

## Service Research Topics and Methods: The Case of Lithuania

The paper provides an overview of service research areas and the methods of data collection used by service researchers working at Lithuanian universities. The authors present the results of content analysis and the researchers' questionnaire survey.

**Keywords:** topics of service research, research methods, research problems, Lithuania.

Straipsnyje apžvelgiamos paslaugų sritys, kurias tyrinėja Lietuvos universitetuose dirbantys paslaugų tyrėjai, pristatomi jų tyrimų metodai. Autorės taip pat pristato savo atliktą analizę ir paslaugų tyrėjų apklausos rezultatus.

**Raktiniai žodžiai:** paslaugų tyrimų sritys, tyrimų metodai, problemos, Lietuva.

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### Introduction

The marketing research information is crucial for service providers in competitive environment (Menon, Varadarajan, 1992). Marketing research helps to search for retrieval of existing, discovery or creation of new information or knowledge. It covers three wide areas: market analysis, product research and consumer research. The results of marketing research supply facts are necessary to make marketing decisions and determine the extent and location of the market for a product or service

(Pellemans, 1999). The growing number of peer-reviewed journals, annual international conferences and education centres demonstrate the spread of information about services. This shows that researchers and practitioners have direct access to scientific knowledge and expertise. Therefore the area of service marketing inquiries continues to evolve.

Service area is a rapidly growing economic sector in Lithuania. Statistics shows that the service sector employed 56.9 per cent of Lithuanian people in 2005 (52.1 per cent – in 1998). In 2006 services sector

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Liudmila BAGDONIENĖ – Doctor of social sciences, assoc. professor at the Department of Business Administration, the Faculty of Social Sciences, Kaunas University of Technology. Address: K. Donelaicio St. 20-422, LT-44239 Kaunas, Lithuania. Tel.: +370 37 300124, 300123. Fax: 370 37 300102. E-mail: liudmila.bagdoniene@ktu.lt

Jurgita ZEMBLYTĖ – PhD student, lecturer at the Department of Business Administration, the Faculty of Social Sciences, Kaunas University of Technology. Address: K. Donelaicio St. 20-422, LT-44239 Kaunas, Lithuania. Tel.: +370 37 300126. Fax: 370 37 300102. E-mail: jurgita.zemblyte@ktu.lt

accounted for 59.5 per cent of overall Gross Domestic Product (1998 – 57.3 per cent) (<http://www.stat.gov.lt/lt/pages/view/?id=1116>). Some indicators of Lithuanian service sector overtake neighbour states of the Baltic – Estonia and Latvia. For example, in 2003 the value added at factor cost (in billion Euro) in Estonia was 2.4, Lithuania – 2.9; the turnover (in billion Euro) – Estonia – 13.9, Latvia – 13.8, Lithuania – 16.2; gross operating rate (in per cent) – Estonia – 8.8, Lithuania – 8.9. In Lithuania's economy the significance of diverse services is different, for example the sector of retail, maintenance/repair of motor vehicles services based on value-added share in non-financial business economy (in term of Nace classification) is the most important, the least important – computer and related activities and other business activities (Statistics in focus, 19/2007).

As the service sector has grown, it has become interesting to academics in Lithuania as well. Various service aspects as a field of research attract more and more attention of PhD students, post-doc and senior researchers for their works. Service study results are presented in many Lithuanian peer-reviewed journals and conferences. However, academic researchers do not have an individual peer-reviewed journal on service area. Besides, there are no annual service conferences and no academics service research centre in Lithuania. As a result, we do not have a full-scale overview on the service research field.

This study is a first attempt to summarize the Lithuanian service research. The **purpose of the paper** is to review the areas of services research and data collection methods that use service researchers working at Lithuanian universities.

The **methods** applied: analysis of scientific literature, content analysis, questionnaire survey.

### **Research areas and applicable methods in service inquires: literature review**

Service marketing as a research field has been a remarkably fast-growing and successful area of research. Service by its nature involves a wide range of various research topics, and our intent is not to review them exhaustively. We present a summing-up on some future research directions (quality, service operation, quality-value-loyalty chain, international service marketing, customer value, etc.).

O. Furrer and P. Sollberger (2006) identify six clusters of service researchers' topics: 1) service quality and customer satisfaction, 2) the strategic aspects of service marketing, 3) relationship and customer retention, 4) technology and value, 5) communication and advertising, and 6) service offering. Service quality and consumer behaviours/ behavioural intentions are the most frequent topic analysed by researchers.

V. A. Zeithaml (2000) notes that in the last decade researchers found evidence about the profit consequences of service quality. The direct relationship between service quality and profitability, offensive and defensive effects of service quality, perceptions of service quality and behavioural intentions, the impact of selecting profitable customers and customer segments, key drivers of service quality, customer retention and profits were examined for to identify the impact of service quality on profit and other financial outcomes of the organization. She brings up

the following questions for future service research: what marketing and managerial variables moderate the relationship between service quality and profit; how service quality variables influence the customer retention and its financial outcomes; when customer purchase intentions and purchase behaviours coincide; how organization must identify, reach and respond to customers at different levels of their profitability; what the key drivers of behavioural intentions, purchase, customer retention and financial outcomes are. V. A. Zeithaml (2000) mentions that much research must reveal the evidence among quality, profitability, and the economic worth of customers and build a coherent and integrated body of knowledge.

A. V. Roth and L. J. Menor (2003) propose the five future research topics: 1) broadening service operations strategy, 2) redefining operations resources, 3) focus on customer experiences, 4) expanding service operations boundaries, and 5) issues implementing service technology and e-services. S. J. Grove, R. P. Fisk and J. John (2003) point to a set of ten different focuses of services. It can be organized under three broad headings: 1) nature of services (sub-headings: the framing of field of services, definitional issues, methods of inquiry, role of service marketer), 2) scope of services (sub-headings: international perspectives, societal and management issues) and 3) services and value creation (sub-headings: process and outcome issues, services and manufacturing).

The top issues in the future international service marketing research was stressed by P. Pauwels and K. Ruyter (2005). There are 1) the moderating effect of culture on the relationship between the intangibility of services and marketing performance,

2) cultural (mis)fit and the service seller-buyer dyad, 3) inward internationalization (cf. customers' mobility), 4) international outsourcing of services, 5) limits of ICT and internet in international service marketing, 6) network approach to international service marketing, 7) process of service internationalization beyond the start-up phase, 8) local service standardization versus adaptation, 9) pricing services across borders and 10) strategic and competitive strategies of global providers.

A. Parasuraman and D. Grewal (2000) outline a set of issues for research related to the quality-value-loyalty chain. These scholars emphasize the increasing importance of technology-customer, technology-employee, and technology-company linkages in serving customers. In our opinion this agenda implies a need and opportunities for both conceptual and empirical work addressing the various issues.

The importance of managing customer as assets continues to grow. V. Kumar, K. N. Lemon and A. Parasuraman (2006) identify some broad domains as research-worthy issues. The first issue is customer dynamics, in other words, the researchers need to understand the relationship between customer equity and brand equity over time. The second research field concerns the braking of traditional functional boundaries. It means that additional research is needed to understand how and where customer management touches the organization. The third, we need to continue research in order to understand how customers will use new technologies and how organizations could incorporate these technologies to grow the value of customer. The fourth, the segmentation based on customer-life-value and the customer selection becomes critical area for

the future research. Understanding how to develop, implement, manage, and monitor customer and brand management solutions across globe is fifth critical issue for future research. Additional research is required to understand how to incorporate market and competitive factors into customer management.

R. Rust (2004) highlights that service research the more and more becomes a mainstream subject in all business-related disciplines and must be inherently interdisciplinary and suggests that it is possible move the service research field forward not only by better serving the customer but and by designing efficient systems of service delivery, training and motivating service providers, using new technology, understanding how service affects the marketplace, etc.

We presented only some key areas in service marketing. The boundaries of service marketing research expand further, new questions and issues will emerge. A concentrated effort by scholars and practitioners will help address those questions and continue to enhance our knowledge in this vital marketing domain.

Research design is the second important question in service research. It could help answer a specific research problem (McDaniel, Gates, 2007). In preparing the research design one should evaluate the ratio of the price of the research and exactness level; think about accessibility of time and other recourses (Pellemans, 1999). This obligates the researcher to decide what nature of research will be and what data collection methods will be chosen. N. K. Malhotra et al. (1999) state that marketing research methods vary greatly, with each method having certain advantages and disadvantages, depending on research problem. The explora-

tory research is conducted to increase understanding of a concept, to clarify the exact nature of the problem or to identify importance variables to be studied, while the results of conclusive research help to make management decisions (Malhotra, 2002). The conclusive research is more formalized, structuralized, and it calculates on bigger representative sampling of the respondents and statistical analysis of received data. The researcher can choose quantitative and/or qualitative methods.

We think that knowledge of data collection methods and their suitable application shows the competence of the researcher. Ph. Kotler (1988) states that one good element of marketing research is an application of various research methods. The quantitative methods have dominated in marketing research for a long time. The most significant developments in survey sampling in the twentieth century, especially related to marketing research are discussed by S. Sudman and E. Blair (1999). In this study we will discuss characteristics of the qualitative methods. It is understandable that there are no special qualitative research data collection methods suitable only for service research. However, one can choose proper qualitative research data collection method only if he/she knows advantages and limitations of quantitative approach.

The qualitative research data collection methods can be 1) direct (focus group and depth interview), when the respondents are introduced with the research aims from the beginning of the interview, and 2) indirect (projective techniques), when the respondents do not know the research aim (Malhotra, 2002). Characteristics of qualitative research data collection methods are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

## Qualitative research data collection methods in service research

Group of methods	Data collection method	Advantages	Disadvantages	Possible application areas in service research
Direct	Focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Synergy effect;</li> <li>▪ Snowball effect (one participant's comments encourage other participants' activity);</li> <li>▪ Security, which is conditioned by participants similarity;</li> <li>▪ Spontaneity;</li> <li>▪ Intuitive insight.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Limited application area;</li> <li>▪ Data has exploratory character;</li> <li>▪ Special preparation of discussion moderator;</li> <li>▪ Non-structural data;</li> <li>▪ No representative data.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To determine customers' preferences and attitude to the service;</li> <li>▪ To design new service or to improve existing service features;</li> <li>▪ To test new advertisement ideas;</li> <li>▪ To estimate customers' attitude to the service price, etc.</li> </ul>
Direct	Depth interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Help to understand customer's outline;</li> <li>▪ Answer's owner is known;</li> <li>▪ Information exchange between interviewer and respondent is free and easy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Interviewer has big influence upon answers, because of interview structure absence;</li> <li>▪ Collected data quality strongly depends on interviewer competence;</li> <li>▪ It is difficult to analyse collected data;</li> <li>▪ Large financial expenditures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Comprehensive sounding about customer, e.g. before plastic operation;</li> <li>▪ To investigate confidential, sensitive customer's problems, e.g. customer's paying capacity;</li> <li>▪ Deep understanding of customer behaviour;</li> <li>▪ Concurrent, intermediaries investigation;</li> <li>▪ In situations then consumption is connected with mood and emotions.</li> </ul>
Indirect	Association techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The researcher gets answers to such questions that would not be answered if respondents know the research aim.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The high requirements for the preparation of the researcher;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Customers' attitude to product (service) mark.</li> </ul>
	Completion techniques		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Difficulties in the generalization of collected data.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To find possible conflicts' decisions.</li> </ul>
	Construction techniques			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To determine profile of the respondent and consumption's motives.</li> </ul>
	Expressive techniques			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Respondent's complaints analysis; to determine reasons why customers do not use services.</li> </ul>

The choice of the research method is influenced by information source. Information about services can be collected from internal and external customers, and from the competitors' customers, whom an organization wants to get on

its side (Berry, Parasuraman, 1996) or from the lost customers, also by analysing transactions between an organization and the customers, complaints, carrying out surveys of the employees and the intermediaries, observing the perception of

service, studying other researches' results, etc. (Palmer, 1998), government or commercial publications, data of different associations, etc. In other words, collecting secondary data (desk research) or primary data (field research) takes place.

## Research methods

Our study applies a two-stage research design that was chosen to determine service research areas and used methods in Lithuania. The first stage involves a quantitative assessment of the papers published in Lithuanian academic journals using a content analysis. This method provides a means for the objective, systematic, and quantitative consideration of published papers (Malhotra, 1999). We studied these academic journals: *Bridges, Business: Theory and Practice, Economic, Engineering Economics, Journal of Business Economics and Management, Management of Organizations: Systematic Research, Social Sciences, Transformations in Business and Economics* between 2002 and 2005. In searching papers we used the following keywords and phrases in their titles, abstracts, or keywords: *service, service organization, service provider, service client or customer, service delivery, service consumption, demand of the service, customer's expectations, satisfaction, loyalty, service market, service compatibility, service quality, innovations in services.*

The second stage expands on the findings from Stage 1 by incorporating a questionnaire survey of the Lithuanian researchers. The survey was realized via Internet. According to A. C. Burns and R. F. Bush (1998), e-mail data collection method is advantageous because it allows the respondents to choose own schedule

for responding. The questionnaire incorporated both open and close-ended questions grouped into two blocs: 1) selection of the service research area and methods, and 2) research organization as well as spread of the results. In the manner of speaking that shows us the competence of researcher. Besides, respondents were also asked to provide details of their research history.

The population considered in this part of the study consisted of Lithuanian researchers interested in service topic. Thus the respondents were selected considering the following criteria: 1) they had published a paper in journals that we analysed in Stage 1 of this study and 2) they work at Lithuanian universities. Total sample was 43 service researchers. The questionnaire was sent in June 2006 by e-mail after notifying respondents of our survey and requesting their participation. The responses were collected in less than two weeks.

## Research results

### Stage 1: content analysis

A total of 64 papers out of 1368 were found relevant to our study keywords. The papers on service topics consist only 5 per cent of total papers number. All papers were grouped in three research issues area: 1) market issues, 2) management issues and 3) customer issues. The details of researches issues and number of papers as references are summarised in Table 2. Based on a simple count of the number of papers, we identified that the market issues on fixed time period were investigated extensively (46.9 per cent of papers); customer issues were studied least (18.8 per cent).

The *market issues* of service research

Table 2

## The areas of service researches

Area	Number of papers	References
Market issues	30	
Service development, internationalization	21	[6], [7], [15], [17], [18], [21], [27], [28], [29], [37], [45], [46], [54], [60], [61], [67], [68], [70], [72], [74], [80]
Service accounting and finance	4	[35], [59], [66], [76]
Market assessment	2	[26], [69]
Infrastructure	2	[16], [83]
Demand of services	1	[9]
Management-side issues	22	
Innovations	7	[4], [14], [24], [25], [38], [39], [42]
Instruments of marketing (positioning, segmenting, communication means, conducting of the researches, etc.)	6	[5], [8], [23], [71], [73], [82]
Competitive ability	3	[36], [55], [76]
Staff of service organizations	3	[1], [12], [81]
Marketing strategy	2	[3], [30]
Productivity	1	[58]
Customer-side issues	12	
Service quality	5	[11], [22], [52], [53], [79]
Customer behaviour	4	[32], [33], [50], [77]
Customer attraction, retention, loyalty	3	[2], [64], [65]
<b>Total:</b>	<b>64</b>	

contain service development and internationalization, accounting and finance of services, market assessment, and infrastructure. In 2002-2005 the main research topics were service development and internationalization. Most of the papers presented situations in the tourism, insurance and banking service sectors; some researchers analyzed consulting, catering, retailing, university, and telecom services market problems. Only one paper presents the results of comparative research in consulting services market of three transition economies (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) during nine years.

The *management-side issues* of service activity include the papers that focus on the demand of services, innovations, instruments of marketing (positioning,

segmenting, communication means, conducting of the researches, etc.), competitive ability, and staff of service organizations, marketing strategy, and productivity. The publications on service innovation and marketing instruments' compose numerous parts of this paper group. Marketing strategy and service productivity attract least attention. The researches covered financial, rural tourism, international carrier, consulting, retailing, and university services.

The *customer-side issues* in service researches are concerned with service quality, customer behaviour, customer attraction, retention and loyalty. It is obviously that the researchers' attention for interested issues is divided almost into equal parts. There were analyzed tour-

ism, health care, and telecommunications services.

Our other focus in the papers' content analysis was on the nature of service research and data collection methods. We went deep into researches' aims and methodology. We identified that 30 papers present results of exploratory research, 33 – of descriptive and only 1 of causal research out of 64 studied papers. The researchers that did exploratory research used the methods of scientific literature and document analysis, questionnaire, case analysis, experts' survey and content analysis. The analysis of scientific literature as data methods used mostly (74 per cent of all exploratory researches). In other words, the researchers narrowed to the secondary data. The scientific literature analysis can provide insight into a service subject. The use of exploratory research reveals that the researchers seek to familiarize him/herself with the problem or concept to be studied, and generate hypotheses (definition of hypothesis) to be tested. We identified more variety of data collection methods used for descriptive research. The researchers utilised questionnaire, interview, phone survey, case and statistical data analysis. The most frequently used data collection method was questionnaire representing 39.4 per cent of all indicated methods used for descriptive research.

It will be observed that the results of such research cannot represent the situation in whole service sector in Lithuania, but it shows certain tendencies of research methodological reasoning.

### **Stage 2: survey**

Responses were received from 11 respondents, resulting in an estimated response rate of 26 per cent. Thus, our survey should be considered as essentially

exploratory. The conclusions from the survey results analysis are applicable only to the respondents' group that took part in the research.

The sample of respondents was young researchers; the major part of them investigates services less than 10 years. 8 out of 11 began their service research career during doctoral thesis preparation. The main competence development activities are literature studies and learning from more experienced colleagues (11 and 8 respectively).

One group of our survey questions addresses how the researchers select the inquire area and methods. We asked respondents about their scientific interests, common aims of the researches and data collection methods. The majority of respondents (9 out of 11) indicated that systematically accomplished inquiries in the same service field. The respondents note four areas of service research in average. 7 out of 11 respondents are interested in customers' needs and expectations, and service quality aspects, 5 out of 11 – in competition and competitive ability, customer satisfaction and loyalty. The investigation of problem (situation) and the attempt to offer the solutions were indicated as researches' motives by most respondents (10 answers). Other motives are the determinations of reasons and the results of certain phenomena (7 answers respectively). The most frequently mentioned data collection methods are questionnaire (10 answers), interview and experts' survey (8 answers respectively).

Our next survey questions group intend to examine how the researchers arrange an inquiry and how they spread results. Concerning the research timing the answers were follows: 22 per cent of time the respondents devote to analyse

scientific literature, 17 per cent – to formulate the research methodology, 22 per cent – to collect data, 13 per cent – to analyse the collected data, 27 per cent of all – to prepare report or scientific paper. According to 10 out of 11 respondents, in some cases it is purposeful to use the research methodology prepared and approved by other researchers. We identified some differences in responses between young (less than ten-year experience researchers) and most experienced respondents. Researchers who study service less than 10 years the biggest part of their time devote for scientific literature analysis, researchers with less than 5 years experience – 1/3 of time. The preparation of the report or scientific paper (except in researchers' group with 6-10 year experience, who more of the time uses on tabling, processing and analysing the collected data than on paper writing) takes the second position by time resources. Respondents, irrespective of experience, less of time devote to research methodology preparation than on scientific literature analysis or paper writing.

Furthermore, the respondents were asked to describe their research team in terms of the size, involvement of students, the competence of the researchers and major problems. The majority of respondents (7 out of 11) noted that they form the research teams a size less than 10 members. Besides, the majority of respondents marks that they usually involve graduate or postgraduate students in research teams. We asked the respondents what they thought about competence of Lithuanian researchers working at universities as well. 7 respondents expressed their opinion. 5 out of 7 considered that the researchers' competence was high; re-

search results were interesting and have an applied value. On the contrary, 2 respondents stated that the competence of most researchers was questionable, researches were fragmentary and results were not significant. According to the respondents, seeking better quality of Lithuanian service research, the researchers desiderate the cooperation (10 answers), development of competence (8 answers), and financial support (6 answers). One respondent pointed the need of initiative researchers who compared experience and used existing opportunities better. Moreover, the respondents pointed to these problems of researches: lack of knowledge (for example, ignorance of statistical methods), the reliability of available information, and cultural differences in international research projects, inadequate finance, the lack of business organizations goodwill to university researchers and reluctance of people to participate in concrete investigation.

We were interested how the respondents disseminated the research results as well. All respondents reported that they diffused the research results publishing papers in scientific journals and present them in seminars and conferences (10 respondents out of 11). That is not surprising as respondents indicated that they got to know innovations in Lithuanian service research by systematic review of scientific journals. The most popular of them: *Engineering Economics*, *Management of Organizations: Systematic Research* (9 answers respectively), and *Social Sciences* (8 answers). However, the discussions about presented results in scientific journals are rare. The majority of respondents (7 answers) stated that they very seldom get feedback from colleagues after publishing research results.

## Discussion

The results of the content analysis present that the researchers are more interested in service market (macro level) than in organization level. However, the topics of researches partially correspond to the world tendencies. We failed to notice the papers that create new knowledge about services, disclose changes in service paradigm, service input into economic, information technology influence on services; there is no discussion about transition from products to services. Moreover, as we can claim from the results of the content analysis, the needs of service customers, expectations, service customer and provider interaction, aspects of customer behaviour are weakly researched and presented in academic journals. Contrary to the results of the content analysis, the survey findings show that majority of respondents work on customer issues. Furthermore, during analysed period dominating research aspect is services to customer. Fast development of business to business services, except logistic and banking services, does not attract proper attention from the researchers. We should mention, as positive aspect, that most researchers study one chosen service group. Such concentration enables a researcher to identify different aspects of the service.

The findings on data collection methods are quite mixed. The results of the content analysis demonstrate that an exploratory research type is very frequent. However, the papers based only on scientific literature analysis dominate. Similarly, the spectrum of the qualitative research data collection methods is narrow. We were unsuccessful to find a paper with such data collection methods as informal discussions with consumers,

employees, management or competitors, and focus groups, projective methods, or pilot studies that are typical in exploratory research type. However, the importance of the qualitative research increases, as the researchers begin their professional service researches during PhD studies and later follow-up their results. Thus they are important contributions to the creation of new knowledge. Although, positive trend is that the researchers use qualitative methods together with quantitative ones. We suppose that the wide use of exploratory research has two limitations: 1) results do not become basis for management decisions, and 2) research does not have succession and does not disclose service shift tendencies. Thus the researchers should not limit their research only with secondary data and do more field research. Furthermore, we guess that the spectrum of applied data collection methods is narrow as the researchers do not know all possible methods or are not able to use them. The application of various methods requires not only competence, but also a large amount of financial and human resources. However, the universities' researchers expressed that one of the main problems is lack of the finance. Besides, they note that normally they work in small research teams (less than 10 members). If so, research teams have limited financial possibilities. Moreover, our findings raise a concern about Lithuanian researches actuality, timely and position in the world service research environment. In particular, this concern is important as Lithuanian academic journals become public to the world community and most of them publish papers in English. Theoretical papers based on literature review and presenting main tendencies in world

service researches are needed, but the researchers should take the priority of empirical surveys of Lithuanian service market.

In addition, from the results of the content analysis we should note that the researchers pay little attention to research methodology and present it incompletely. Referring to the survey results, the researchers spend almost one fourth of all time to prepare the research methodology. Besides, respondents spared less of their research time on research methodology preparation than on scientific literature analysis or paper writing. This may be explanations why the researchers do not present the research method and research organization questions, do not discuss the formation of questionnaire, the arguments why the researcher uses one or another data collection method, the information how he/she sampled the respondents, do not present research time and place in their papers. Also, there are papers, the authors of which do not present research aim and nature. The respondents acclaim that it would be valuable to use methodology of other researchers for the comparative analysis. However, this is impossible today because the methodology is described in many papers unclear. Weak methodological preparation could not give good research results.

Finally, our findings show that the main sources to spread the research results are the papers in scientific journals, and presentations in seminars and conferences. However, it would be valuable for the researchers to think about their research results presentation for the general public and business people, especially, seeking to be close to the business reality and foster a sense of community among researchers

and service business managers.

Summing up we could mention that cooperation among researchers is one premise for the development of the quality of Lithuanian service research. It may result in integrated research in the future, discussions and analysis about published papers and their comments. Another form for the researchers' competence development may be the organization of the researchers' network. The main objectives of network would be to share information, to provide professional development, to cultivate research in the field of service business, to support researchers. Mutual efforts of the researchers from network can be used to find financial support, to make better quality and bigger amount service research not only locally, but also internationally.

### **Limitations and future research**

The present study has several limitations. First, we examined only scholarly papers, but other outlets also publish service research papers. Conference proceedings, scientific monographs, reports provided by the researcher groups and dissertations are also important sources of service research. Second, we have selected a four year period for our study. A longer period may be important to identify strengths and weaknesses, the progress and directions of service research in Lithuania. By looking for leading service research groups in Lithuanian academic institutions and their research priorities, it would be valuable to examine the published authors by their work place and position. Third, we used questionnaire and small sample of the respondents in Stage 2. We suppose that an exhaustive inter-

view with service researchers and more samples may disclose more details on how they select the research area and methods, how they prepare the research methodology and spread the results. Moreover, such a discussion would be valuable to get forecasts for the future of service research in Lithuania. Also, it may initiate the cooperation among researchers. Though, we are confident that the findings presented in our study reflect the main tendencies in service research in Lithuania. We encourage researchers to compare the situations of countries with strong service researchers' school (for example, Sweden, France) as well as other countries with developing economies, where social sciences do not have long historical research traditions and the experience of service researchers is just starting to develop. This information may be meaningful for the service researchers.

## Conclusions

By adopting a two-stage research design incorporating content analysis and questionnaire survey, this study has improved the understanding of service research areas and data collection methods used by Lithuanian service researchers working at universities. The content analysis of the papers published in Lithuanian academic journals between 2002 and 2005 identifies that service market issues and specifically the topics of service development and internationalization are the most important area within service

research, it also discloses that mostly service researches are exploratory. Besides, papers based only on scientific literature analysis without empirical data are dominating.

The data gathered from the survey of Lithuanian service researchers working at universities, revealed that the biggest number of our respondents were interested in customer issues. This survey also confirmed that exploratory research was more frequent. The most often data collection methods used were questionnaire, interview and experts' survey. The researchers give less importance to methodology preparation than other research activities. The team of researchers, despite involved students, is small. Main problems pointed out are lack of the finance and the business organizations not-goodwill to university researchers. Also, the results report that the main means to disseminate the research results are the papers in scientific journals, the seminars and conferences. However, the feedback from other researchers is rare.

The researchers should pay more attention to empirical surveys and preparation of research methodology, especially the selection of data collection method in the future. In order to get better research quality and solve the problem of insufficient financing the Lithuanian researchers should seek for cooperation. It is necessary to collaborate with service researchers from foreign countries and to use all possibilities to do a comparative analysis of various aspects of the service field.

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Liudmila BAGDONIENĖ, Jurgita ZEMBLYTĖ

## PASLAUGŲ TYRIMŲ SRITYS IR METODAI: LIETUVOS SITUACIJOS ANALIZĖ

### S a n t r a u k a

Stiprios konkurencijos sąlygomis marketingo tyrimų informacija yra lemiamą priimant vadybos sprendimus. Vakarų šalių mokslininkų nuomone, pastaraisiais dešimtmečiais sparčiausiai auga paslaugų marketingo tyrimų svarba. Straipsnio tikslas – ištirti, kokias paslaugų sritis ir kokiais metodais tyrinėja Lietuvos universitetuose dirbantys paslaugų tyrėjai.

Paslaugų prigimtis lemia tiriamų sričių įvairovę, todėl pirmojoje straipsnio dalyje aptariami O. Furrer ir P. Sollberger (2006), V. A. Zeithaml (2000), A. V. Roth ir L. J. Menor (2003), P. Pauwels ir K. Ruyter (2005), A. Parasuraman ir D. Grewal (2000) požiūriai į tiriamus paslaugų marketingo aspektus. Nepaisant kai kurių skirtumų, daugeliu atveju minėti mokslininkai akcentuoja paslaugų kokybės ir vartotojų patenkinimą, santykius su vartotojais ir jų išlaikymą, paslaugų kokybės ir pelningumo sąsajas, technologijų diegimą, kainodaros ir kitus tyrimus, ypač tarptautiniu lygmeniu. Straipsnyje aptarti tik svarbiausi, bet toli gražu ne visi, paslaugų marketingo tyrimų aspektai. Kitas svarbus paslaugų marketingo tyrimų klausimas yra tyrimo metodologinė prieiga ir jos sąlygojami duomenų rinkimo metodai. P. Pellemans (1999) tvirtina, kad tyrimo metodologijos parengimas įpareigoja tyrėją įvertinti tyrimo kainą ir tikslumo lygmenį, laiko ir kitų išteklių prieinamumą. Taigi tyrėjas turi nuspręsti, koks bus tyrimo pobūdis ir metodai. Straipsnyje aptariami duomenų rinkimo metodų privalumai ir ribotumai ir jų tinkamumas vykdant žvalgomąjį (angl. *exploatory research*) ir išvadų (angl. *conclusive research*) tyrimus.

Antrojoje straipsnio dalyje pateikiama empirinio tyrimo metodika, kurioje aptariama tyrimo eiga ir pagrindžiami duomenų gavimui taikomi turinio (angl. *content*) analizės ir apklausos metodai.

Trečiojoje dalyje aptariami 2002-2005 m.

Lietuvos universitetų mokslo žurnaluose skelbti straipsniai, nagrinėjantys paslaugų problematiką, (raktiniai žodžiai: paslauga, paslaugų organizacija, paslaugų teikėjas, paslaugų vartotojas (klientas) paslaugų teikimas, paslaugų vartojimas, paslaugų paklausa, paslaugų vartotojų lūkesčiai, pasitenkinimas, lojalumas, paslaugų rinka, paslaugų kokybė, paslaugų inovacijos) ir Lietuvos universitetuose dirbančių bei paslaugų tyrimus vykdančių mokslininkų ir doktorantų apklausos rezultatai. Rezultatai rodo, kad didžiausias dėmesys tiriant paslaugas skiriamas makro (rinkos), o ne mikro (organizacijos) lygmens problemoms. Daugeliu atveju tiriamos tos paslaugų sritys, kurių svarbą akcentuoja žinomiausi Vakarų šalių mokslininkai – paslaugų vartotojų lūkesčiai, vartotojų ir paslaugų teikėjų sąveika, paslaugų vartotojų elgsenos ypatumai, paslaugų internacionalizacija ir kt. Tačiau nepavyko rasti straipsnių, kuriuose būtų nagrinėjama paslaugų paradigmos kaitos, paslaugų indėlio ekonomikai ir gamybinių įmonių veiklos rezultatams, informacinių technologijų įtakos paslaugoms ir kt. problematika. Pažymėtina ir tai, kad tyrėjai savo dėmesį sukoncentruoja į vieną paslaugų grupę – paslaugas galutiniams vartotojams (paslaugos, teikiamos organizacijoms, tiriamos retai). Išanalizavus atliekamų tyrimų pobūdį paaiškėjo, kad tyrėjai dažniau atlieka žvalgomuosius tyrimus. Tą pačią tendenciją rodo ir Lietuvos universitetuose dirbančių paslaugų tyrėjų apklausos rezultatai. Iš taikomų duomenų rinkimo metodų vyrauja mokslinės literatūros analizė. Kitų kokybinių metodų spektras ribotas. Gilesnius ir įvairesnius paslaugų tyrimus riboja menki tyrėjų išteklių, ypač finansiniai. Apibendrinant galima teigti, kad tyrimų, kurie aptarti išnagrinėtuose straipsniuose, rezultatai negali būti konkrečių vadybinių sprendimų pagrindu, be to, jie neatspindi paslaugų kaip ekonominės veiklos pokyčių tendencijų.