in order to satisfy customers.

2.2 Blue ocean strategy

Blue ocean strategy was created by W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne in 2004. It is a simple and clear theory of how companies can benefit from strategic thinking and move beyond competition. The theory of blue ocean strategy considers free markets as a red ocean full of competitors. In the red ocean, companies need to spend capital and resources to survive from the competition. According to the theory companies should instead focus on a new idea(s) and move away from the red ocean and the competition. This is done by thinking how they can be different from the competition. (Kim & Mauborgne 2004.)

This ideology brings companies closer towards so called blue ocean. By rethinking competitive business ideas companies become different from the competition. Companies are creating new market shares by being different. Companies which are able to create new instead of focusing to the competition are able to move to the blue ocean. In a blue ocean, the competition is made irrelevant due to the new market share. In the blue ocean companies can focus their capital and resources into meaningful business operations instead of competition. (Kim & Mauborgne 2017.)

According to the study of Alam and Islam, the blue ocean strategy is beneficial tool for different industries and companies. Their study listed 23 large companies which have used and succeeded in creating a good blue ocean strategy. This list includes major world leading companies such as Apple, Google, Amazon, Nintendo, and HBO. The study found out the blue ocean strategy is a significant help and important tool for increasing profits and creating market space. (Alam & Islam 2017.)

Another study by Rahman and Choudhury also states that blue ocean strategy brings competitiveness into the markets. According to the findings of the study, the blue ocean strategy significantly helps companies' organizational performance. It can also factor to companies' return on investment. Blue ocean strategy can be adapted to any business industry. The study states that blue ocean strategy creates innovations, reduces costs, and helps companies establish less competitive market spaces. (Rahman & Choudhury 2019.)

2.2.1 Tool for blue ocean strategy

The blue ocean strategy includes an analytical tool for creating blue oceans. This tool was created to help entrepreneur rethink their strategy and offering. The tool includes a simple pattern which assist companies to retarget and relocate themselves in the “oceans”. It highlights the blue ocean strategy’s main message of differentiation.

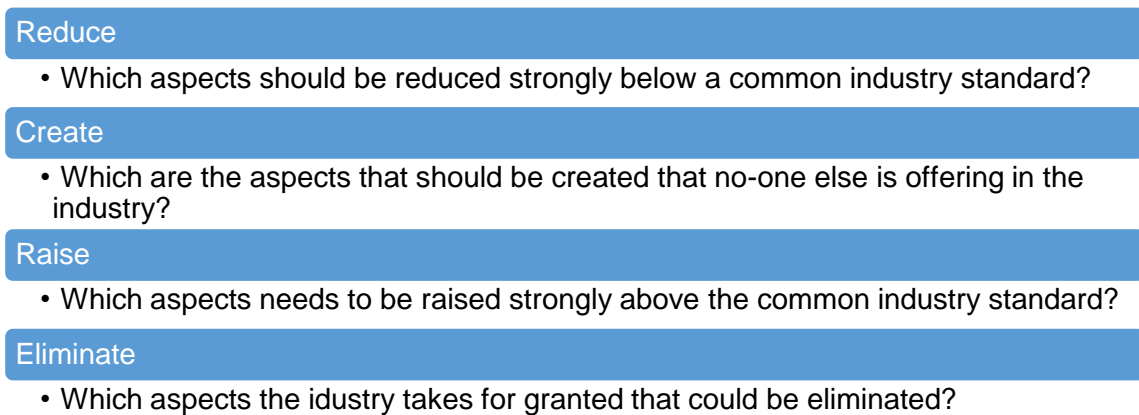


Figure 1 Blue Ocean Strategy value curve chart (Kim & Mauborgne 2004)

With this value curve tool companies can ask themselves the correct strategical questions to differentiate from the competitors. Eliminating and reducing factors focus on the cost structure and cost side. The creation and the raising questions consider how new value can be created to the customers and use that to remove the competitor. (Kim & Mauborgne 2004.)

With this strategic tool major companies such as Apple, Netflix, Nintendo Wii, and South-west Airlines have been able to create winning strategies and rethink their operations again (Alam & Islam 2017). The blue ocean strategic tool helps companies to create innovative solutions which enables them to move to less competitive market space (Rahman & Choudhury 2019). Often strategic guidelines and tool can be very hard to perform and use. Unlike those tools, the blue ocean strategy’s tool is simple and easy for companies to start rethinking their strategies.

The first question of value curve chart considers reducing some aspects or factors from the service. It discusses whether the competition is too developed as well as the services within it. This means that the costs of these services are also high for the customer and especially for the company. (Kim & Mauborgne 2004.)

The second question discusses the aspect of what should be created to the industry. Between the other competitors what is something that is missing from the others. What could be created that no one from your competitors would not have it. This question helps companies to create new demand and change the positioning in the market. (Kim & Mauborgne 2004.)

The third question considers aspects which should be raised above the common industry standard. Are there some aspects that force customers to compromise among the competitors in the industry? The question discusses whether the customer need to always compromise when buying a service. is there something that could be done better so the customers would not have to compromise? By this company would raise the standard or service and offer customer a service that would not need compromises. (Kim & Mauborgne 2004.)

The fourth question considers whether there is something that the industry that have been already used or done so long that it is being taken for granted. This kind of aspect could be eliminated from the service because they are possible not valued anymore. (Kim & Mauborgne 2004.)

2.3 Case company strategy

The case company's strategy is formed by the CEO of the company. The case company's strategy includes topics such as personnel and resource planning, potential customer profiles and sales channels, continuous learning, transparency in operations and customer understanding. The strategy is written to guide the company into correct direction. It is important for the company to follow and adapt the strategy, since the first years of operations are critical. (Tonder 2020.)

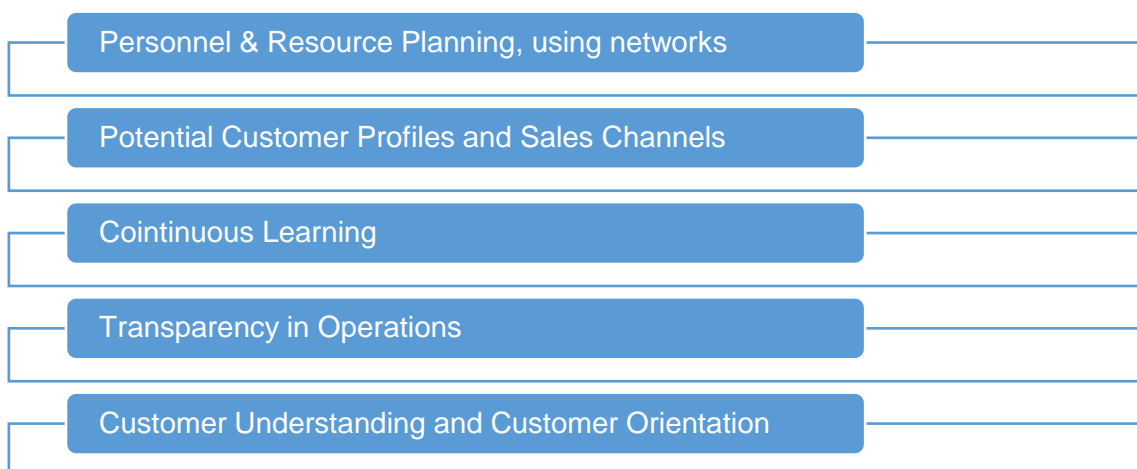


Figure 2 Case company's cornerstones for establishing strategy (Tonder 2020)

Case company's resource strategy is to outsource multiple parts of the projects. The project management is usually done inhouse, however it can also be outsourced if needed or demanded by the customer. Ideology behind the resource strategy is to use connections and network to outsource different parts of projects. The strategy states that personnel must be kept in minimum.

Consulting business can be very unstable. This is due to the customers' ability to use capital for projects. In case if the economy is bad and in general the companies do not have capital to fund projects. This means that consulting companies are also struggling. Due to this unstable business environment and segment, securing the ability to employ is important. The strategy discusses this by stating to keep the personnel at minimum.

The use of networks is also good due to other reasons. By using networks case company can have more efficient use of resources and by that increase their profitability. Networks also able more broad knowledge as projects can be done by different professionals. Different companies have different capabilities and knowledge. By using networks, the case company can use and utilise these capabilities. The use of networks also strengthens the overall knowability of the case company and increases the amount of network itself.

Many cases and projects are occurred and sold due to the amount of network. Customer companies accept offers more easily if they already know someone from the company or the offer is gotten by the network. This is also a good reason to use networks. As networks get larger and greater, the number of new customers also gets larger.

Another aspect in the case company's strategy is continues learning. As the case company wants to be able to help their customers in the best way, they need to stay highly educated in all trends for example in marketing. Continues learning increases knowledge and performance in the company. It helps the company and its employees.

Transparency in the strategy means that the case company wants to be transparent in their operations. Too many consulting companies are vague about their operations. By being transparent in their operations the case company aims to get more competitiveness. Transparency helps customers to understand what is done in the project and how the price is formed. It also helps the customers to trust the company since they know what is happening in any point of the project.

Customer understanding and customer orientation is very important part of the strategy. The case company seeks competitiveness in the markets by being customer oriented and by truly understanding the customer. This is done by listening what are customer issues,

understanding their need and wanting to solve their problems. It means being flexible, fair, clear, and understanding towards the customer.

2.4 Observing case company's strategy with blue ocean strategy

The case company's strategy can be examined through the blue ocean's strategy tool introduced in figure 1. This tool included aspects of reduce, create, limit, and raise. As mentioned in the chapter 2.3 this tool was created to help companies find their free market space and by this eliminate competition.

3 Service design

Service design means designing services towards more customer-oriented direction. The purpose of service design is to innovate and improve the quality of services to gain more satisfied and loyal customers. Service design is aimed to result better performing and more profitable companies. Service design is affected by the economic, social, and technical aspects. These aspects include for example the higher need to have more profitable services, need to personalize and give outstanding customer experiences and have more digitally driven solutions. (Reason et al. 2015.)

When talking about service design, service offering should also be considered. Service offering means defining the company's services and their scope. Service offering discusses the current services which are being offered and investigates what services should be offered. The scope of service design should be defined or based on the company's strategy. Service offering also discusses the profitability of services that are offered. Some services are less expensive to produce than other services. However, this does not mean that the services which are less profitable should be removed from the service offerings. (Jaakkola et al. 2008.)

When planning the service offering companies should always consider their strategy and its goals but also their customer needs. Services are often more understandable and useful for the customers when they are planned based on their needs instead of the need of service provider. After the service offering is planned the services are defined as main services and subservices. For a consulting company the main service could be accounting, and subservices could be handling the customer billing. This way the companies provide better services for their customers and are more competitive against other competitors. (Jaakkola et al. 2008.)

3.1 Blue printing of services

Blueprinting is a method of defining and building service processes. Service process is built to represent how services are created and what processes are needed. Below, figure 1 illustrates such example. The figure represents the most important and critical steps when services are created. Blueprinting helps companies to understand the process and every step of what is needed in planning and creating services. This process is important to make sure that the service is customer-oriented, and it includes all needed aspects.

Very important aspect in service blueprinting is to recognize the steps which are visible and aimed for customers and which are aimed for the internal company use. This also helps to

see customers participation and needs during the process. Service blueprinting is needed to do to make sure that service is not lacking any important steps. It also helps companies to engage employees to understand the whole process.

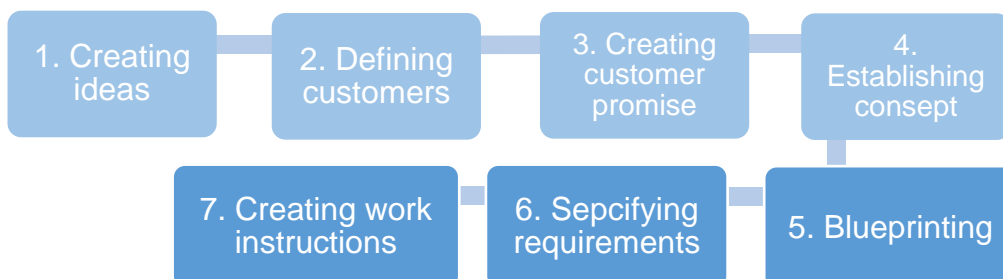


Figure 3 Service blueprinting process (Tonder 2013)

The first four steps in the service blueprinting process observe creating ideas and analysing them. These steps include creating ideas, defining customers, creating customer promises, and establishing concept. All these above-mentioned steps are highlighted with lighter-blue colour in the figure 3. These steps are done and analysed to make selling of the service easier. The steps are meant to make selling clearer to the company and to the customer. (Tonder 2013.)

Creating ideas includes finding a market segment and creating and establishing an idea what to use in the market segment. Creating an idea enables starting the process as well as starting the company. Idea creation should be revolutionary and forward looking instead of trying to adapt to the current competitors. (Tonder 2013.)

The next step is defining customers and grouping them into segments. Customer orientation and meeting the customers' needs are the main point of designing services. Defining customers and creating segmented customer groups should always focus on which customer a company can serve well and how the company can meet their needs. It is unnecessary to reach customers whose issues the company cannot solve. (Tonder 2013.)

The third step is to create and define a customer promise. Customer promise is a value sentence for customer to help choose between competitors. Customer promise is meant to offer company's values and promises to customers and so on help customers to choose them. Customers promise should be considered carefully. It helps companies to set their values into the markets and by that differentiate from the competitors. It can be considered

as well as part of the process and brand. Companies should always be able to keep their customer promise. (Tonder 2013.)

The fourth step, establishing a concept, creates a concept for the customer. Establishing concept means creating a group of services which are carefully considered and designed to fit together as a service concept. Instead of just selling a random group of services, concept is detailly planned and entity which holds similar services. Concept is created for the customer to help them better understand the service and its offerings. It is created to hold companies service offering together as a group of uniform and connected services. (Tonder 2013.)

Secondly the service blueprinting pattern observes the development of service processes. These steps include blueprinting, specifying requirements and creating work documents. Developing services and processes can include for example increasing the process performance or its efficiency. Developing service processes' part is highlighted with darker blue in the figure 1. (Tonder 2013.)

Blueprinting is the fifth step in the figure. As mentioned before, blueprinting is the face of developing processes into well-functioning services. It includes making service process smooth and pleasant for the customer. It also includes establishing different parts of the service process into the parts which can be seen visible and experienced by the customer and to the parts which are not visible to the customer and are done internally. (Tonder 2013.)

The sixth step, specifying requirements, is about setting standards into the ready created service processes. Setting standards and creating criteria and requirements is important. This enables and promises the customers steady and qualitative services every time. Specifying requirements helps companies to deliver constant quality and brand. It also helps company's employees to know what to do. (Tonder 2013.)

The final, seventh, step is about creating work documents. Work documents face goes very hand in hand with the previous step, specifying requirement, as both steps aim to make consistent services. Creating work documents is important since the knowledge inside of the company needs to be documented and by that shown and educated to everyone. Documentation of service processes enables steady service production and quality. (Tonder 2013.)

3.2 Customer experience in service design

Service design is a beneficial tool for increasing both customer understanding and orientation. Service design gives an outside perspective of customer viewpoints. It helps companies to look at their service from customers point of view and by that also increase the service performance. (Reason et al. 2015.) Customer's experiences in services are important to consider in service design. According to the study of Folstad et al. customers participation and internal participation in service design are important. Both parties complement each other in the planning by having different attitudes and experiences towards designing the services. (Folstad et al. 2014.)

Understanding customers in service design also enables companies to understand other factors that influence customers viewpoints. These outside actors can be other companies such as competitors or customers' families and friends. These outside actors influence customers attitudes and behaviour towards the companies. This information is beneficial for the company because it helps to understand the customer and their behaviour more deeply. (Reason et al. 2015.)

According to the book "Service Design: From Insight to Inspiration" customer or user involvement helps companies to design the services easier for the customer. When customers or users are used in the designing face the service is often easier and more convenient to use. This effects especially to online and digital services. Services which are easier to use for the customer, often decrease the amount of effort that companies needs to put into it such as customer assisting. (Polaine et al. 2013.)

Positive customer experience can be stated as one of the biggest objectives of service companies. Good customer experience leads to customer satisfaction. Many service company's objective is to get satisfied customers into loyal regular customers who can advocate for the service and purchase it again. (Sukwadi 2015.) Customer participation in service design is a successful way to design services into more customer oriented model. When customers are involved in planning the services and user experience the outcome tends to be satisfying to customers. Services receive better experience. Customer satisfaction in service design can lead to better customer loyalty and customer attitude towards the company or service. With customer loyalty companies can easier sell the service or commit the customer into it. Customer loyalty also enables better possibility to repurchase and recommendation to other people.

Customer's participation to service design depends on the company and its sector. It also depends on the nature of services that are offered. Service design can be developed with

company's past or present customers or with the combination of both. Customers participation often leads to more customer friendly and customer orientated services. Service design can be implemented for example with customer interviews and questionnaires. Customers can also act as a test group for understanding and using the service. (Jaakkola et al. 2008.)

3.3 Case company's service design

3.4 Using blue ocean strategy in case company's service design

4 Productization of services

Productization of services means conceptualizing the services in a way that they are easily understood by customers and stakeholders. However, service productization has no exact meaning. Its meaning changes in different business sectors and between persons who are using productization. In general, productization of services means systemizing and standardizing the service to a common form which can be duplicated and done again. Productization of services should always be in line and done by the basis on company's strategy. (Jaakkola et al. 2008.)

Parantainen states in his book "productization" that service productization means copying the services. In his book, well done productization means that services are defined and formed with such detail that they could be copied by another company with correct documentation and time. If a company succeeds in documenting their service operations and processes, the services are then productized and could be taken into use by another entrepreneur with no previous experience. This means that for example franchising companies should always have a good service productization and documentation of their services. (Parantainen 2007.)

The aim of service productization is to have higher quality and competitiveness in company's service offerings. This means that the offered services are well defined, understandable for the customer and they can be priced in a similar way. Well performed service productization leads to higher customer satisfaction and better service operations for the company. Both aspects led to more profitable company. Companies which have productized services are more often customer oriented, innovative, efficient, and systematic in their operations. (Jaakkola et al. 2008.)

4.1 Principles in service productization

The ideology behind service productization is to have services which can be easily duplicated between different customers and to have processes which are established, ready to use and easy to understand for the customers and employees of the company. Productized services are more efficient for the company and they are easier to sell to the customers. Also, the work inside of the company is more productive as employees are aware of what needs to be done. (Jaakkola et al. 2008.)

Productization of services have three models of how to limit the company's offerings. Many companies face the issue of choosing the correct service offering model for their company. With the correct service tailoring companies can better set their strategic objectives and

goals how to reach them. They can also easier state their ideal customers who to reach in the strategy. This makes the selling of services much easier since the company has targeted customers who to reach. (Parantainen 2007.)

The first model is for the company to have only certain customer cases which they are solving. These cases are previously set and predicted beforehand and are usually common issues and problems for customer companies. The first tailoring model offers customers very productised services. The services are always similar, and the result is predicted well. When buying the service customer knows exactly what they are getting. These services can be easily promoted. The issue in this service model is the limited amount of customer since the models is set. The issue is that this service tailoring model does not listen to the customers problems more deeply, however, has predicted solving for them. (Parantainen 2007.)

The second model is to have very tailored services for needs of customer company. This means that the service company is more likely to get a customer since they have more flexible offerings. A company which has only certain customer cases in their service offering, like in the first model, has limited possibilities to work. However, they are very set on their processes which means that those certain cases can be done efficiently and with sure processes. However, a company which can tailor their services has more customer friendly approach and has more flexibility to choose customer cases. (Parantainen 2007.)

Thirdly, a more common way is to have a combination from the previous models. In this model companies do not need to set their services to exact case however, they do need to choose the area of cases that they want to operate in. In this model the companies do not need to precisely set their customer profile, they just need to choose similar kinds of cases and customers. (Parantainen 2007.)

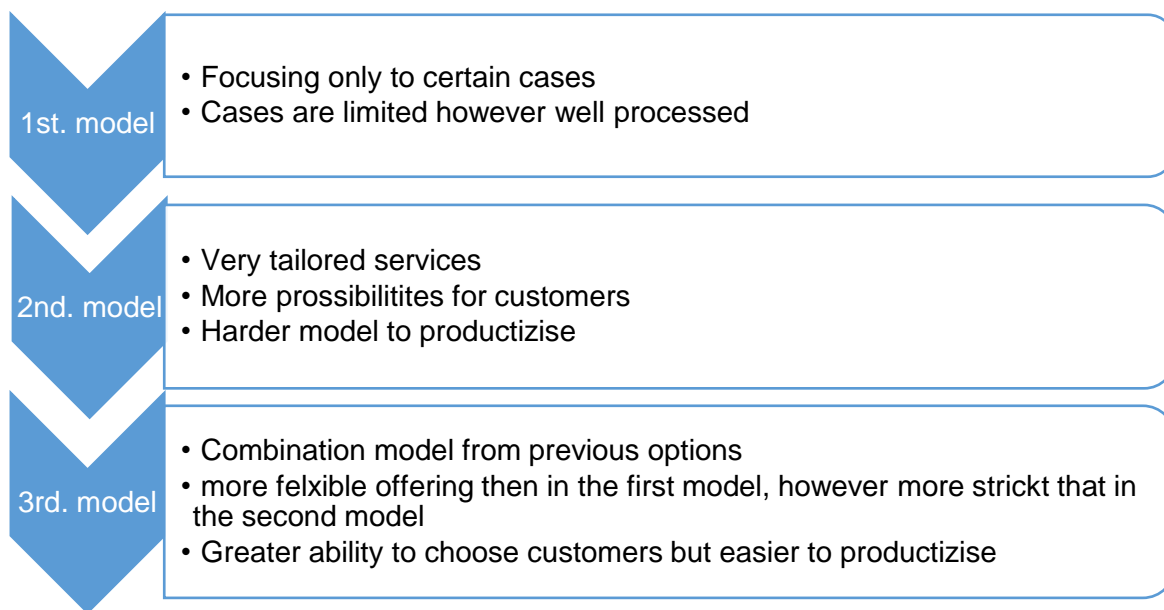


Figure 4 models in tailoring services (Parantainen 2007)

From the tailoring models which are discussed in the figure 4 above, the third option enables companies to have the greatest flexibility in services and still have a good opportunity to find customers. However, if a company's operations and knowledge are very limited then the first option may be the best. The first option enables companies to have very productized services and benefits brought by that.

The first model was too strict for the case company. This is due to the reason that the case company has many kinds of customers from several different business sectors. Because of the case company has several types of customers, their needs vary also strongly from each other. Due to this reason the first service productization model was too strict. The model limited and restricted the company's services too much. As a consulting company with broad services, the case company needs to be able to serve many types of customers. This means that they are also able to adapt to the customer's problems better.

The second model was more suitable compared to the first model, however it gives a lot of unlimited options for the company and for the customers. This is harmful since this type of model is very hard to productize. This type of service productization model may also be very dangerous since it is hard for customers to understand. If customers have close to unlimited options, it is hard for them to decide what do they need. This may result to customers choosing another company who has done a better result in productization.

4.2 Competitive advantages of service productization

Parantainen states in his book "Productization" that service productization can be seen as a broad process which enables that one service being sold to different customers with different aspects and needs. This means that for the service provider company one service process could be adapted to multiple different customers which all have personal needs. Therefore, the service provider company would have high productivity and high efficiency when the similar project work could be easily personalized for different companies. (Parantainen 2010.)

Jaakkola, Orava and Varjonen also state in their research that standardization of services brings efficiency and profitability into the company. According to them the standardization will be beneficial to the service company. This applies to both, content of the offered service and to the internal and external process of the offered service. Productized services can be offered and used for many customers with the same style, process and patterns. The same documents and processes can be used for all customers which makes the service more efficient. Efficiency brings profitability into the service company. (Jaakkola et al. 2008.)

4.3 Standardization of services

Service productization includes both internal and external productizations. Service productization is not only for packaging the services to help the customers understand them better. A major part of service productization is also to develop company's internal processes and documentation of different service stages. (Jaakkola et al. 2008.)

Standardizing services are usually done by using technology or other ways systemizing the service process. The goal of internal service productization is to standardize and document all possessed services and processes by the company. This is done to make sure that company's processes are similar or alike with every customer. It is also done to make sure that some parts of the service process are not known by only some employee of the company instead all of them. With the use of documentation, companies can make sure that all employees are aware of the processes done in the company. With documenting the processes, companies are also safe with their processes even though responsible employee would exit the company. (Jaakkola et al. 2008)

The service process documentation and standardization can be done by using common documents, process instructions, collecting and using data of the processes, standardized work instruments and computer programs and using company's common communication programs.

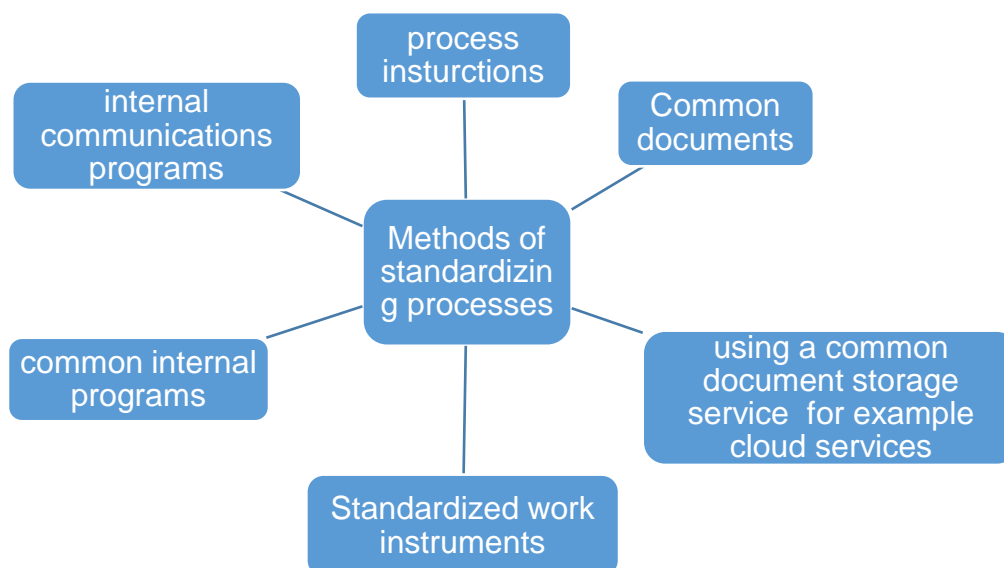


Figure 5 process standardizing methods (Jaakkola et al. 2008)

This type of service standardization may seem as a massive invest for a company. However, companies benefit greatly from standardizing processes. It increases efficiency and lowers costs for single service projects. At the beginning face of standardization, it may seem that adapting new technologies and documenting all processes is very time consuming. Using technology does not mean that the companies need to build their own technologies for standardizing processes. These technologies can be outsourced and procured from other service companies. (Jaakkola et al. 2008.)

By standardizing service processes companies can predict their service costs and results better. When processes are already standard, the company is more able to know how much resources some parts of the service process take. By predicting resources companies can assess their costs better and so on also see whether the customer price for the service is correct. Also standardized service are more stable to predict results. When service processes are always done according to the standards the service result stays somewhat constant and predictable. This means that companies can make more accurate promises to the customers concerning the service timing and results. (Jaakkola et al. 2008.)

4.4 Pricing of services

Services are more complex to sell by their nature. Even though the services would be well productized customers find it always harder to buy services. This is due to the reason that customers struggle imagining the reality what they are paying for in services. Realizing the service offering and where the price comes from is much harder compared to buying products. The service price is directly connected to customers image of the company. The image of the service or the profession in general affects to the price. Cleaning services are usually low cost when doctor services are high. In the case of consulting, professional expert services are commonly rated high. (Sipilä 2003.)

According to Sipilä service pricing follows three main principles. Even though the pricing principles are divided into three different characters all of them affect to company's pricing method in some level.

1. Pricing based on costs
2. Pricing based on markets, competition, and customers
3. Pricing based on company's goals and objectives

Pricing that is based on cost is a strict model which considers only the cost of the service and profit margin. This method calculates how much it costs to the company to produce the service and add the hoped profit margin. The model is seen as fair since it is same for everyone however it is criticized for not taking customers value into considerations.

Pricing which is based on markets, customers and competition is more complex to build. In this model the price is affected by competition and demand, regulations and laws affecting to the business area, and costs of the service itself. The price is formed from by counting the lowest price from the costs and the highest price from the demand and competition.

Pricing that is based on company's own goals and objectives is often a viewpoint in pricing of services. However, often this pricing method needs to be changed due to the competition which is affecting the overall pricing of the markets. Often, only in the case of monopoly position companies can use goal and objective based pricing methods. (Sipilä 2003)

Parantainen states in his book "pricing" that service pricing is done by following three stages. The first stage includes deciding what is affecting the price. This means that the company needs to decide is the prices based on competition or difference. In the case of competition, often the lowest price offeror wins if the products are somewhat identical. If the company can differentiate itself from the competitors, the price can be higher. (Parantainen 2017)

The second stage of pricing is anchoring the price. Like Sipilä's model this stage also presents three models how to base the company's price: value or benefit seen by the customer, the second-best choice of the customer, and company's costs. These three models help the company to set the best price. These also include that overall market prices and demand is considered. (Parantainen 2017.)

The third stage considers the billing style. In this point of the stages the price is already set for the company. In this stage companies to assess which way they should bill the customer. Other competitors and differentiation should also be considered in this model since billing is important aspect to the customer. (Parantainen 2017.)

4.5 Productization of services in a case company

4.5.1 Case company's external service productization

4.5.2 Case company's internal service productization

4.6 Blue ocean strategy in case company's service productization

5 Empirical part

5.1 Methodology

The methodology chapter in this thesis is combined from the methods that were used. This includes approached such as deductive and inductive and approaches such as qualitative and quantitative. This chapter discusses what those approaches are and why certain approaches are selected and used. The following parts in this chapter also discuss the correctness of the chosen methods and approaches. It discusses the theory behind the approached and by that also argues and explains the choices. Lastly, this chapter discusses and argues the validity and reliability of this study.

5.1.1 Inductive or deductive approach

Inductive research means researching issue from detailed information into general information and idea. It means that simple cases are used to build a bigger picture and better understanding. Deductive means that the general knowledge is used to understand more detailed issues and cases. Deductive research includes good general information and its research before starting. Inductive research does not have a lot of general information in the beginning of research since it is made during the research. (Kananen 2010.)

The author has chosen deductive research into this study. This method was chosen due to the nature of this study. This study aims to find more detailed information what to provide for the case company. The information is gathered from the general, broader knowledge and information studied and provided by other authors. Due to this, deductive approach is correct method chosen for this particular study.

This study first discusses and research the general information concerning strategy, service design and productization of services. After the literature review, this study makes conclusions from the general information. Conclusions were used to get more detailed information from the general knowledge. This detailed information was used to understand a single case better. This proves that the deductive method is the correct research method in this study. (Kananen 2010.)

5.1.2 Qualitative or quantitative approach

Quantitative research begins with a research issue. Quantitative research method researches the chosen issue by forming a series of questions. These questions are used to draw conclusion to match the founded issue. Quantitative research method researches the

issue by numbers. The questionnaires from amount of data and numbers which will be researched. These numbers are the base of quantitative research method. The author will also from a results and conclusions from those numbers. (Kananen 2010.)

Qualitative research method is applied when the author wants a more deeper level understanding, wants to form a new theory to support previous ones, or wants a good description of certain issue. Qualitative research method uses interviews and literature as its source of data. Interviews bring more qualitative information which can be used to draw conclusions. (Kananen 2010.)

As this research wants a deeper level understanding from the general knowledge, a qualitative research method is correct to use. The objective of this thesis is to from ideas and examples from the general information to the case company and its situation. This means that the author needs to study the general issues and theories which have been already discussed and studies by other authors. From those theories the author needs to make conclusions and findings to meet the objective of this study. Those findings will be used to draw examples for the case company. (Kananen 2010.)

In this research the author used academic literature and small open interviews to gather the data and information. The academic literature was used to describe and provide the basic theories that ae existing around the subjects of strategy, service design and productization of services. This included books and previous studies.

This study also included two types of interviews. The first interview was a single open interview which was held to the CEO of the case company. As the company is just recently established and started operating a lot of information is known by the CEO. Especially with the part of case company strategy. This information is provided by the CEO since he is the only one who knows about it. The interview was an open theme interview where the CEO told openly about the operations and the strategy of the company.

The second type of interview was held to the current customers of the case company. These interviews were structures as semi-structured interviews. They included questions concerning the case company's service design. The customers were important source of information since they are the only ones who are the best aware of the company's operations from the customer's point of view. (Kananen 2010.)

5.2 Reliability and validity

The reliability and validity aspects discuss the truthfulness and the trustfulness of this thesis. As this thesis follows qualitative research the aspects of documentation and method of gathering information are discussed. Documentation is very important aspect and face of this study. When the methods of gathering data and information, analysing, and interpreting them the correctness of documentation is important. With the correct use of documentation, the thesis can be made with transparency and reliability. In the methods of gathering data and information, analysing, and interpreting it is needed to document the theories and reasons behind choosing the methods. By documenting these stages of thesis, the author will not face the issue of forgetting information or theories behind them. This also means that the theories of different research methods will be researched before starting to write the thesis. This will increase the trustfulness behind the entire thesis and the methods used in it. (Kananen 2010.)

Another aspect of reliability in this qualitative research is the authors interpretation. Interpretations are discussed in here as in the qualitative research method a lot of information and conclusions are drawn from other authors (Kananen 2010). If the author of this study has misled some conclusions or had a different perspective, this study may have different results as some other author would have. This thesis follows heavily other authors theories. Due to this reason the interpretation is a real worry in validity.

This thesis also uses interviews as a source of data. The reliability behind the data collected from the interviews is another concern in reliability (Kananen 2010). Interviews are collected from the CEO of the case company and from the current customers of the case company. Both interviews carry a concern of validity. If the interviewee wants to have given a certain picture of the company or has other biases affecting, may the result of those interviews be affected.

5.3 Customer experiences in case company's service design

As mentioned in the chapter three, the service design is aimed to make the services more customer-friendly and customer oriented. A major part in service design is to make the case company's services as customer oriented as possible. Service design is good to plan in with the participation of case company's customers. Even though the case company has good customer understanding, the point of view of actual customer is always valued and important.

To ensure the customers position this study does not mention the names of the companies which have participated in the interview. This study includes three customers: customer X, customer Y and customer Z. All these customers have major size projects that the case company is managing and handling. All of the customers also belong to the case company's target customer profiles. They are small and in the development face. The author chose to have open question interview to get as much of the customer viewpoint as possible.

How do you feel about MindBlow's service offering? Is the range of services comprehensive?

How would you describe your participation to the project?

Did MindBlow make it easy for you / your company to participate to the project?

How does the service model (meaning that MindBlow handles the project management) help you or is it suitable for your company?

Would you rather handle the project management within your company and why?

Figure 6 Interview questions for the case company's customers

These interviews were all held through face to face meetings or with remote video calls. To avoid any misunderstandings the customers were told why they are being interviewed and the questions were also explained. The customers could answer these questions with the length that they wanted. All the customers answered to the same questions. The customers were also told that this interview will stay anonymous and it does not affect to their project in any way.

Customer X

Customer X thinks that the service offering has been very flexible. This flexibility in services is in their opinion key factors that enable small companies to participate in these kinds of development projects. The customer is very pleased that MindBlow is so flexible with their services. In the beginning, the offer and the project plan included certain services and areas that the project included. In the middle of project, the customer needed help with logistics arrangements. Even though the offer did not include that, the case company assisted the

customer with their logistics issues. This was very important for the customer since they would have not been able to solve those logistics issues inhouse.

Customer X describes that their involvement in the project has been easy and convenient. The project steps have been explained well which helps them to stay in tract of the project. Even though the customer is not involved with working in the project they feel that they still are very aware of it and in control of it. The participation was also made very easy for the customer. Everything that was needed from them was very well informed and instructed. In their opinion the case company did not needed too much of their time into the project.

The customer was particularly pleased about the project management. In customer X project there were multiple different companies participating in it. MindBlow was responsible for both participating the project steps as well as managing the project, finding those other companies to participate in and communicate with them. The customer felt that they could have not been able to participate in this size project if they would have been managing the project.

Customer Y

Customer Y was also satisfied with the service offering. In their opinion the case company was able to respond in every aspect that they wanted in the project. The case company explained well that some parts of the project are done by other partner companies, however the customer do not need to worry about that. The honest explanation of which companies are involved and why was pleasing for the customer.

The customer was happy that they did not have to participate in the project that much. That was one of the key factors in their case. In their opinion they would have been too busy to participate fully and due to that they wanted to pay for the case company to do the work. Because of their busy work schedule the customer thought that the case company made it very easy to participate in the project. The time issues were also the main reason why they wanted MindBlow to handle the management of the project. In their opinion they felt more relaxed that someone else was responsible for the management.

Customer Z

Customer Z felt that MindBlow's services were good since they did not only offer the services, the also helped to choose and helped the customer to understand why they needed some services. In customer Z opinion they would have not been able to decide all the project parts since they did not have that much knowledge in it. They were satisfied that the case company helped them to form the whole project together.

Also due to the lack of knowledge the customer Z felt that it was important that they did not need to participate and know about these aspects. The customer could focus on running their business and doing the very day operation and at the same time someone from the outside was looking how to develop them. Even though this needs a lot of trust from the customers side, the customer Z felt that it was very suitable for them.

Customer Z also said that this project would have been completely impossible to do if they would have needed to do the project management. As the customer was lacking knowledge about the different development areas, they felt that it would have been impossible to manage and lead the project. They would have not been able to handle the time and resource management or even to handle a communication with other partner companies.

The results from these interviews and their conclusions are presented in the results chapter.

6 Results

This thesis found results and multiple recommendations for the case company. As this thesis topic was divided into three sections the results are also divided into their own sections. Each section discusses the findings based on this study. The results from this study vary from opinions and results from the customer interview, recommendations found from the basis of literary sources and concepts which are made based on the knowledge gathered from the case company and from literature.

Strategy

The strategy was in the beginning delimited as minor part of this study. The strategy was being evaluated through the blue ocean strategy tool which was established to help companies to create free market space. Blue ocean strategy tool helped the author to evaluate multiple parts from the case company's strategy which can be used differentiating from the competitors. Blue ocean strategy and its strategic tool was chosen for this study based on other researcher's good results.

The strategy chapter discussed briefly about common strategies and their cornerstones among service companies. The study found out that customer service was the biggest highlight in every strategy. This aspect is very important for service company to enable customer loyalty and possible repurchases. Another highly valued aspect was making teams efficient and utilising their resources the best way. This was chosen to the strategy to serve the customers better with the best possible service teams and also to make the operations efficient and highly resourced.

In the strategy chapter the study also found out that blue ocean strategy and its strategic tool is a competitive factor among the competitors. Blue ocean strategy was seen as a major factor in competitiveness among different companies and industries. With innovating thinking many companies were able to seek differentiation. Even though the strategy and the tool are good ways to seek differentiation, it is important to remember that one blue ocean strategy does not last forever. Companies need to remember to update their strategies and rethink their competitive advantages in every three to five years. Competitive advantages can be lost easily once the markets change or competitors evolve.

Service design

Productization of services

The service standardization also helps the customers to understand the service model better. Due to this buying the service is easier, and customers can better understand what

exactly they are buying. Service standardization helps the customers to compare service offerors, their prices and quality. Service standardization also helps companies to offer more equal services to each customer.

7 Summary and discussion

This study focused on the benefits that service design and productization of service bring into company. The study included a case company which operates in consulting and project management fields. The objectives of this study were identified by the needs of the case company. The objectives of this study were to find out how service design and productization should be done in a small consulting company. Another objective was to see if the blue ocean strategy is applicable for companies, especially to the case company. The final objective of this study was to see if standardization of services affects customer satisfaction.

The strategy chapter discussed about common cornerstones of service strategies. The most common cornerstones in service company's strategies were customer service and keeping the existing customers inhouse. Also, differentiation and utilizing team's resources were main cornerstones. The strategy chapter also discussed about blue ocean strategy and how it can be used in the case company. Blue ocean strategy was established as a useful tool for all organization. With the blue ocean strategy companies can create innovative solutions and break free from the competition. The case company's blue ocean strategy solutions were identified and evaluated to be differentiating factors.

Service design was discussed in the third chapter. Based on the theoretical framework the service design was seen as a major part of planning services and making the customer oriented. Service blueprinting was mentioned as one of the main service designing tools. The service design chapter discussed about the importance of customers participation. With customer participation companies can understand customers viewpoints better and be able to design services into more user-friendly way.

The case company's service design was also discussed in this chapter. The case company's services were identified as customer friendly by the interview held to the current customers of the case company. Main points were the lack of time needed from the customer, transparency in the operations and the size of the service offerings. The case company's service design was also seen as competitive among the blue ocean strategy.

Productization of services was discussed in the fourth chapter. Productization can bring major benefits into the company. It can make the company's services easier to sell to the customers. It can also help the company's employees to better understand the services which are offered. Service productization are divided into two categories: internal and external productization. Internal productization is visible for the employees. Well internally productised services make the operations more efficient and qualitative. External services

are seen by the customers. They help the customers to understand they are buying and received from the service.

As an empirical study this thesis included an interview which was held to three current customers of the case company. The results of the interview supported the service design, model, offerings and productization. It was mentioned that this type of service needs a lot of trust among the case company and the customer. However, the customers felt that the transparency in the operations helped to create trust.

As results this study made also two example figures which can be seen from the results chapter. The figures described detailly about the internal and external processes and blueprint of the service. The figures were made by the author to give example for the case company how service processes could be described. The study also resulted correct service packaging which helps the company to serve their large customer segment.

This study could be done again in a larger form. The results of this study were good; however, the author was aware that the size of the study was limited only to one case company. The results of this thesis can help many small and midsize companies, especially the ones which are operating in the management consulting field. The results and the theoretical framework of this thesis are valuable information for service offerors.

As mentioned in this study service design and service productization are important aspects among service companies. Designing and productizing help companies to increase their customer base, decrease their costs by being more efficient, and serving their existing customer better. As the subject of this thesis is important the future research among this topic is important. More broader case company base, deeper research, and understanding of service design and productization are excellent future studies.

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