

Customers' mixed emotions of co-creation in new service development

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The involvement of customers as co-creators in new service development is increasingly being suggested as a successful strategy to improve the success rate of new services. However, the customers' view of this involvement is much less frequently studied than the companies' side. In addition, we only know little about how co-creation is perceived when they partake in innovation whereas how co-creation is experienced during consumption has been studied extensively. In the present paper, the customers' perspective during co-creation in new service development is studied.

In joint effort with academia a nationally renowned Zoo conducted a large open innovation project where 15 families with small children were given the task to co-create new ideas for future services. Participants were equipped with videocameras and were asked to focus on emotions, problems and incidents of interest and to use these situations as a means to come up with ideas for services that would improve the total customer experience at the zoo. The participants were given instructions about their participation ahead of visiting the zoo and were asked to leave their videotaped observations after the visit was over. Subsequent to the visit participants were interviewed about their experiences of participating as co-creators. Another follow-up interview was conducted half-year after the project took part.

The findings disclose mixed emotions among participants as they experience both costs and benefits during co-creation. The costs regard, in short, burden of workload, focusing on negative aspects, difficulties to understand the task, legitimate claims for future action and ownership of ideas. Of interest to see is also that the participants fail to recognize the value of their contribution. The benefits regard, in short, insightful ideas, detections of pleasure, rewards and commitment and loyalty.

Based on available research, this paper conceptualises the mixed emotions of cocreation during new service development and makes suggestions for further research. This research might lead not only to a better understanding of customer co-creation but also to better planning of such endeavours from the companies' point of view.