

**INNOVATION IN A SERVICE COMPANY:
THE SERASA EXPERIAN CASE STUDY ANALYSIS IN THE LIGHT
OF AN INTEGRATIVE APPROACH**

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ABSTRACT

The current fierce competition pushes organizations to look for differentials in their activities. In order to do so, the new motto in the organizations strategies is innovation. Considering the relevance of this subject, in this study, we propose to know how a service company is innovating as well as to identify to which extension the services innovation aspects (customers and supplier competences, service characteristics) are related to the innovation outputs. In order to achieve such objectives we investigated four innovative services nominated by Serasa Experian: - the Application Manager 3 (a proposals credit processing platform to support businesses decision making); the Nota Fiscal Eletrônica (a service to support several steps to issue a digital document during the businesses transactions); the Me Avise (intended to the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs); and the Me Proteja (identity theft protection service). The three first services are based on B2B relationships, while the last one is a B2C relationship. We investigated the service innovation phenomenon under a qualitative research perspective that was carried out via interviews, based on semi-structured questions. Our main findings point that it happened different types of service innovation among the projects investigated. The search results were analyzed in the light of the Gallouj and Weinstein (1997) service innovation integrative approach and showed good adherence to the model concept.

Key-words: financial service innovation; competences; routines.

INTRODUCTION

The current fierce competition pushes organizations to look for differentials in their activities. In order to do so, the new motto in the organizations strategies is innovation.

Some organizations say to be innovative and they do are. Others, however, declare themselves as innovative just to communicate the notion of modernity to the society, to be recognized and widely accepted and to benefit of this reputation.

So, how can we know if an organization is really innovative? “What” does an organization do and “how” does it do to innovate? How can we properly identify the type of the innovation resultant?

These are some of the questions raised as part of a research on innovative organizations performed in Brazil. In fact, there are uncountable studies on innovation, but none of them is conclusive in indicating unique and right ways to innovate (SANTOS, 2010)

Some Brazilian governmental institutions, for example, issue official reports on organizations innovative activities, but since the information is normally presented in an aggregated basis, the innovation details are not disclosed. Besides this, it has been observed that the majority of reports on innovation is technology biased.

Similar fact is reported by Drejer (2009) which argues that manufacturing predominates the economic analysis, encompassing the innovation studies. She explains that the studies of service innovation as distinctive activities have the potential of contributing to the development of such a synthesis approach to innovation by pointing to features of innovation which have been largely ignored in studies taking a traditional, technology focused manufacturing approach to innovation (DREJER, 2009).

Considering these aspects as well as the growing participation of services in the Brazilian GDP, we found very appropriate to conduct a study in a recognized innovative service organization.

The major criterion to choose the organization to be studied was its engagement in innovative activities. Other points considered were the availability of a range of different innovative services in the company and the possibility to investigate them in details.

Recent work by Gallouj and Savona (2009) discuss whether, and the extent to which, the ill-definition and mis-measurement of service output have influenced the conceptualization and analysis of innovation in services.

The willingness to contribute to this discussion as well as the opportunity to shed some light on this topic, motivated the elaboration of this paper, which major objectives are:

- 1) Know how the studied company is innovating in its services;
- 2) Identify to which extension the services innovation aspects (customers and supplier competences, service characteristics) are related to the innovation outputs.

Theoretical Domain

Leaders of most service businesses find little guidance in existing writing on innovation. The central themes of R&D, intellectual property, and breakthrough technologies often miss how service businesses evolve by steadily generating and implementing new ideas. The lack of guidance would not be puzzling if services' share in the businesses sector were small, or innovation in services were unimportant. However, neither is true (LYONS; CHATMAN; JOYCE, 2007).

Recognizing such circumstance, several scholars have been approaching the services innovation theme in a tentative to better understand and explain the innovation phenomenon in service activities as well as to identify their possible differences or similarities to the innovation in manufacturing activities.

A recent work by Damanpour, Walker and Avellaneda (2009), for example, investigates the effects of innovation types and organization performance. Although this study focuses on consequences of adoption of three types of innovation (service, technological process and administrative process) in service organizations, it is worth to highlight its review on types of innovation that is summarized on table 1.

Damanpour, Walker and Avellaneda (2009) employ three innovation types of the four from Meeus and Equidist (2006) that are applicable to service organizations, defined as follows:

[...] we define *service innovations* as the introduction of new services to the existing or new clients and offer of existing services to new clients. [...] *process innovations* have internal focus and aim to increase efficiency and effectiveness of the internal organizational processes to facilitate the production and the delivery of goods or services to the customers. [...] *technological process innovations* are new elements introduced into an organization's production system or service operation for producing its products or rendering its services to the clients. [...] *administrative process innovations* are new approaches or practices to motivate and reward organizational members, devise strategy and structure of tasks and units, and modify the organization's management processes (DAMANPOUR; WALKER; AVELLANEDA, 2009, P. 654).

Some of these definitions are encompassed by the seminal work of Gallouj and Weinstein (1997) that laid foundations of a theory to be used to interpret innovation processes in the

service sector, being in line with the hypotheses of a convergence between manufacturing and services.

Table 1: Types of innovation according to the literature review
by Damanpour, Walker and Avellaneda

Author (s)	Type of innovation
Zaltman et al. (1973).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified 20 innovation types grouped in terms of state of the organization, focus and outcome of innovation.
Albernaty and Utterback (1978); Kotabe and Murray (1990); Light (1998).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguished between product and process innovations.
Birkinshaw et al. (2008); Kimberly and Evanisko (1981); Lam (2005).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguished between technological (technical) and administrative (organizational, management) innovations.
Equidist et al. (2001); Meeus and Equidist (2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juxtaposed previous typologies ; • Offered a taxonomy distinguishing two types of product innovations (in goods and in services) and two types of process innovation (technological and organizational).
Hamel (2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguished two types of process innovations (in operational processes and in management processes)

Source: Authors, based on Damanpour, Walker and Avellaneda (2009)

Such work was recaptured by Gallouj and Savona (2009) as a review of debates in service innovation and it is regarded as a baseline for investigation in our research. As per Gallouj and Savona (2009) the literature on innovation in services is classified according to three main approaches: - the technologist or assimilation approach, the service-oriented or differentiation approach and the integrative or synthesizing approach. A summary of them are indicated in the Table 2 as follows:

Table 2: Summary of main approaches in the literature on innovation in services

Approach	Major authors	Meanings and major characteristics of innovation in services approaches
Technologist or assimilation	Barras (1986)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed the Reverse Product Cycle (RPC); • Primacy of manufacturing over services as determinant of the innovation processes
	Pavitt (1984)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codified innovations across firms and sectors into (1) supplier dominated, (2) production intensive, (3) science based, (4) information intensive, (5) technological trajectory.

	Miozzo and Soete (2001).	• Proposed taxonomies for services based on Pavitt's work.
Service-oriented or differentiation	Gadrey and Gallouj (1998), Hauknes (1998), Sundbo e Gallouj (1998b); Sundbo e Gallouj (2000); Gallouj (2002a)	• Emphasizes characteristics of innovation processes in services activities. • The first generation of service-oriented focused (KIBS). • Focus on services with lower competence and knowledge intensity afterwards
Integrative or synthesizing	Hauknes (1998); Gallouj e Weinstein (1997).	• Main idea is to integrate the previous perspectives to develop a theory including the common aspects of manufacturing and services innovation, respecting their specificities.

Source: Authors, based on Vargas (2006) and Gallouj and Savona (2009)

Such approach Gallouj and Weinstein (1997) consider a product (either a good or service) to be represented by a set of vectors of characteristics and competences that are linked. The characteristics-based representation of the product is illustrated on Figure 1. The vectors of this model have the following meanings:

- Vector [Y]: represents the service characteristics, the final user's value;
- Vector [T]: represents the technical characteristics of the product, material or immaterial. Underlying the vector [T] is the process (technological and non-technological) employed to produce vector [Y];
- Vectors [C] and [C']: indicate competence sets of the supplier and the customer-user, respectively (GALLOUJ; SAVONA, 2009). The vector [C] of competences mobilized in the provision of a service relates only to *individual* competences or to a clearly delimited group, i.e., the team involved in providing the service in question. It does not include *organizational* competences, which fall within the scope of intangible technical characteristics [T] (GALLOUJ; WEINSTEIN, 1997).

As highlighted by these authors, two important definitions result from this approach:

- 1) Innovation: can be defined accordingly as the changes affecting one or more elements of one or more vectors of characteristics or of competences. Innovation is defined as a process, not as a result.
- 2) The service delivery: is defined as a simultaneous employment (and relationship) of technical characteristics (material and immaterial) and competences (internal and external) to produce the service (or final characteristics).

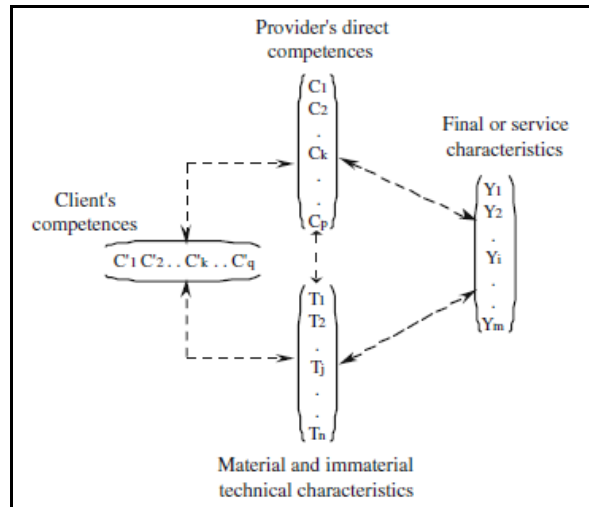


Figure 1: The characteristics-based representation of the product.

Source: Gallouj and Savona (2009); Gallouj and Weinstein (1997)

- According to this approach a broader definition of innovation models are suggested, resulting of the dynamics of their characteristics: - *radical innovation, improvement innovation, incremental innovation, Ad hoc innovation, recombination innovation (or architectural innovation) and formalization innovation* (GALLOUJ; SAVONA, 2009).

One important point to contextualize our study is that it focuses on the integrative or synthesizing approach. Empirical previous studies were carried out based on this approach, like for example, the one conducted by de Vries (2004) in Europe. We have not found similar study to ours performed in Brazil.

It is worth mentioning a recent work by Facó, Diniz and Csillag (2009) that investigated innovation performed in Brazilian banks, analyzing the diffusion of innovation processes in bank products, based on a three variables framework (regulation, market and technology).

In fact, this is aligned with findings of a recent paper by Gomes, Machado and Giotto (2009) that summarizes the innovation knowledge produced in Brazil. Authors indicate that major focus is on technological innovation investigation. This supports the need of having more studies on innovation with a non-technological focus, justifying the relevance of the present study.

METHODS

Experimental Domain

In order to accomplish the objectives stated in this paper we based our research on a multiple case study (four innovative projects) in a single innovative organization.

As pointed by Eisenhardt (1989), case studies can involve either single or multiple cases, and numerous levels of analysis. Moreover, case studies can employ an embedded design, that is, multiple levels of analysis within a single study. Finally, while there is no ideal number of cases, a number between 4 and 10 cases usually works well (EISENHARDT, 1989).

While the innovative projects are the units of analyses in our work, the individuals and the organization are the level of analyses.

For each one of the service innovative projects there were two respondents nominated by the organization investigated; in total there were 10 respondents (two females and eight males).

The average age of the respondents was 35 years; the average length of time spent in the studied company was around 6 years. The respondents' backgrounds were very diverse, encompassing engineers, businesses administrators, systems analysts, publicists. The criterion to choose such respondents was their high involvement with each respective innovative project.

We investigated the innovation phenomenon under a qualitative research perspective. This qualitative research was performed via interviews based on semi-structured questions related to the trajectory of the innovative services projects, characteristics and motivation of the team involved and customer interface (Table 3).

Table 3: Summary of main issues approached in the innovative service interviews

	Blocs	Issues approached
Interview Guide	1 – Trajectory of the company innovative service project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Origin;• Steps;• Difficulties faced.
	2 – Team that took part of the innovative service project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Innovative behavior;• Motivation to innovate.
	3 – Customer interface while working on the innovative service project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ways of work;• Competences.

Source: Authors

A total of 10 interviews were carried out summing approximately 15 hours, from March to August 2010. Such interviews were taped and transcribed afterwards.

Company description¹

We choose the Serasa Experian Company as the studied organization and four of their innovative services already launched to the Brazilian marketplace.

The Serasa Experian is a company of the Experian group and it is the major credit bureau apart from USA. The Serasa Experian holds the more extensive data base about consumers, companies and economic groups of Latin America.

The company has been for more than 40 years in Brazil providing support to credit and businesses decisions, responding on line / real time to 4 million consults per day that are demanded by 400 thousand direct and indirect customers.

The Serasa Experian offers integrated solutions that encompass all steps of businesses cycle, such as market prospection, customers' management, retention and **monetization**, credit acquisition and concession, credit portfolio management, billing and fraud management and validation.

The Experian group headquarters is in Dublin (Ireland) and operational offices in Costa Mesa (USA) and Nottingham (UK). The group employs approximately 15.500 people in 38 countries, supporting customers in more than 65 locations. Its annual sales exceed US\$ 4 billion.

Projects description

As mentioned previously the Serasa Experian Company was requested to indicate innovative services according to their perception. The major characteristics of the four innovative services nominated by the company are highlighted on Table 4, as follows:

Table 4: Main characteristics of the innovative service investigated

Innovative Service	Service purpose	Type of customer relationship
Application Manager 3	a proposals credit processing platform to support businesses decision making	B2B
Nota Fiscal Eletrônica	a service to support several steps to issue a digital document during the businesses transactions, required by the Brazilian Fiscal	B2B

¹ Source: Serasa Experian web site. Available in: < <http://www.serasaexperian.com.br/> > Accessed in 29. oct. 2010.

	authorities	
Me Avise	intended to the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)	B2B
Me Proteja	identity theft protection	B2C

Source: Authors

Such innovative services present diverse characteristics and demanded wide and different levels of human and material resources. Besides this, as per Table 3, most of these services were introduced to business consumers (B2B relationships) and one was introduced to end-consumers (B2C relationships). We understand the fact of having service innovative products destined to different consumers as a great opportunity to investigate competences involved to properly conduct the projects to successful results.

These circumstances have also allowed us to test, for example, the adherence of the data we gathered in the field to the Gallouj and Weinstein (1997) innovation model that will be discussed in the next results section. A brief description of each one of projects is provided as follows, as a summary of participants' interviews. We consider of the utmost importance the participants' experiences and perceptions, mainly because of we perceive that services involve a lot of communication. This is particularly important in organizing (WEICK; SUTCLIFFE, 2005)

(1) Application Manager 3 (AM3)

Around three years ago, the Serasa Experian Company was challenged by one of its customers, a big Brazilian bank, to improve the bank capacity to provide credits massively mainly to unknown end-consumers. By that time, such bank had already contracted out 15 suppliers to perform one of their work processes.

The Serasa Experian service offering was the Application Manager 3 (AM3), a proposals credit platform to support business decision making, composed by three modules: - the identity validation; the credit technology and the services workflow. One of the major benefits of this solution is the possibility of having better consisted credit proposals resulting in more efficient management of customers and billing process.

Participants of the Application Manager 3 (AM3) development and launching reported that, in their perception, the main difficulties faced by them could be roughly summarized in two points:

- Change the Serasa Experian paradigm of not working with third parties;

- Change the Serasa Experian market approach mindset, from a pure selling behavior to a consultant behavior.

From the technical point of view, the company managed to create a new architecture that integrated their already existent services. The principal idea is that existent services were interconnected via a functional integration layer that was created. It was reported that around 3 thousand hours were spent to build this project, which meant a big technological effort.

One of Serasa Experian strategies to introduce the Application Manager 3 (AM3) to the market was via an event when there was a customer testimonial on how the AM3 was successfully used by them.

(2) Nota Fiscal Eletrônica (NF-e)

The Nota Fiscal Eletrônica (NF-e) is part of the Brazilian governmental initiative to modernize and computerize its fiscal and tax management. The NF-e is a digital document, electronically issued and stored, with the purpose of documenting a service or good transaction.

As a matter of fact, the Nota Fiscal Eletrônica (NF-e) derived from a benchmark of a pioneered solution developed in Chile. Observing that the Brazilian fiscal and tax environment is more complex, the Serasa Experian NF-e version evolved to a more sophisticated technology, based on web services.

It was reported that the company first got involved in the NF-e project in 2006, but discussions on the business models still had to mature. The full service operation was delivered by the end of 2008.

As per participants' opinions, one of the major novelties of the NF-e service is the way it is commercialized. The customer basically pays as it uses the service, which means that they are charged by document issued.

Although the initial idea was to destine the service mainly to Small and Medium Companies (SMEs), the majority of big companies got interested in the Serasa Experian NF-e service. As mentioned by the participants, such big companies work based on Service Level Agreements (SLAs), demanding high service standards.

In the participants' perspective, the customers played an important role ratifying the service during pilot tests. At least 50 people worked directly represented by various Serasa Experian departments. The company also got into partnership that had a preliminary NF-e solution.

This was considered another relevant innovative aspect of development of the Serasa Experian NF-e service, according to participants' perception.

(3) Me Advise

A recurrent characteristic pointed by the participants who worked on the Me Advise service was the velocity by which the project was developed and successfully introduced to the market. There was an informal but strong coordinated task force to achieve the company target financial results in a record time. Employees' engagement was mentioned as the differential ingredient in the Me Advise service development.

In regards to the project origin, it was reported by the participants that inside Serasa Experian there is a Segments Area that has, among other responsibilities, to look for businesses opportunities in the Small and Medium Companies (SMEs) market. This area, together with the sales force, identified a demand from this market that consisted into providing to SMEs as well as its respective partners, a monitoring service, lately called Me Advise.

The Me Advise service monitors the CNPJ (national registration of legal entities) as well as the CPF (national registry of individuals) of its partners. When there is a payment default or a potential fraud initiative against a CNPJ and / or a CPF, the Me Advise service automatically informs its customers. This is particularly valued by the SMEs because such companies normally participate of public biddings that do not allow companies with payment defaults to take part of them.

The Small and Medium Companies (SMEs) knowledge of own businesses were perceived by the participants as competences that helped the businesses opportunity identification and properly development of Me Advise.

(4) Me Proteja

The Me Proteja has been launched recently by Serasa Experian and it is first business initiative to service the end-consumer (B2C relationship) in Brazil. It is a pro-active service in the sense that informs its customers of potential identity theft actions, via email and / or SMS. The Me Proteja is a pre-paid service that can be discontinued at customers' desire.

The fact of being a pre-paid service impacted the Serasa Experian billing process, which had to be adapted to this new format. Other point highlighted as an important skill developed by

the company to work on this new business model, was its ability to reach end-customers in an easier and friendlier way.

The company conducted focus group sessions to properly understand the customers' feelings in regards to their previous negative experiences with identity theft as well as their concerns in regards to their financial own reputation. Such sessions also provided the Serasa Experian with some preliminary guides to the service price and customers value perception.

Besides this, the company had to track back all possible steps taken by a fraudulent mindset in order to identify which points had to be monitored to protect individuals against potential identity criminal actions.

According to the participants' point of view, the Me Proteja service demanded strong risk and legal evaluation during its development, which was favored by the company strong internal culture to frank communication and discipline to build a business case to promote employees engagement.

SEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study were evaluated according to the content analysis, as per Bardin (2009) and Flick (2004) perspectives as well as by template analysis. According to Nygel (2004) the template analysis does not describe a single, clearly defined method; it refers rather to a varied but related group of techniques for thematically organizing and analyzing textual data. As a set of techniques, rather than a distinct methodology, template analysis may be used within a range of epistemological positions.

That is to say, research which is concerned with “discovering” underlying causes of human action, and which seeks to achieve researcher objectivity and to demonstrate coding reliability. On the other hand, template analysis can be used within what call a “contextual constructivist” position. Here, the researcher assumes that there are always multiple interpretations to be made of any phenomenon, which depend upon the position of the researcher and the context of the research. Concern with coding reliability is therefore irrelevant; instead issues such as the reflexivity of the researcher, the attempt to approach the topic from different perspectives, and the richness of the description produced, are important requirements (NYGEL, 2004).

In order to guide the creation of codes for the template analysis we found useful to start by using the Table 3, the interview guide, to set a previous codification. Then we grouped the respondents' answers for each one of the innovative projects investigated according to the

vectors of the Gallouj and Weinstein (1997) model showed on Figure 1. We built the Table 5 summing up all the service innovative projects characteristics. We inserted two additional lines; one related to the Gallouj and Weinstein (1997) model of innovation and other expressing the type of innovation resulted as per the respondents perceptions.

One of the first things that can be remarked when interpreting the search results is the typical knowledge-intensive characteristic of the Serasa Experian services. Observing the tables 4 and 5 as well as the projects descriptions, as per participant's perspectives, we promptly can identify their customer's involvement in several ways and intensities during the services generation.

According to Gallouj and Weinstein (1997), one of the fundamental characteristics of service activities, particularly "knowledge-intensive" ones, is the client participation (in various forms) in the production of the service.

Another point that is worth mentioning is the participants' innovation perspective of respective services. In fact, most of them expressed how the service outcomes impacted the Serasa Experian previous status.

Table 5: The Serasa Experina service innovative projects characteristics.

	Application Manager 3 (AM3)	Nota Fiscal Eletrônica (NF-e)	Me Avise	Me Proteja
<u>Vector [Y]:</u> service characteristics, final user's value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More consistent proposals; • Better customers management; • Proper billing end-user; • Improved knowledge of non-customers; • Massive credit concession; • Fewer suppliers; • Increased financial results; • Adaptable to customer's needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comply with the Brazilian Fiscal requirements; • Reliable web services; • Solution aggregates Digital Certificate; • Attend the Service Level Agreements (SLA) demands. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to date information on payments default; • Fraud prevention. • Confidence to take part of public bids. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify potential misuse of individuals information (CPF); • Fraud prevention; • Information on personal payments default.
<u>Vector [T]:</u> product technical characteristics, material /immaterial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product concept; • Concept focus on functionalities • Service Oriented Architecture; • Software integration layer connected to two or more products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Software to issue NF-es; • Solution foments Digital Certificate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service to monitor potential defaults on payments related to individuals (CPF) and company partners (CNPJ). • Destined to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous service to monitor potential defaults on payments related to individuals (CPF) and potential fraud actions. • Destined to end-consumers; • Send information via customer email, SMS. • Pro-active service • Pre-paid service; • Customer can discontinue service ;

Table 5: The Serasa Experina service innovative projects characteristics (continue)

	Application Manager 3 (AM3)	Nota Fiscal Eletrônica (NF-e)	Me Avise	Me Proteja
<u>Vector [C]:</u> supplier competence set	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge on credit technology • Information availability; • Ability to organize the information already available; • Exposition to several markets and wide range of customers sizes; • Ability to share information; • Management of third parties; • Do the right questions and listen; • Analytical skills; • Technological resources; • Good teamwork • Understand the customers' needs and businesses; • TI flexibility to adapt to customers' needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to recognize and set a partnership with a third party to provide expertise, solution; • Ability to link the third party solution to the Serasa Experian customer's portfolio. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility to adjust internal processes to launch product in a record time. • Strong teamwork ; • Ability to identify the demand of SMEs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to think as a fraudulent mindset and convert this into personal prevention. • Flexibility to adapt to end-customers language; • Discipline to mature the idea and build a business case; • Ability to develop a pre-payment billing system. • Change mindset from B2B to B2C; • New procedures development such as post selling follow up • Receptive culture to new projects proposal; • Collaborative environment; • Frankness is value • Strong teamwork • Engagement culture • Risks evaluation

Source: Authors

Table 5: The Serasa Experina service innovative projects characteristics (continue)

	Application Manager 3 (AM3)	Nota Fiscal Eletrônica (NF-e)	Me Avise	Me Proteja
<u>Vector [C1]:</u> customer-user competence set	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand, use and value the product concept; • Ability to share information with suppliers; • Knowledge of the own business; • End-consumer knowledge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to ratify the service provided; • TI knowledge; • Technological resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the service value; • Feedback on validation of service price; • Ability to share information with suppliers; • Knowledge of the own business; • Negotiation skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness to manage own financial reputation. • Previous exposition to frauds and defaults • Ability to express “how stuff works”; • Capacity to clearly express experiences and feelings; • Internet availability and skills to use it; • Experience in buying via internet; • Ability to evaluate the service offerings.
<u>Innovation perspective</u> as per respondents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The concept of service is a novelty to the Brazilian market; • Innovation in the sense of Serasa Experian market approach; • Paradigm change on the way of work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changed paradigm of software use as a service. Customers’ payment is based on document issued. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a new service to the Brazilian market; • The workflow inside Serasa Experian had to be adapted to launch service in time; • The way how customers’ needs were perceived. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pioneer in Brazil; • Different business focus and strategy; • Built on combined available resources;
<u>Innovation models</u> As per authors views based on definitions of Gallouj, Weinstein (1997)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ad hoc; • Recombination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ad hoc; • Recombination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incremental; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recombination

This can be explained by an underlying fact of organizational changes resulting from the Serasa acquisition by the Experian group, which broadened the company exposition to a global level as well as changed its mindset. Previous practices, like i.e. having third parties as part of their production processes used not to be allowed. This mindset change is particularly verified in the development of the Application Management 3 and Nota Fiscal Eletrônica (NF-e) services; both of them set third parties relationships.

Other important issue is concerned to the origin of projects and their effects over the innovative services trajectory. While the Application Manager 3 (AM3) origin is a clear response to an important customer challenge, the Nota Fiscal Eletrônica (NF-e) is related to

an opportunity resultant from an external change on tax and fiscal Brazilian procedures requirements.

The Me Avise and the Me Proteja projects origins are similar in the sense of the company willingness to meet other market's needs and publics. The former faced an additional appeal to increase financial results within the fiscal year the project idea was generated and implemented, in a very short period of time. The later focused efforts to massive (B2C relationship) offering of the new service.

Considering all previous aspects as well as the Gallouj and Weinstein (1997) models of innovation, we classified the four Serasa Experian innovative as per showed in table 4. We understand that single definitions are not appropriated for the Application Manager 3 (AM3) and Nota Fiscal Eletrônica (NF-e) services because both of them present overlaps of models of innovations.

In case of the Application Manager 3 (AM3) service, we found that the Ad hoc innovation classification is pertinent because it mainly resulted as a solution to a customer of Serasa Experian. Another point that signalizes to this classification is the form, by which the innovative service was produced, at the Serasa Experian and customer interface.

We also found possible to classify the Application Manager 3 (AM3) service as a recombination innovation (or architectural innovation) because it combines characteristics of other products. As per the Gallouj and Weinstein (1997), innovation of this kind exploits the possibilities opened up by new combinations of various final and technical characteristics, derived from an established stock of knowledge, and a given technological base or existing within a defined technological trajectory.

In our point of view the same reasons mentioned previously would apply to the Nota Fiscal Eletrônica (NF-e) service. It was developed to accomplish an official governmental requirement, and counted on customer's ratifications (Ad hoc innovation). Besides this, the Nota Fiscal Eletrônica (NF-e) service was built on an existing solution, from another company, which was aggregated to the Serasa Experian Company (recombination innovation).

We understand that it is adequate to classify the Me Proteja service under the recombination innovation because it combines characteristics of other products, that is, information already available to Serasa Experian.

As per our perception, The Me Avise service can be better classified under the incremental innovation definition. We justify our choice due to the fact that in such classification, new characteristics can be added, eliminated or substituted, but leave the whole set of vectors

unchanged. We think that Me Avise was particularly innovative by being generated and launched in a record time, based on an optimal use of the company resources and good teamwork.

When comparing the four innovative services sets of characteristics we found that two projects, the Application Management 3 and Nota Fiscal Eletrônica (NF-e) show broader service characteristics, final user's value (vector [Y]) compared to the Me Avise and Me Proteja Services. We believe that this can be explained by the fact that both services are more robust and complex solutions; they even demand more refined customers competences (vector [C]), such as ability to ratify the service provided by Serasa Experian. Both services also have in common the fact of facing demands of big customers, requiring more elaborated solutions.

In summary, our perception is that there is some adherence of data gathered in the field to the Gallouj and Weinstein (1997) models of innovation, although the borders among innovative services definitions still remain a bit fuzzy.

We felt very comfortable using the Gallouj and Weinstein (1997) models of innovation in the sense that it supports ways of grouping vectors that normally are mixed up in the innovation service process.

It is worth to mention, though, that apparently important aspects are uncovered by the Gallouj and Weinstein (1997) models of innovation, such as corporate culture behavior in respect to innovative initiatives. While conducting our research we found relevant elements related to corporate culture, present in all participants discourses, which we believe to be supportive to the innovation phenomenon. Collaborators' open and frank communications as well as some board initiatives were mentioned as decisive to change the company mindset. They permeated all innovative service projects.

The corporate culture approach is emphasized by Lyons et al. (2007). The authors define the "service innovation culture" as the consistent, coherent, and comprehensive presence of values and norms that promote fresh thinking and swift execution in service firms. Lyons et al. (2007) highlight that behavioral norms and values that define culture are vitally important in services, in contrast to physical products, because behavior itself is the product.

Another point that it is worth mentioning in regards to the Gallouj and Weinstein (1997) models of innovation is that their examples of service innovation are kind of compartmented into sectors. Our research brings another perspective since it presents the variations on innovative services within a single company.

CONCLUSIONS

The two major objectives of this paper were to know how the studied organization, the Serasa Experian Company, was innovating in its services and to identify to which extension the services innovation characteristics were related to the innovation outputs.

In order to achieve such objectives we investigated four innovative services nominated by Serasa Experian: - the Application Manager 3 (a proposals credit processing platform to support businesses decision making); the Nota Fiscal Eletrônica (a service to support several steps to issue a digital document during the businesses transactions); the Me Avise (intended to the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs); and the Me Proteja (identity theft protection service). The three first services are based on B2B relationships, while the last one is a B2C relationship.

We investigated the service innovation phenomenon under a qualitative research perspective that was carried out via interviews, based on semi-structured questions.

Our main findings point that it happened different types of service innovation among the projects investigated. The search results were analyzed in the light of the Gallouj and Weinstein (1997) service innovation integrative approach and showed good adherence to the model concept. This means that it was possible to properly identify differences among the investigated services in regards to the sets of characteristics vectors that compose the model, as well as the innovative services outputs.

Based on our observations and interpretation we understand that the Application Management 3 and Nota Fiscal Eletrônica (NF-e) services involved Ad hoc and recombination innovation, while the Me Proteja and the Me Avise were recombination and incremental innovations respectively.

We also found that apparently the Gallouj and Weinstein (1997) model uncovers important aspects to the innovation phenomenon, such as a proper understanding of the corporate culture role in innovative services.

We perceive that this aspect might be further investigated by promoting a better understanding of “service innovation culture” definition as proposed by Lyons et al. (2007). Such definition encompasses elements such as norms and behavior that are related to the routines concept, in a broader sense.

As per Gallouj and Weinstein (1997), in the terminology adopted by Nelson and Winter (1982), and evolutionary theory, the competences [C] are the equivalent of “skills” and

intangible technical characteristics [T]² equate to a certain extent to “routines”, or at least more codified of these routines.

We believe that by means of this work it was possible to learn what were the origins, steps and main difficulties faced over the innovative services studied. It was a great opportunity to understand how people that participated in such innovative services think of innovation process and respective outputs, as well as which kind of competences were involved during the Serasa Experian innovative services.

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² Nomenclature of technical characteristics is mentioned as [X] in the original paper.

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