

## Management of Customer Participation in Public Services: a Case of Townships<sup>1</sup> of Lithuania

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### Abstract

The article analyzes an important object of marketing researches: management of customer participation in public services. In the article there is substantiated the approach to analysis of management of customer participation as separate but interrelated activities. Following the attitude that active customer participation is necessary in services that create individual value in direct interaction with a service provider, the results of a qualitative research carried out in townships of Lithuania are presented. The research has identified the measures actually used at townships for management of customer participation in services.

**Keywords:** customer participation, management of customer participation, coproduction of services, public services, townships of Lithuania.

### Introduction

Customer participation in services is a subject of marketing researches in scholarly literature dealing with cases of both private and public sectors. Contrary to a popular belief, a client in marketing is not treated as a passive demander whose every caprice must be satisfied. The theory of services marketing emphasizes an important role of customer participation in service, this role gives an opportunity for customers to influence the results of services, to carry out a part of activities of service provision, to share own knowledge with an organisation, to devote own time and other resources for achievement of joint result of effort of provider and customer: an efficiently provided service. The literature distinguishes levels of activeness in participation in services: from passive participant to the one actively engaging in joint (together with service provider) service producing activities. At different levels a customer performs different roles that determine different benefit of participation both to the client and to the service provider. Be-

nefit of customer participation has been proven by research, but the question of how to manage customer participation (particularly in public services) has been little analyzed.

Customer participation in services is natural: a service cannot be provided without customer participation of some form, but to achieve higher level of participation of customers the participation must be managed. In that case a customer becomes not a passive receiver of services, but a coproducer of these services. This perspective provides for possibilities to lower costs of provision of public services and to increase customer satisfaction, what is particularly important in public sector. The named aspects ground the **relevance** and timeliness of the topic under investigation. To achieve an active involvement of a customer, it is necessary to create a model of management of customer participation in public services. For this purpose it is required not only to build on what has been done on the subject in the business sector, but also to identify what is exceptionally related to public sector. Petukiene, the co-author of the present article, with a view to create such a model has carried out theoretical and empirical researches, one of which is qualitative interview. This article presents the results of the first part of the empirical research (the already-mentioned interview), on the basis of which the model will be constructed. Therefore, the **aim of the article** is upon completion of analysis of activities of management of customer participation in services to identify the means of activities of management that are used at townships of Lithuania. To fulfil the first part of the aim the authors used the methods of research literature analysis and systematization, to fulfil the second one they used semi-structured qualitative interview, for generalization of the results of which the method of qualitative content analysis was used.

Acknowledging that customer participation manifests in services sector that is characterized by personal interactions of customer and service provider,

<sup>1</sup> Approximate translation for the smallest administrative division (in Lithuanian language called *seniūnija*) in Lithuania. Translation variants for this Lithuanian term exist: seniūnija is sometimes translated into English as ward, neighbourhood, elder parish, or local authority.

for the empirical research were selected townships of Lithuania as public sector institutions that are the closest to customers of services and that are in direct contact with these customers. According to Boyle et al. (2006, p. 98), coproduction is best organized exactly through local institutions. Despite the fact that due to the lack of economic and financial freedom townships usually formally perform a role of administrator of services, in reality, however, they are the centres of community attraction, the institutions that identify and tackle local problems. In other words, relations between a township and residents are linked through mechanisms of production-provision of services, regardless of what role in this case the township plays in the context of state politics and according to the law. Furthermore, according to Raipa (2007, p. 12), despite limitations of financial capabilities, the needs of and demands from citizens and their groups to public institutions are growing without cease.

Carrying out a research at townships is also important because a township is not a typical organization of the public sector (by its relation to customer it can be equated to municipality and police only). The conclusions of research carried out so far are drawn on the basis of different samples, where respondents differ depending on their social and cultural environment in the country, these pieces of research also represent different types of services, therefore it is hardly possible to unequivocally claim that there is enough clear evidence about universality of management of customer participation in services and its applicability not only to different sectors of services, but also to culturally distinctive environments. Thereby the **subject** of the research is Lithuanian townships-run activities of management of customer participation in public services (management in this paper is seen as focused influence on customer's behaviour through different yet interrelated activities).

Because the results presented in this article will later be used in creating a model of management of customers' participation in a service, the attitude that this must be done by referring to management practice that actually exists in this field is followed. Also important is the fact that in scientific literature the aspects of management of customer participation are analyzed more in cases of services provided by business sector, moreover, experience of business organizations cannot be unconditionally transferred to public sector, comprehensive theoretical analysis of means of activities of management of customer participation in the mentioned context is not expedient. In this paper with a view to identify the means of activities of management of customer participation a qualitative research is carried out, the *aim* of which is to identify the actually used means of management

of customer participation in public services. Therefore the **problem** can be defined by such question: *how (by what means) to manage customer participation so that they become coproducers of public services at townships of Lithuania?*

In addition to the above-mentioned arguments for novelty of the research, it must be mentioned that management of customer participation in coproducing public services remains insufficiently substantiated both theoretically and methodologically (in Lithuania, no research of this kind has been carried out so far as well). In the analyzed literature on public administration the perspective of customer participation in public services is usually presented on abstract, declarative level, or interest is paid to practical aspects only. Having analyzed more than 100 sources, we could not find even a definition of management of customer participation. This paper not only presents the definition (formulated by the authors of this paper) of management of customer participation in services, but also identifies management activities and means actually used at townships of Lithuania.

### **Management of customer participation in public services: theoretical approach**

“Customer” and “marketing” in public sector is increasingly more rarely criticised. According to McGuire (2003, p. 9), although competition and possibility for users to choose are still limited in many public services, but metaphor of a “customer” was brought to public services with a view to shift the emphasis of provision of services from programs and suppliers to users and results, as a result of this marketing has become an integral part of management of public sector organisations in many developed countries of the world. Despite this insight, we will first briefly discuss the validity of the concept of *customer* in public sector.

Appearance of the concept of *customer* in academic and practical discussions of public sector is related to the idea of the New Public Management (hereinafter referred to as NPM). The task for public administration functioning according to the principles of the NPM is to provide citizens with the services they need. A citizen is begun to be seen not as a subordinate, but as a customer who, by paying taxes to the state, also demands from it provision of high quality services (Vanagas, 2006, p. 161). According to Rosen (2007, p. 13), a customer is the one who is being provided with *services* (such as production of the public sector) produced by establishments. This attitude is supported by many authors, for example, by Doole et al. (2005, p. 25), who maintain that buyers of services are often referred to as customers, and Sias (2008,

p.156), cited by Merriam-Webster (2003), is also of opinion that a customer is the one who uses professional advice or *services* of others, or the one who is serviced by or uses services of a social institution. Gray (2007, p. 5) claims that in services where a person's participation in a service is a must for its results to be achieved, they (persons) are called customers, and adds that a customer is a common term for public services. On the other hand, it is very difficult to identify the boundaries separating different roles of people in the case of public services, therefore in order not to go too much into terminological discussions about the boundaries of one or another term a construct of a customer is deliberately used. It must be added that some authors question validity of the concept of a *customer* in specific conditions of a public sector (Alford, 2002 a, p. 337), because this concept does not properly describe the relations among governmental agencies and members of society, and is understood as depreciation of citizens, reduction of them (their role) to passive recipients of a service instead as treating them as active intermediaries. Such and similar contemplations of the authors are far from the concept of modern marketing, where "profitable" user is no longer emphasized, but different role of a customer is considered: the role that requires relations, but not transactions in the process of exchange.

Customer participation is a concept of behaviour, therefore management of participation is associated in this article to management of customer's behaviour, i.e., to giving a formative influence to customer behaviour in the desired direction – towards higher level of participation. Aiming at managing customer's participative behaviour it is important to identify roles of customers, their tasks, to be able to teach them to carry out those tasks, through application of appropriate stimulants to impact customers so that they get actively involved into the process of service production.

More and more frequent request for *customers* to participate in production of services they are provided with creates many questions that should be discussed; this requires separate researches (Evans et al., 2008). Physical participation of customers in services is matter-of-course, a naturally occurring phenomenon: a service cannot be provided without customer participation of some form, but to achieve higher level of participation of customers the *customer participation must be managed*. In the analyzed literature can be found analyses of separate processes related to management of customer participation in service as well as their constituent components that in the present article are called the activities of *management of customer participation*.

Because management materializes through specific tasks and their sequences, it is better to analy-

ze management of customer participation as composition of certain activities. According to Melnikas (2002, p. 298), every system of management must involve a complex of interrelated and coordinated means and opportunities, the entirety of which could ensure the fulfilment of aims and interests of the subject of management by exerting formative managing influence on the subjects of management and at the same time guarantee that in the subject of management the tasks set for it are being fully performed and functions delegated to it are fully realized. Accordingly, in order to manage customer participation in a service so that the customers become coproducers of services, it is necessary to exert a formative influence on them; this influence must be a performance of different yet interrelated activities.

In this article the activities of management of customer participation in public services are defined as activities initiated and performed by an organization, the entirety of which as well as combinations of means used in them enable achievement of efficient participation of customers of public services. Activities of management of customer participation are organization's formal actions that are aimed at influencing behaviour of customers so that they would want to, would be able and would understand how to actively participate in coproduction of services, or that are directed at efficient use of resources (knowledge, skills, time, physical efforts, etc.) possessed by customers in coproduction of services. The attitude maintained is that combinations of individual means of activities of management of customer participation differently affect the expression of participation in the service. Activities of *management of customer participation* are associated with *selection of customers*, their *teaching* and *motivation*. It is possible to give such a generalization after systematization of insights of such authors as Mills and Morris (1986), Bowen (1986), Schneider and Bowen (1995), Rodie and Kleine (2000), Lengnick-Hall et al. (2000), Bettencourt et al. (2002), Groth (2005), Bowers and Martin (2007) that the carried out research into participation in services allows to assume that efficient participation of customers in coproduction of a service can be achieved *by increasing role clarity, by teaching and motivating the customers*.

Having compared the participation of employees of an organisation and its customers, Mills and Morris (1986) claimed that for customers to successfully perform their roles in services it is necessary to manage them as employees of the organisation. Because role clarity, competencies and motivation are important in performance of work by employees, the mentioned authors offered to apply to customers the same management strategies that are applied to em-



ployees. As Kuusisto and Paallysaho (2008, p. 17) have noticed, Mills and Morris (1986) have proposed two main ways that services organizations can use to ensure the desired performance of customers: *customer selection* and *customer socialization* by instructing them in the area important for participation in the service. Therefore, efficient coproduction of services depends both on voluntary actions of customers and on presence of meaningful opportunities and means for their participation (Gittel 1980; Pammer 1992; Sharp 1980, cited from Marschall, 2004, p. 232).

Anticipating that customers can and want to perform appropriate roles, potential participants of coproduction of services are selected. Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons (2004, p. 405) call it the selection of suitable customers. For the customers who lack knowledge or skills to perform the roles the teaching strategies are applied, because according to Pestoff (2004), citizens (customers), however, usually lack readiness and experience to perform active roles in public services. Bowers and Martin (2007) maintain that customers must be taught in the same way as organization would teach its employees. It is likely that customers will perform their roles more efficiently if they are rewarded for that (Kotze, Plessis, 2003), therefore customers must have motivation to participate in production of services (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2000; Bowers and Martin, 2007, p. 93). To trigger such behaviour, an organization must offer the customer things that that customer values. For this reason it must strive as much as possible to better understand what a customer wants (Kotler 1972, cited from Alford, 1998).

To summarize it can be said that selection of customers is choosing appropriate customer for performance of appropriate role, teaching him/her – providing with knowledge and skills lacking for performance of appropriate role, and motivation – increasing willingness and interest of a customer to properly perform the roles.

## **Methodology of the empirical research**

To gather the data for empirical research a qualitative research approach was chosen. Individual focused (semi-structured) interview with employees of townships of Lithuania was selected as a source of data for research. The participants of the interview were 12 informants from 8 townships.

Focused interview is most appropriate when carrying out qualitative research (Bitinas et al., 2008, p. 8). Peculiarity of qualitative research in which the generalization of managerial experience is important is that the researched must be a person who can and wants to provide comprehensive information necessary for questions formulated by the researcher to be answered (Bitinas et al., 2008, p. 137). Taking this at-

titude the research sample was drawn based on principle of snowball sampling, which enabled us to select townships active in respect of residents' participation. *The main aim of the qualitative research was to identify the means of activities of management of customer participation in services.* It is important to mention that is only the first stage of the empirical research, the results of which are presented in this article. During the second stage quantitative research (interviewing of active customers) was carried out in order to find out the influence of application of means of activities of management of customer participation on activeness of customer participation. However, the results of the second part of the research will not be presented in this article.

In the course of the research it came out that the townships that had already participated in the research did not represent the universe sufficiently. For this reason in this qualitative research the mixed purposeful selection was applied, it is used when it turns out that certain representatives of the universe are missing and therefore validity of the research cannot be ensured. Accordingly, later in the research (the first five interviews having been done) criterion selection was applied; it is the selection when units of the sample are selected from the population according to the criteria laid down by the researcher (Bitinas et al., 2008, p. 101). In this case the following criteria were distinguished: type of township according to village-town dimension; distance from centre of the region, economic-financial independence; level of activation of customer participation. This was aimed at satisfying the condition of maximally different variants, i.e., aiming at saturation of the sample.

Sample size was not planned in advance, because in qualitative researches the problem of sample size is not very important (Bitinas et al., 2008, p. 104), much more important is informative capacity of the data. For this reason the data were collected until they started to repeat themselves and their informative capacity diminished apparently and, as it was already mentioned, until townships represented by the informants satisfied the condition of maximally different variants.

Lithuania is currently divided into 10 counties and 60 municipalities, in them 551 townships are formed, of these townships 37 are town townships, 450 village townships, and others are of mixed type (data of LSSA). Though only 8 townships participated in the research, they satisfy the essential criterion of selection of the sample: activeness of both residents and employees of townships in joint activities that produce public services. Therefore, in the research participated 3 town-type (1 city and 2 region centres) and 5 village-type townships (being in varying distances from region centres and different in size according to

number of residents and settlements) from 5 different municipalities of Lithuania. The geographical distribution of the townships included western, northern, and central Lithuania. The research was carried out during June-August of 2009.

The interview with employees (elders<sup>2</sup> and social workers) of townships was conducted by visiting them at their workplaces. This was arranged in advance with agreement of the heads of the townships, day and time of the meeting were coordinated. The interviews took place at work room of an elder and/or a social worker, in familiar environment, thus aiming to create stimulating conditions for the informant to openly talk about the situation, express his/her personal opinion. Ideas said by the respondent during the interview were fixed in the prepared report. No informant agreed to talk with presence of recording equipment. Course of research allowed in the constructivist approach was used during interview: free form of expression of thoughts by the informant, enabling his/her subjectivity to manifest (i.e., enabling the reflection of the experience). Anonymity was ensured for the informants, this is in compliance with the ethics of any social research.

The interview data were analyzed by applying the method of qualitative content analysis. Mayring (cited from Zydziunaite et al., 2005, p. 25) notes that content analysis is a valid method allowing for specific conclusions to be drawn based on the text analyzed. The text of verbatim report of the interview was read many times. Remarks, reflections were written in the notes, this enabled to classify the data into topics and subtopics. The reflections of the authors of the research were complemented with experience of what was more felt. For evaluation of interpretations and conclusions to be possible, the excerpts from the interview are presented, without avoiding the usage of personal and informal language. Although qualitative research is subjective, relationship of the investigator to the informant impacts interpretation of the data, but subjective knowledge is also valuable and can exist in parallel with the objective knowledge.

### **Management of customer participation in townships of Lithuania: activities and means**

Going back to the theoretical bases of the research it must be mentioned that the following activities of customer participation in services were identified: *selection*, *teaching*, and *motivation*, therefore with orientation being towards the latter the focused questions allowed to identify the actually used means

<sup>2</sup> Approximate translation for the official representative/leader (in Lithuanian language called *seniūnas*) of the smallest administrative division in Lithuania; without reference to age.

of management of participation of local people at the townships that had been researched.

**Selection.** The informants were first asked about how the potential coproducers' characteristics necessary for playing active roles in services (character traits, overall activeness, attitudes towards participation, values, etc.) as well as resources possessed by customers (time, money, knowledge, competences, etc.) are identified.

After summarizing the cases mentioned by the informants, the following forms of *selection* of customers according to their personal features and possessed resources for participation can be distinguished: *direct* form of selection means that township itself without help of any intermediaries identifies the possibilities for participation of a potential customer; *personal* means that during identification of possibilities higher or lower personal contact exists; *indirect-impersonal* means that mass means of information of customers are applied in hope that the customers themselves will decide about their own possibilities to participate in production of a specific service. *Indirect-impersonal* form of customer selection presupposes building of social networks, and vice versa: the actually existing social networks guarantee the more or less efficient process of customer selection. Based on the opinions of the informants, local social networks are characterized more as informal, cooperative, open, consisting of persons, formal and informal groups. Such forms of selection are specific to townships. The latter forms and means of customer selection that are used in activities of townships reflect the situation with financial-economic independence of the townships. It can be stated that activities of customer *selection* are actually conducted, but quite differently, because expression and dynamics depend on personal qualities and competences of the governor.

Identifying the cases of coproduction at a township the informants used to state that customers must possess abilities and resources necessary for performance of more active roles in production of services. Most often the respondents mentioned that selection of customers is made according to features of behaviour, usefulness, convenience, activeness and other resources, of which the most important are *occupational competences* (e.g., joiner, social worker); *money* (in this case the opinions were divided: in townships of more village-type it was noticed that better well-off people are attributed to the group of potential coproducers, while in townships of more city-type, on the contrary, better well-off people are not seen as potential coproducers (elder of a village-type township: "usually the rich ones are not active. They care about their own matters")); *experience in participation* (elder of a village-type township: "practically I invite

the same people, they are our regular helpers here”; another elder of a village-type township: “he is doing this not for the first time, so I ask him to help”; another elder of a village-type township: “by communicating you see over a long time who can do what”).

Customer’s *convenience* that is an important criterion for selection and that refers to person’s style of communication, tolerance, cooperativeness was mentioned as much as in eight cases, in various senses. Semantics of this category is oriented towards two connotations: *mature person* and *convenient goodness*. A *mature person* means a personality characterized by tolerance, self-discipline, sense of belonging to community, constructive dialogue, and orientation towards solving of problems instead of searching for those guilty of the problems that emerged. The metaphor of *convenient goodness* expresses iden-

tity of a person who causes no trouble, does not complain, does not threaten with courts, etc. “Convenient goodness”, according to Ruskus (2006), is appreciated in society, but this form of behaviour means destructive relationship.

All means of *selection* applied at townships for customer participation and identified during the qualitative research can be classified into two types (see Table 1): *delegation (assignment of responsibility)* and *voluntary self-determination*. Most often delegation is on voluntary basis as well, but personal delegation to participate in production of services, obligation to take responsibility also means recognition of customer’s competence, respect, and assumption can be made that it presupposes higher motivation to more actively participate in production of services.

Table 1

**Means and types of customer selection that are applied by townships**

Types of means of selection	Means
Delegation	Personal request by elder, other employees of the township
	Customer as a potential coproducer is personally delegated by other customers
	By efforts of formal local institutions a potential coproducer is not only identified, but also personally asked to participate in a particular service
	By efforts of local institutions a member who belongs/belonged to the institution is delegated
Voluntary self-determination	By efforts of organizations of civil society a potential coproducer is identified and delegated
	At meeting of residents the areas that require coproduction are presented expecting customers’ voluntary self-determination
	Customers independently search for information in environment of local community
	Customers independently search for information in environment of local institutions
	Customers independently search for/find information in local means of information dissemination
	Customers independently search for/find information in environment of local organizations of civil society

In case of *delegation* group of means of selection the governing subject has already identified the potential possibilities of the customer (based on previous experience) to perform certain roles in service so the customer is personally asked (or certain tasks are delegated to him) as efficient performer of a necessary role in production of service.

In most cases the informants have mentioned that the best results can be achieved by making use of personal relations and contacts with a particular customer who has necessary knowledge and skills. To sum up it can also be claimed that abundance of customers in selection is not important as well. A better approach is when those who want to and can participate in production of services or who need that very much for themselves are selected.

The basis of *voluntary self-determination* group of means is formed by customers’ initiative, customers’ deliberate efforts in searching for infor-

mation about opportunities to voluntarily contribute to public services. These means of selection reflect the local residents’ expression of sense of belonging to community, maturity of civic society at particular townships.

The presented means of selection can also be classified by who conducts/realizes these activities. In this aspect classification can be into *direct* (conducted directly by the governing subjects) and *indirect* (conducted through various organizations of civil society). By applying direct influence means of selection the governing subject searches for personal contact with potential coproducer of services as well as for alternatives to forms of influence. In the case of application of means of indirect influence intermediaries (i.e., other subjects, e.g., partners cooperating in selecting (by delegating or asking) the potential coproducers) are brought to activities of selection. In the second case the responsibility for selection of custo-

mer appropriate for performance of a specific role in production of services falls on public sector institutions, business enterprises, organizations of civil society or other potential or current coproducers of services that operate at the township. Such partnership is a part of wider perspective of evaluation of the phenomenon being analyzed, but this goes beyond the scope of this research and therefore will not be analyzed in detail.

Summarizing this activity (*selection*) of management it can be stated that in townships that are more concentrated geographically, that feature rustic, com-

munal way of life, that have no high turnover of residents more intensive and closer cooperation takes place, direct relations in selecting participants are characteristic, therefore direct means of customer selection are used more often. In townships where the elder (or other township employees) is native of local community he works at such means are used most often.

**Means of customer teaching.** The dominant means applied for teaching customers of services of townships are grouped into 4 types and given in Table 2.

Table 2

**Means and types of teaching of customers applied at townships**

Type of means of teaching	Means
Learning from other customers	Learning from the positive experience
	Learning by sharing experience with other customers
Teaching with help of printed, distributable and other material	Teaching with help of printed distributable material
	Teaching with help of notices and information messages
	Teaching through the spread of the positive experience
Teaching/learning through other organizations	Learning by sharing experience with an organization of civil society
	Learning by sharing experience with co-workers
Personal or group teaching	Personal teaching of a client
	Teaching at residents' meetings

In most cases teaching/learning was mentioned in the context of learning from other customers by communicating with them and/or watching them (elder of a town-type township: “good example is always good and example for others. Some start working around and others start moving as well. One catches this from another, wants to have the same good that others have”). Learning (not teaching) is also manageable, only the conditions for this have to be made, learning from other customers must be activated. Learning from others was mentioned as one of the most efficient means: “they learn from each other. Some do something, and soon you can see that others join. There is even no necessity for township to intervene”. An assumption can be made that for the governing subject the costs of such means of teaching are minimal, they are distributed among the learners themselves. Therefore, when managing customers' participation, irrespective of what activity is being discussed, other customers in that environment as well as interactions among customers must be taken into consideration. When customers assume the role of a partial employee, they not only benefit from their experience, but also help other customers.

Another category of means of teaching/learning can be attributed to the level of information. In such case through printed material, handouts, announcements, notices, comments and articles in local newspapers, online, on local bulletin boards the residents are informed about the ways, means, procedures, etc.

of performance of roles necessary in services hoping that this will be enough for a customer to understand how to perform the corresponding roles of production of services. In activities of teaching/learning also important is local social network (already discussed in case of means of selection) – roles of institutions, establishments, companies, institutions of civic society that operate at the township. After summarization of utterances of the informants it was noticed that in all cases more or less intensive involvement of social partners in the process of teaching was mentioned (elder of a village-type township: “I never go myself – we arrange that through the community. If the elder pushes, I am not sure that we will obtain a good variant. And now the community has discussed and you can see that people are mowing grass on their side of the street”). In literature on public administration such social networks are not a new phenomenon in analyzing political, cultural or social participation of citizens. It is a frequent area of research and practice. If organizations of civic society are authoritative at local communities, are experienced in coproducing public services, then they have power to influence motivation of potential coproducers of public services to learn, and generally such organizations then can initiate change of attitudes of members of local community towards participation and change in related participative behaviour.

Systematizing the results of the research it was also identified that means of personal and/or group te-



aching have an important role in the process of managing customer participation. Teaching activities both in environment of service provision (elder of a town-type township: “here in this room I have to teach, give advice on what to do so that his problem would be solved faster”) and in environment not of service provision (elder of a town-type township: “I sent my people to go visit people at their homes, to go to the communities of the blocks of flats to speak about how they will get organized so that it would be better... We invited them to meetings near their homes to discuss about how it would be better for them to do.”) were distinguished. Such methods of teaching are more used in services where personal benefit is clearly distinguished (e.g., in social services, in document preparation services). In the case of “economic” and “communal” services more often mentioned were group means as well as other means of teaching given in Table 3.

Generalizing the cases of means of learning it must be noted that not only the governing entity’s actions towards the subordinates are met, but also vice versa, i.e., learning of the governing entity together *with* customers and even *from* customers of services.

**Means of customer motivation.** In the theory of management quite a number of means of motivation are distinguished, however in the activities of townships when managing customer participation a unique composition of means of motivation is observed.

Like in the case of the above-given other means of activities of management, means of motivation are classified according to certain features as well. When classifying, in all cases we looked from the perspective of the governing person. All the means of motivation identified during the interview are classified into three types on the basis of the classical typology of customer rewards: tangible and intangible rewards.

Table 3

**Means and types of customer motivation applied at townships**

Type of means of motivation	Means
Related to direct financial expenses	Official written thanks
	Event as reward to all customers who participated
	Thanks, greeting in mass media
	Official tangible reward
	Unofficial “barter” reward
Related to indirect financial expenses	Thanks, greeting at public events
	Appreciation of efforts by promising support for participation in other services
	Unofficial reward in a form of solving personal problems of the customer faster and easier
Conditionally unrelated to financial expenses	Unofficial personal thanks from the elder
	Recognition expressed by offering responsible duties, by delegating responsibility
	Respect and recognition from other customers

The results of the research show that when stimulating residents to participate in production of services or when remunerating them for their participation townships *use* tangible rewards that are in one or another way related to financial expenses. As a consequence townships experience various problems that they solve by using internal, not always legal ways and resources: “we arrange gifts unofficially... The elder has no hospitality expenses, so, for example, we have concluded an unofficial agreement with one nursery garden. This nursery garden gave us gift checks, and in exchange we sent them workers that worked for them for 5 days. But officially we cannot do that. All these are illegal barter”. A means of “unofficial barter reward” is also attributed to means of motivation that are related to financial expenses, this means goes beyond lawful boundaries of activity and authority of the elder and is related to use of the internal resources of the township.

Virtually the only motivation means related to financial expenses that was identified was official thanks from the elder for participation in coproducing the services. Official thanks from the elder in local mass media may be unrelated to financial expenses, for example, representatives of the local press themselves take the initiative to disseminate information important for the local community and in such a case they do not request payment for the interview with the elder. As the analysis of the results of the interview has shown, this means is used by the elders quite often (e.g., “here, if the newspaper X is writing about us I try to mention various good people”, “if only there is a possibility, I definitely mention to journalists our helpers”), but this means is attributed to the category of means related to financial expenses, because focused management of customer participation is related to means planned in advance instead of spontaneous means that depend on the initiatives of external participants.



Other means, the *means related to financial expenses*, involve the following means: event as reward to all who participated, official tangible reward, and unofficial “barter” reward. According to respondents’ speaking, the first two require greater funding of the activities of the township, so in the lack of it other internal resources or the already-mentioned unofficial deals are used.

The group of *means related to indirect financial expenses* involves those means of motivation identified during the interview that were named by the informants as being conditionally “cheaper”. Such is public thanks at community festivals: “We have a tradition that at community festivals such people are publicly greeted, honoured, awarded if some present is successfully organized”. To this group was also assigned one more means of motivation: reward in a form of help for solving personal problems of the customer faster and easier: “usually they expect “friendship”. So to say, I scratch your back and you’ll scratch mine... You give to me, and I give to you. They expect more favourable decision, priority (e.g., when making decision on which street to asphalt first)”.

To the group of *means unrelated or conditionally unrelated to financial expenses* was attributed verbal personal thanks of the elder (“so you personally praise a person and it becomes so pleasant for him. If a person comes to township with some concern, I always say thank you”; “so if there is a need I visit a person at home to thank”), respect and recognition from other residents, and delegation of official public responsibility as an expressed recognition.

When analyzing the verbatim reports of the interviews, the following generalizations can be made: in village-type townships more frequent and more diverse use of means of customer motivation is observed in comparison to other townships. Though less, but like in the case of other managerial activities, in activity of motivating important is the role of other local organizations. In many cases events and thanks in local mass media can be associated with cooperation with other organizations. The townships (their employees) that successfully implement activation of participation have strong, values-based grounds for activities that are oriented towards a person. For this reason it is likely that means used at the analyzed townships for activation of customer participation and for the implementation of which unofficial activities are undertaken do not contravene the public interest.

## Conclusions

Management of customer participation was *defined* (this has not been done before) as the process during which the service provider plans, coordinates, or-

ganizes and controls activities (processes of conducting them) related to selection, teaching, motivating customers of public services aiming at active participation of customers in coproduction of public services.

It was *found* that in order to achieve higher level of participation of customers in services participation must be managed, it is not enough to be restricted to individual voluntary initiatives of customer participation or and/or initiatives of providers of public services, as these initiatives depend on personal qualities.

It was *generalized* that management of customer participation in services can be analyzed as a composition of separate yet interrelated activities, as a consequence there were distinguished management activities that perform the functions of *customer selection, teaching, and motivation*.

The *generalized* results of the empirical research allow us to claim that management of customer participation in public services is actually existing phenomenon in Lithuania’s townships that are active in the sense of participation. It was found that in townships of village type the use of means of management is more intensive and more diverse. More instances of management of customer participation in services of townships are observed in the townships having greater economic-financial independence.

Groups of *selection* means used at townships were *classified* and *characterized* as being either of delegation type or of voluntary self-determination type. In the first case personal governor-customer contact, long-term (participation) relationship or personal acquaintanceship are emphasized. In the second case success of management depends on efficient communication through traditional mass means of marketing as well as on personal initiatives of township residents and their awareness.

Means (individual and group ones) of teaching and personal contact, supportive means of learning from experience, from other customers as well as means of information (printed, handouts, bulletins, announcements and similar ones) that are used in activities of *teaching* were *distinguished* and *described*.

Material and non-material means of *motivation* that are used were *characterized*: township residents are motivated by and awarded with official public (tangible or intangible) means; personal (tangible or intangible) means; social means. The most efficient means were identified; these are personal thanks from the elder for customer’s efforts as well as respect and recognition from other customers.

*To summarize* we can state that the customer participation management means *identified* at townships are distinctive, reflecting the cultural and social peculiarity of the local communities.

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### Klientų dalyvavimo viešosiose paslaugose valdymas: Lietuvos seniūnijų atvejis

#### Santrauka

Vienas svarbiausių šiuolaikinio viešojo sektoriaus uždavinių – atliepti viešųjų paslaugų klientų poreikius, sukurti jiems maksimalią vertę ir tai padaryti mažesniais sąnaudomis. Aktyvus klientų dalyvavimas viešosiose paslaugose kaip tik ir siejamas su minėtų problemų spren-

mu. Pripažįstama, kad teikiant viešąsias paslaugas, kurios nukreiptos į naudos individualiam klientui kūrimą per tiesioginę sąveiką su paslaugų teikėju, yra būtinas aktyvus klientų dalyvavimas. Šiame straipsnyje klientų dalyvavimo valdymas viešosiose paslaugose analizuojamas kaip

rinkodaros tyrimų objektas. Paslaugų rinkodaros teorijoje pabrėžiamas svarbus klientų dalyvavimo paslaugose vaidmuo, kuomet klientai turi įtakos paslaugų rezultatams, atlieka dalį paslaugos teikimo veiklų, dalijasi su organizacija savo žiniomis, skiria savo laiką ir kitus išteklius.

Klientų dalyvavimas paslaugose yra savaime suprantamas: paslauga negali būti suteikta be vienokio ar kito kliento dalyvavimo, tačiau siekiant aukštesnio klientų dalyvavimo lygio, dalyvavimą reikia valdyti. Tokiu atveju klientas tampa nebe pasyvus paslaugų gavėjas, bet šių paslaugų bendrakūrėjas, t. y. dalyvaujantis aukščiausiam dalyvavimo lygmenyje (teorijoje išskiriami dalyvavimo lygiai – nuo pasyvaus iki itin aktyvaus kliento dalyvavimo, kada klientas, kuriant paslaugą, pasitelkia savo išteklius ir pastangas).

Straipsnyje pagrindžiama, kad klientų dalyvavimo valdymas yra aktuali ir tirtina Lietuvos seniūnijose problema. Taigi straipsnio *tikslas* – išskyrus klientų dalyvavimo paslaugose valdymo veiklas, identifikuoti Lietuvos seniūnijose naudojamas valdymo veiklų priemones. Pirmai tikslo daliai realizuoti panaudoti mokslinės literatūros analizės ir sisteminimo metodai, antrajai – pusiau struktūruotas kokybinis interviu, kurio rezultatams apibendrinti taikytas kokybinės turinio analizės metodas. Tyrimo *objektas* – Lietuvos seniūnijų vykdomos klientų dalyvavimo viešosiose paslaugose valdymo veiklos (valdymas šiame straipsnyje traktuojamas kaip kryptingas poveikis kliento elgesiui skirtingomis, bet tarpusavyje susijusiomis veiklomis). Problema apibrėžiama klausimu: kaip (kokiomis priemonėmis) valdyti klientų dalyvavimą, kad jie taptų viešųjų paslaugų bendrakūrėjais Lietuvos seniūnijose?

Šio tyrimo rezultatai traktuotini kaip tarpiniai kuriant klientų dalyvavimo viešosiose paslaugose valdymo modelį. Viena šio straipsnio autorių – Petukienė, ketindama sukurti tokį modelį, atliko teorinius ir empirinius tyrimus, kurių vienas – kokybinis interviu.

#### **Klientų dalyvavimo viešosiose paslaugose valdymas: teorinė prieiga**

Straipsnyje visų pirma aptariamas sąvokos *klientas* validumas viešajame sektoriuje. Straipsnyje pritariama nuomonei, kad abejonės dėl sąvokos *klientas* validumas viešajame sektoriuje prasilenkia su šiuolaikinės rinkodaros koncepcija.

Klientų dalyvavimas yra elgsenos konceptas, todėl dalyvavimo valdymas šiame straipsnyje siejamas su kliento elgsenos valdymu, t. y. kryptingo poveikio darymu kliento elgsenai pageidautina linkme – aukštesnio dalyvavimo lygio link. Kadangi valdymas realizuojamas per konkrečias užduotis, jų sekas, todėl teigiama, kad klientų dalyvavimo valdymą tikslingiau nagrinėti kaip tam tikrų veiklų kompoziciją. Valdymo veiklos apibrėžiamos kaip organizacijos inicijuojamos ir vykdomos veiklos, kurių visuma ir jose naudojamų priemonių kombinacijos leidžia pasiekti efektyvų viešųjų paslaugų klientų dalyvavimą. Klientų dalyvavimo valdymo veiklos siejamos su klientų atrankos, jų mokymo ir motyvavimo funkcijomis. Klientų atranka yra tinkamo kliento tinkamam vaidmeniui atlikti atrinkimas, mokymas – trūkstamų žinių ir įgūdžių tinkamam vaidmeniui atlikti suteikimas, ir motyvavimas – kliento noro ir intereso tinkamai atlikti paslaugose vaidmenis didinimas.

#### **Empirinio tyrimo metodologija**

Empirinio tyrimo duomenims surinkti buvo pasirinktas individualus kryptingasis (iš dalies struktūrizuotasis) interviu su Lietuvos seniūnijų darbuotojais. Interviu dalyvavo 12 informantų iš 8 seniūnijų, kurios buvo atrinktos pagal aktyvumą bendrai kartu su vietos gyventojais kuriant viešąsias paslaugas. Iš anksto nebuvo numatytas imties dydis, nes kur kas svarbiau yra duomenų informatyvumas. Todėl duomenys rinkti tol, kol jie pradėjo kartotis ir akivaizdžiai sumažėjo jų informatyvumas, kol informantų atstovaujamos seniūnijos tenkino maksimaliai įvairių variantų sąlygą (pagal seniūnijos tipą (kaimo–miesto), nutolimą nuo rajono centro, ūkinį–finansinį savarankiškumą).

#### **Klientų dalyvavimo Lietuvos seniūnijose valdymas: veiklos ir priemonės**

*Atranka.* Per tyrimą pirmiausia išsiaiškinta, kaip seniūnijose nustatomos potencialių bendrakūrėjų būtinos aktyviems vaidmenims paslaugose atlikti charakteristikos ir klientų turimi ištekliai. Sukategorizavus minėtus atvejus, išskirtos klientų atrankos formos. Po to seniūnijose taikomos klientų atrankos dalyvavimui priemonės suskirstytos į du tipus: delegavimo (įpareigojimo) ir savanoriško apsisprendimo. Delegavimas paremtas savanoriškumo principu, tačiau asmenišką delegavimą dalyvauti paslaugų kūrime, atsakomybės prisiėmimo įpareigojimas kartu reiškia ir kliento kompetencijos pripažinimą. Geriausių rezultatų galima pasiekti per asmeninius ryšius ir kontaktus su konkrečiu reikalingų žinių ir įgūdžių turinčiu klientu. Savanoriško apsisprendimo priemonių grupės pagrindas – klientų iniciatyva, sąmoningos klientų pastangos ieškant informacijos apie galimybes savanoriškai prisidėti prie viešųjų paslaugų.

Atrankos priemonės taip pat galimos klasifikuoti pagal tai, kas šias veiklas vykdo / realizuoja. Šiuo aspektu jas galima suskirstyti į tiesiogines (vykdomas tiesiogiai valdančiųjų subjektų) ir netiesiogines (vykdomas per įvairias pilietinės visuomenės organizacijas). Netiesioginių poveikio priemonių taikymo atveju atrankos veiklose įtraukiami tarpininkai, kuriems tenka atsakomybė už tinkamo kliento konkrečiam vaidmeniui paslaugų kūrime atlikti.

Apibendrinant galima teigti, kad labiau koncentruotos geografinė prasme seniūnijose (kurioms būdingas kaimiškas, bendruomeninis gyvenimo būdas, kuriose nėra didelė gyventojų kaita) vyksta intensyvesnis, glaudesnis bendravimas, būdingi tiesioginiai santykiai atrenkant dalyvius, todėl dažniau naudojamos tiesioginės klientų atrankos priemonės.

*Mokymas.* Daugeliu atvejų mokymas(-is) buvo minimas mokymosi iš kitų klientų, bendraujant su jais ir / ar stebint juos tam tikrame kontekste. Mokymasis (ne mokymas) taip pat yra valdomas, tik tam reikia sudaryti sąlygas, aktyvinti mokymąsi iš kitų klientų. Mokymasis iš kitų buvo minimas kaip viena efektyviausių priemonių. Kitą mokymo(-si) priemonių grupę galima priskirti informavimo lygmeniui. Tokiu atveju per spausdintinę, dalomąją medžiagą ir pan. gyventojai informuojami apie paslaugose reikalingų vaidmenų atlikimo būdus, priemones, procedūras ir pan., tikintis, kad to pakaks klientui suprasti, kaip atlikti atitinkamus paslaugų kūrimo vaidmenis. Mokymo(-si) veikloje taip pat svarbus socialinis vietos tinklas – se-



niūnijose veikiančių institucijų, įstaigų, įmonių, pilietinės visuomenės organizacijų vaidmuo. Nustatyta, kad asmeninio ir / ar grupinio mokymo priemonės vaidina svarbų vaidmenį klientų dalyvavimo valdymo procese. Išskirtos tiek mokymo veiklos realizuojamos paslaugos teikimo, tiek ne paslaugos teikimo aplinkoje.

*Motyvavimas.* Motyvavimo priemonės, vertinant valdančiojo perspektyvos aspektu, suklasifikuotos į tris tipus, remiantis klasikine atlygių klientui tipologija: materialūs ir nematerialūs atlygiai. Tyrimo rezultatai rodo, kad seniūnijos, skatindamos vietas gyventojus dalyvauti kuriant paslaugas ar atlygindamos už jų dalyvavimą, naudoja materialiuosius atlygius, kurie yra susiję su finansinėmis išlaidomis. To padarinys – seniūnijų patiriamos įvairios problemos, kurias sprendžia naudojantis vidiniais, tačiau ne visuomet teisėtai būdais ir ištekliais. Bene vienintelė identifikuota, su finansinėmis išlaidomis susijusi motyvavimo priemonė yra oficiali seniūno padėka už dalyvavimą bendrai kuriant paslaugas. Kitoms, su finansinėmis išlaidomis susijusioms priemonėms, priskirtas renginys kaip atlygis visiems dalyvavusiems, oficialus materialinis atlygis ir neoficialus prekių mainų atlygis. Kaip parodė informantų pasisakymai, reikalingas didesnis seniūnijos veiklos finansavimas, tačiau nesant pakankamam jo lygiui, naudojami kiti vidaus ištekliai arba minėtieji neoficialūs sandoriai. Susijusių su netiesioginėmis finansinėmis išlaidomis priemonių grupei priskirtos tos identifikuotos motyvavimo priemonės, kurios informantų buvo įvardytos kaip sąlyginai „pigesnės“. Tai – vieša padėka bendruomenių švenčių metu. Taip pat šioje grupėje priskirta priemonė – atlygis kaip pagalba greičiau ir lengviau sprendžiant asmenines kliento problemas. Nesusijusių arba sąlyginai nesusijusių su finansinėmis išlaidomis priemonių grupei priskirta žodinė asmeninė seniūno padėka, kitų gyventojų pagarba ir padėka, o kaip išreiškiamas pripažinimas – oficialios visuomeninės atsakomybės delegavimas.

## Išvados

Apibrėžtas, kas nebuvo padaryta iki šiol, klientų dalyvavimo valdymas kaip procesas, kurio metu paslaugos teikėjas planuoja, koordinuoja, organizuoja ir kontroliuoja veiklas (jų atlikimo procesus), susijusias su viešųjų paslaugų klientų atranka, mokymu, motyvavimu, siekiant aktyvaus klientų dalyvavimo kuriant bendras viešąsias paslaugas.

Suklasifikuotos ir charakterizuotos atrankos priemonių, naudojamų seniūnijose, kaip delegavimo ir savanoriško apsisprendimo grupės. Pirmuoju atveju akcentuojamas asmeninis valdančiojo ir kliento kontaktas, ilgalaikiai (dalyvavimo) santykiai ar asmeninė pažintis. Antruoju atveju valdymo sėkmė priklauso nuo efektyvios komunikacijos tradicinėmis masinėmis rinkodaros priemonėmis ir seniūnijos gyventojų asmeninės iniciatyvos, sąmoningumo.

Išskirtos ir apibūdintos mokymo veiklose naudojamos mokymo asmeninio kontakto priemonės (individualios ir grupinės); mokymosi iš patirties, iš kitų klientų palaikančios priemonės ir informavimo priemonės (spausdintinė, dalomoji medžiaga, skelbimai, pranešimai ir pan.).

Charakterizuotos naudojamos materialinės ir nematerialinės motyvavimo priemonės: seniūnijų gyventojai skatinami ir apdovanojami oficialiomis viešomis (materialiomis ar nematerialiomis) priemonėmis; asmeninėmis (materialiomis ar nematerialiomis) ir socialinėmis priemonėmis. Išskirta efektyviausia priemonė – asmeninė seniūno padėka už kliento pastangas ir kitų klientų pagarba ir pripažinimas.

*Pagrindiniai žodžiai:* klientų dalyvavimas, valdymo klientų dalyvavimas, bendros gamybos paslaugos, viešosios paslaugos, Lietuvos seniūnijos.

The article has been reviewed.

Received in January, 2010; accepted in March, 2010.