

Service Innovation and Financial Performance: An Empirical Analysis within Financial Institutions in Cameroon

NANA NDAMBWE Christelle Aurore

Phd in Finance, University of Douala, Faculty of Economics and Management, Cameroon

Abstract: *The main objective of this study is to measure the effect of service innovation. It is motivated by the observation that institutions face performance problems, one of the resolutions of which requires effective and complete control of the latter. Data collected from 95 Cameroonian financial institutions was tested using simple linear regression. The results reveal that the meaning of the variation in financial performance depends on contingency element within these financial institutions.*

Keywords: Service innovation, Financial performance, Financial institutions

1. Introduction

Innovation has long been recognized as one of the main sources of competitive advantage in business (Schumpeter, 1934), including in the service sectors. Research on innovation in general tends to focus on technological innovation by manufacturing companies (Drejer, 2004; Toivonen and Tuominen, 2009; de Vries, 2006), largely ignoring service innovation and its inherent opportunities. This narrowed focus probably stems from a traditional view of services as low-frequency activities of innovation (e.g. Baumol, 1967; Pavitt, 1984; Pavitt, Robson and Townsend, 1989) and the focus on product of the literature on innovation (Garcia and Calantone, 2002; Hauser, Tellis and Griffin, 2006) which reflects a context in which manufacturing was the main economic driver (Drejer, 2004; Sundbo and Gallouj, 2000). However, in developed economies, the service sector now dominates their gross domestic products and its share continues to grow (Gallouj & Djellal, 2010a; Gallouj & Windrum, 2009). Consequently, services and service innovation represent the main drivers of economic growth (Gallouj, 2002; Miles, 1993; OECD, 2005).

Although research on service innovation has also gained momentum, the concept remains relatively unexplored compared to product innovation. It therefore requires an in-depth conceptual and empirical analysis (Ostrom et al., 2010; Page and Schirr, 2008). However, most researchers agree that service innovation is essential to the short- and long-term success of service and industrial enterprises (De Jong, Bruins, Dolsma & Meijgaard, 2003; Tidd & Hull, 2003; Bryson & Monnoyer, 2004; Matear, Gray, & Garrett, 2004; Lu, Lin, & Wu, 2005; Miles, 2005; Berry, Shankar, Parish, Cadwallader & Dotzel, 2006; Kjellberg, Azimont, & Reid, 2015). Similarly, Cusumano, Kahl and Suarez (2015) consider that service innovation is a source of competitive advantage which increases customer satisfaction. In addition, in the literature on service innovation, their effect on financial performance is generally discussed. First of all, service innovations are proposed to increase the operating profit of a company by reducing its operational costs (Lawler, 2005; Richmond, 2008) or by increasing sales

revenues (Hipp, Tether, & Miles, 2000; De Jong & Vermeulen, 2003; Mansury & Love, 2008). On the other hand, are proposed to increase the profitability of the company (Lievens & Moenaert, 2000); (Matear et al, 2004). The problematic of our research revolves around the following questioning: What is the link between service innovation and financial performance? This suggests the following hypothesis:

H0: Financial services innovation positively influences financial performance.

To answer this, we will first clarify several important key concepts such as service innovation and the concept of performance. Thereafter, we will try to establish the link between service innovation and performance to validate or refute the initial hypothesis. Finally, we will present a classification of financial institutions according to service innovation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The concept of service innovation

Drawing on a Schumpeterian approach, Toivonen and Tuominen (2009) defined service innovation as "a new service or a renewal of an existing service which is put into practice and which brings benefits to the organization that developed it". In the professional service of companies such as management consulting and law firms, service innovation is considered to be "the creation of new areas of practice (Anand et al. 2007; Gardner et al. 2008) which take advantage of the internet to develop new insurance services (Barrett and Gendron 2006; Gendron and Barrett 2004) in order to diversify into new markets". Most of the work focused on service innovation has been carried out in various sectors. Especially in avant-garde industries such as financial services (Barras 1986, 1990); in public sector services, where open standards and oversight facilitate the disintegration of services and their reintegration aggregation around what have been called service ecosystems (Fishenden and Thompson 2012), and finally, in the legal sector (Sako 2009, 2010), where we examine how digital innovation

facilitates the disintegration of global value chains. While it appears that innovation is increasingly becoming an important driver of business competitiveness, the very nature of service innovation seems to receive limited attention from both managers and academics. As Menor et al. (2002) point out; there are still key challenges and opportunities in this area.

Current research on service innovation does not always identify the different types or categories of service innovation in their analysis (Johnson et al. 2000; Menor et al. 2002). Therefore, Menor et al. (2002) highlight the specific gaps in research into innovation of new services associated with the fundamental question "How does the NSD process differ given the specific characteristics of the service?" As a domain, Menor et al. (2002) reveal that they have struggled not only to differentiate the types of service innovation in their research, but also that considerable work needs to be done to understand the underlying relationships between service innovation and business performance.

However, researchers have proposed several typologies of service innovation that respond to this first problem. One of the key criteria that have been used as the basis for establishing the typology is the degree of radicality of the innovation. To this end, studying service innovation on the basis of the degree of novelty or novelty is now a common way of categorizing innovation (Sundbo, 1997; Toivonen & Tuominen, 2009). A separation involves dividing innovations into radical and incremental, where radical usually refers to innovations that are new to the world and progressive innovations are those that are new to the market (Sundbo, 1997). From this perspective, innovations that are new only to the company that adopts them should not be considered as innovation.

From another point of view, Avlonitis and Al. (2001) propose a typology which classifies service innovation into six different types: new services on the market, new services for companies, new delivery processes, service modifications, service range extensions and service repositioning. This typology reflects a continuum of the range of innovations from discontinuous (radical) innovation to continuous (incremental) innovation (de Brentani, 2001). Radical innovation is fundamentally different from incremental innovation (Ettlie et al, 1984; Dewar and Dutton, 1986; McDermott and O'Connor, 2002).

In accordance with this service logic, Den Hertog (2000) recognizes four dimensions of service innovation (novelty), namely in the concept of service, the customer interface, the service delivery system, and technology, with many service innovations involving a combination of these four dimensions (Miles 2008). Others have argued that since particular customer services in a particular circumstance, services should be viewed as emerging, interactive and dynamic, as well as knowledge and information intensive communication flows between suppliers and customers (Miles 2008). As a result, service innovation can emerge as an ad hoc innovation arising from the exchange of services as well as by anticipation innovations.

2.2. The concept of performance

Performance remains an ambiguous notion that needs to be clarified and dissected before elucidating its link with service innovation.

Performance can be defined as the achievement of results in relation to set objectives and the means and resources mobilized. In this it is linked to the concepts of effectiveness (ability to achieve objectives) and efficiency (ability to achieve objectives within the limits of the means implemented). According to Lorino (1997), "is performance in the enterprise, all that, and only what, contributes to achieving the strategic objectives". According to Boyer, this notion of performance can also be summed up as the idea of success or success for the company or even that of value creation noted by Oubrahim and Benlahcen (2019) who speaks of "the strategic and managerial approach of performance" by equating it with "the adoption of good practices contributing to the creation of value". The concept of performance therefore makes it possible to assess the implementation of strategies carried out by firms.

From another point of view, Bourguignon (1995) has grouped 3 senses to define performance in management sciences:

- The first meaning is performance synonymous with success: this meaning is subjective and depends on success from the point of view of the observer;
- The second meaning is performance synonymous with result: this meaning relates to the objective result of an action and therefore to the concept of value;
- The third meaning is performance synonymous with action: this meaning refers to the implementation of an action or a process (putting a skill into practice is a possible performance).

In summary, according to these three senses, the idea of performance relates to the action first and then to the result observed subsequently (Pesqueux, 2002). Finally, another aspect of the definition of performance is added by Bessire (1999), namely, that performance is the result of logical and rational decisions having coherence between them. Furthermore, for a long time, performance was measured only by profit, thus being considered as a one-dimensional concept. The sole objective was financial and essentially consisted in maximizing the profitability of the shareholders through the increase of turnover and market share. These elements were therefore the only measures of the company's performance. However, this purely financial conception has been criticized by a number of authors (Dohou-Renaud, 2007; Bouquin, 2004; Lebas, 1995). The latter considered this financial dimension to be a short-term conception (Kaplan & Norton, 1996), and unsuited to a complex environmental context. Because, several dimensions must be mastered and several actors must be taken into account such as suppliers, customers, partners, employees.

Because they greatly participate in the development of the business and must therefore be listened to and satisfied.

Thus, the approach to performance has evolved to become broader and therefore multidimensional. We therefore begin to speak of the concept of global performance which, according to Baret (2000), is "the aggregation of economic, social and environmental performance" or according to Lepetit (1997) "a multidimensional aim (or goal), economic, social and societal, financial and environmental, which concerns businesses as well as human societies, both employees and citizens". Performance is therefore considered on several aspects and the choice of aspect (s) taken into account in its measurement will be made according to the contexts. In certain contexts, financial performance (profitability) will be sufficient. In others, it will also be necessary to see economic performance (competitiveness) or even process performance or organizational (efficiency) or social performance or even legal performance (solvency).

Ultimately, the definition of performance shows us that performance is necessary for any organization, but its measurement remains complex because it involves monitoring many performance indicators as well as the involvement of many actors. Whatever the nature of the performance, the most important is that it is sustainable, that is to say that the positive results allowing the performance are repeated over time (Pinto, 2003). But, what is the link between performance and service innovation?

2.3. Resource Theory as a Framework For Performance And Innovation.

Resource-based theory (RBV / RBT) has been widely used in performance studies (Innocent, 2015). RBV also tries to answer the following question: how can organizations achieve competitive advantage over other organizations in the same sector and improve their performance?

To this end, the RBV considered that an organization contained the different types of organizational resources such as asset resources, resource capacities, process resources, management skills, technological resources and knowledge (Barney, 1991). In addition, Hsu and Pereira (2008) stated that RBV helps the organization to identify its internal resource system which not only enables it to improve organizational performance, but also creates competitive advantage for the organization.

In another aspect, evolutionary models assume that the learning and innovation processes are aimed at the pursuit of better performance. Companies are therefore divided between the allocation of their resources intended for the exploitation of their knowledge and the exploration of new procedures or new products (process or product innovations), likely to generate higher rents. At the firm level, innovation is the pledge to maintain and strengthen the primary properties of R&A, and therefore the sustainability of competitive advantage and performance. Innovation is therefore a source of transformations of conditions, both internal and external to the firm of appropriation of idiosyncratic rents.

In essence, resource-based theory explains the differences in performance between firms relative to internal factors or at the firm level (Wernerfelt, 1984) and the effects of innovation as a specific firm resource.

2.4. The Link between Service Innovation and Performance

After understanding the context in which service innovation emerged, as well as the research that was developed for it - it is possible to appreciate the potential of the subject in carrying out research involving many organizations, public or private. In this context, one of the concepts that has gained importance in studies on the subject of service innovation is performance.

According to Prajogo (2006), the need to find sources of competitive advantage in the service sector - especially when considering innovation as a source of competitive advantage (and its implications for performance) has further in addition attracted the attention of researchers. The concept of performance in relation to building service innovation can be studied from different perspectives.

With more micro aspects, some research has sought to understand the existing relationship between performance and service innovation implemented in organizations (Chong and Zhou, 2014, Hsueh et al, 2010; Kang and Kang, 2014, Kirner et al., 2009). From a more macro perspective, other studies have focused on the impact of service innovation on the company's overall performance (Lin, 2013, McDermott and Prajogo, 2012, Melton and Hartline, 2013, Ordanini and Rubera, 2010). From this latter perspective, innovation is considered to be a powerful factor explaining the differences in performance between companies (Fagerberg, 2005). So there are several reasons for the increased interest in research aimed at addressing the interfaces between service innovation and performance. The economic growth of the service sector and its importance in the development of society have allowed service innovation to be considered as a new factor of economic progress (Barcet, 2010, Gallouj, 2007). In this sense, the achievement of innovation allows better organizational performance, which is reflected in growth and productivity (Cainelli, Evangelista and Savona, 2006). In addition, the globalization of economies has fostered a new reality, allowing the creation of businesses that were previously unimaginable. In light of this, organizations seek innovation and better performance, aiming to compete and differentiate themselves in their respective markets (Baregheh and al, 2009, Yokomizo, 2014).

H0: Financial services innovation positively influences financial performance.

3. Methodology

As part of this research, we retain a sample of 117 financial institutions. 95 usable responses were entered into SPSS-19 for reliability verification. The data collection method is the questionnaire. It was preferred because of its convenience

and ease of administration. This questionnaire was administered to account managers and / or managers over a period from 2018-2019. The scope of this study was limited to service innovations present in financial institutions geographically limited to the Littoral, Center, and West regions due to their strong representation in these areas.

This taking into account the objectives of the research, the level of significance desired, the statistical technique used, the cost and time constraints and the size of the population.

Yen et al. (2012) developed measures for service innovation based on the definition of Ostrom et al. (2010) in terms of three dimensions. As this study considers a multidimensional approach to service innovation, it therefore uses different forms that service innovation can take in any organization. Service innovation can take the form of radical service innovation, incremental service innovation or quality of service. Therefore, a total scale of 7 elements is used in this study to measure the multidimensional concept of service innovation. The 5-point likert scale was chosen for the measurement of service innovation is chosen to capture the multidimensional nature of it.

The measures for service innovation use Likert-type scales with 5 points anchored strongly agree (5) strongly disagree (1).

The financial performance measure also uses a 5-point Likert-type scale, but is anchored to a very high figure represented by (5) and very low by (1). The measures of quantification of the variables are fairly well established. Therefore, their validity may not be the concern, as Sekaran and Bougie (2016) say, "when well-validated measures are used, there is of course no need to reinstate their validity for each study". The reliability of the articles can however be tested.

All measurements showed high internal consistency with Cronbach alpha above 0.7, which Nunnally (1978) recommended.

4. Result

4.1 Regression

With regard to radical service innovation in financial institutions in Cameroon, it is clear that since the p value is 0, that the relationship between radical service innovation and financial performance is significant. Therefore, it cannot be concluded that radical financial service innovation has a negative correlation with financial performance ($b = -0.274$). Finding that we are also doing with quality innovation (.870), which has a positive correlation with financial performance So, we conclude that there is a mixed relationship between service innovation and financial performance. We can therefore conclude that each financial institution should better think of their new financial service innovation as improved so that it can have a significant influence on their financial performance.

Table 1: Regression analysis result

	Financial performance		
	R2	Sig	Coef
Ino-rad	0.706	0.034	-0.274
Ino-qual	0.706	0.021	0.87
Ino-inc	0.706	0.833	-0.374

Source : Author

4.2 Classification

The hierarchical analyzes were carried out using SPAD 5.5 software on the various groups of individuals made up, in this case by financial institutions. The search for a better partition made it possible to highlight a classification in relation to the legal form into 4 classes recorded above.

Table 2: Classification of financial institutions into 4 classes

Classes	Institutions financières		
1/4	EMF2 EMF2 4 EMF2 5	EMF2 2 EMF2 6 EMF2 3	SA
2/4	Banque Banque 3 Banque 6 SNC	Banque 2 Banque 5 Banque 4 SA	
3/4		EMF1	
4/4		SARL	

Source: Author

5. Discussion

Analysis of service innovation shows that new financial services and the quality of these services significantly influence the variable financial performance within financial institutions. On the other hand, the link associated with hypotheses of improvement in financial service is not significant in terms of financial performance. We note that innovation in financial services within Cameroonian financial institutions is both radical. This result is similar to that of Al-Ansari et al. (2013) who finds that radical innovation has been the main type of innovation in SMEs. On the other hand, this assertion disagrees with Storey (1994) who finds that compared to larger companies, SMEs are more able to make additional innovations due to their scarce resources and niche roles in the market, but that some companies have no ambition for growth or take risks by developing new products and services and are often content with existing products and services, regardless of changes to their external environment.

In addition, this service innovation is also based on the quality of service. However, we note that, new financial services negatively influence financial performance. This can be explained by the fact that the customers of these financial institutions do not easily perceive the improvement in services linked to NICT. Furthermore, the majority of people who frequent these businesses are adults and elderly. And therefore are not very comfortable with the computer tool. This result raises the need to be concerned with the way in which financial institutions in Cameroon could make new innovations in financial services accepted not only by their employees but also by their customers. This result agrees

with the thinking of Artz et al. (2010), in the sense that this negation could result from the use of an inappropriate proxy for innovation, in its case patents and in ours the reconfiguration of these existing financial services. In our case, we believe that this difference may be due to the contingent environment in which Cameroonian financial institutions operate.

The classification of financial institutions shows that the average index for this dimension is 83/100. The main characteristic of this group is: For 2nd category EMFs, it is the main form of innovation found. It is both focused on new services and on the quality of services. Historically, microfinance has mainly referred to micro-credit. A micro credit corresponds to a small amount of credit intended primarily for people with little or no income. Only with the advent of ICT and the raging competition in the financial sector, they were forced to integrate new services to offer their customers very marginalized by traditional banks. These financial services will firstly help to significantly improve the living conditions of the populations. And secondly, these services are one of the factors for the success of the Sustainable Development Goals, since they allow, among other things, to promote and increase entrepreneurship.

We realize that microfinance places an emphasis on quality relating to service. In other words, its customers are sensitive to the improvement in the service that is offered. As precise operational information, cost reduction and customer satisfaction are essential to the success and survival of the banking sector.

5.1. Managerial implications

This research study offers many valuable implications for practice and theory. With regard to its practical implications, the results are important for a wide range of stakeholders.

The governments of developing countries where services represent a significant part of their economies can use the results of this study to formulate policies to innovate their service sectors to promote economic growth and well-being. By using the findings and ideas from this study, the performance of financial institutions can be improved. The results can also be generalized and extended to other services.

It also offers many valuable implications for managers in the service industries and service organizations. Managers can learn, engage and choose the optimal combination of various dimensions of service innovation to drive performance and gain a competitive advantage over their competitors. They can also learn how the different dimensions of service innovation interact to drive the financial performance of organizations. In this way, this study helps business leaders and department heads in their decision-making and the formulation of their strategy.

Individually, the link, both positive and negative, to financial performance, seems to suggest that for financial institutions to provide better financial services, leaders should take into

account the contingent environment within the organization. Thus, by integrating the contingent environment, in particular the values, the culture that encourages innovation, managers can help their organizations to become more sensitive to changes in the external environment and to become more competitive. As Drucker (1994) so well emphasizes; organizations characterized by a deep entrenchment of leadership practices and organizational values, risk success because they stop questioning the need to change and react to the external environment.

5.2. Theoretical implications

On a theoretical level, this study offers relevant implications and fills many identified gaps, in particular in the fields of service innovation management and performance management.

First, it helps to bring some conclusion by showing the significant impact of each dimension of service innovation on performance. Second, it fills the gap in empirical studies on service innovation in developing economies, with a service sector growing in total GDP. Studies on this subject have been avoided in developing countries which could probably be replete with this research effort. Third, the implications are also important for the theory of interrelationships between different modes of service innovation, as this study highlights the multidimensional nature of service innovation.

6. Limits and future directions of research

Like most studies, this research is not without its limitations. First, it is about external validity. More specifically, to what extent the results of this study can be generalized outside the banking sector of the country concerned and in other developing countries. The sample size was not large enough as there were time constraints that could hamper external validity and generalization of the results of this study across the service sector and in developing economies. The sample size is not large enough to allow us to use another method of analysis.

First, there is a question of external validity. In addition, the respondents were geographically limited to three regions in Cameroon (Littoral, Center and West). All of the above factors hinder the generalization of results.

Future research may focus on services such as hospitality, health, social, tourism, construction, household, etc. Different service innovation models, frameworks, typologies can be applied to different services, which can increase the potential of these sectors. Future research could also focus on developing full-fledged management and performance measurement matrices to capture multidimensional nature of service innovation and performance. Further research on the service innovation strategy and process can provide valuable information in this area.

All of these research directions encourage a wide range of stakeholders to turn to this potential promising area of

research to improve the performance of their organizations and economies and create a competitive and sustainable advantage and the well-being of companies.

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