

Towards a framework for New Service Development Practices

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Abstract. Different frameworks for New Service Development (NSD) practices have been suggested by prior conceptual research. We have assessed three frameworks frequently referred to in extant research, and exposed how these three cover different dimensions of NSD practices. By exploring the practices of NSD empirically, this paper continues the ongoing discussion of what the relevant aggregated dimensions of NSD practices are. The detailed practices identified by interviewing 25 employees, all with key roles in relation to NSD in five large Scandinavian service firms, about their NSD practices, are clustered into three aggregated overarching dimensions of NSD practices: 1) identifying needs, 2) assuring support and 3) dividing work. The findings suggest that the NSD process is the prime focus of NSD practices and that different resources are integral parts. The findings provide both managerial implications and implications for further research.

Keywords. New Service Development, service innovation, practice theory

1 Introduction

The potential role of New Service Development (NSD) in creating financial performance and competitive advantage for both service and manufacturing firms is increasingly acknowledged (e.g. Aas & Pedersen, 2011). At the same time, frameworks of successful NSD practices remain scarce (den Hertog, van der Aa, & de Jong, 2010). Recently, Lusch and Nambisan (2015) suggested that the core value of both services and products are the utility they render. However, the innovation process for physical products as opposed to intangible services can be very different. In particular, den Hertog et al. (2010) explain how service innovation involves multiple dimensions ranging from changes to the service concept, customer interaction and business models, to technical and organizational changes. In spite of this, the empirical innovation management literature has focused primarily on the development of new physical products when exploring the practices that firms undertake when they innovate successfully (K. B. Kahn, Barczak, & Moss, 2006).

An extensive series of empirical studies has identified relevant practices when new physical products are developed (K. B. Kahn et al., 2006). Insights from this empirical

research stream have formed the basis for developing frameworks of New Product Development (NPD) practices and for suggesting normative advice for NPD managers. Because of this research stream the Product Development and Management Association (PDMA), for example, now applies strategy, portfolio management, process, tools, metrics, market research, teams, people, and organizational issues as key aggregated dimensions in their framework of NPD practices (PDMA, 2016). This framework works as a guide for NPD practices research (Kenneth B. Kahn, Barczak, Nicholas, Ledwith, & Perks, 2012), as well as a guide for practitioners and the training of practitioners (PDMA, 2016).

Due to the differences between services and products and between service innovation and product innovation (Droege, Hildebrand, & Forcada, 2009), there is, however, no guarantee that the frameworks based on studies of physical product innovation are also relevant for NSD. From a managerial perspective, this gap in the literature is disconcerting. Managers need to facilitate efficient practices to succeed with innovation, and due to the lack of frameworks of NSD practices, and lack of corresponding normative guidance, this is now a difficult and hazardous task for managers pursuing a business strategy reliant upon NSD (den Hertog et al., 2010). A recent review of the NSD research literature even concludes that the literature “fails to provide managers with consistent answers to basic questions about how to most effectively manage NSD processes” (Biemans, Griffin, & Moenaert, 2015, p. 1).

An important first step in improving this situation would be to develop a framework of the key aggregated dimensions of NSD practices, like those developed for NPD. There have already been a few attempts at this in the literature, but the few frameworks suggested are predominantly based on conceptual discussions (den Hertog et al., 2010; Froehle & Roth, 2007). We therefore argue that more empirical research is needed to confirm, or alternatively contradict, the NSD practices frameworks suggested by prior conceptual research. Therefore, in this paper our aim is to contribute to filling this literature gap by asking the following research question (RQ): What are the key aggregated dimensions of NSD practices that firms undertake to succeed with their NSD efforts?

Instead of deploying a conceptual theory-based top-down approach, like prior research, to answer this question, we follow an empirical bottom-up approach where the starting point is the identification of NSD practices, and where these practices then are aggregated into key NSD practices dimensions on higher levels. The paper is structured in the following way: In the next section, we review the literature discussing NPD and NSD practices as well as practice theory. In the third section, we describe the empirical method deployed to answer the RQ. The findings are reported in the fourth section. In the two latter sections, we discuss the findings and conclude.

2 Literature review

To elucidate the research question, we need to combine insights from the results of NPD and NSD practices research together with practice theory; highlighting practices of service development necessitates a thorough understanding of practices as phenomena; the different frameworks all refer to practices without engaging in what

practices are. Recently, Aas, Breunig, Hydle, and Pedersen (2015) assessed the relevance of extant NPD frameworks for NSD and identified PDMA (2011) and Froehle and Roth (2007) as the two most frequently cited frameworks. In addition den Hertog et al. (2010) introduce an understanding of the multidimensional service innovation process. All three frameworks claim to offer insight into NSD practices, and consequently, we compare these frameworks to assess the aggregate dimensions suggested.

2.1 Dimensions of NPD Practices

The innovation management literature has focused primarily on the development of new physical products when exploring the practices that firms undertake when they innovate (K. B. Kahn et al., 2006). This research stream has resulted in a set of aggregated innovation practices dimensions. K. B. Kahn et al. (2006) for example, suggest that NPD practices are delineated across six dimensions: 1) strategy, 2) portfolio management, 3) process, 4) market research, 5) people, and 6) metrics and performance measurement.

Similar aggregated practices dimensions are used by professional NPD organizations and associations, such as the Product Development and Management Association (PDMA) when they for example carry out best practices surveys (e.g. PDMA, 2011) and certification work (PDMA, 2016). In their latest NPD best practices survey, PDMA uses the following NPD dimensions: 1) culture, 2) strategy, 3) portfolio management, 4) process, 5) front end, 6) tools and 7) measures and metrics (PDMA, 2011), and in their latest certification work seven similar aggregated NPD dimensions are deployed: 1) strategy, 2) portfolio management, 3) process, 4) tools, 5) metrics, 6) market research and 7) teams, people, and organizational issues as dimensions (PDMA, 2016).

Although the practices dimensions used by PDMA are a result of research on the development of physical products, they have also been used by several researchers as a framework for studying NSD practices empirically (K. B. Kahn et al., 2006; Zomerdijk & Voss, 2011). However, due to differences between products and services and between NPD and NSD (Droege et al., 2009) it is unclear to what degree the NPD practices dimensions are suited to guide empirical studies of NSD practices.

2.2 Dimensions of NSD Practices

The attempts to develop frameworks of the key dimensions of NSD practices are limited, and the few frameworks suggested in the literature are predominantly based on conceptual discussions. A recent example of a framework derived from theory, is “the resource-process framework of NSD” suggested by (Froehle & Roth, 2007). This framework suggests two key dimensions of NSD practices: resource-oriented practices and process-oriented practices, and the authors further suggest that the resource-oriented practices may be subdivided into intellectual resources, organizational resources and physical resources, whereas the process-oriented practices may be subdivided into design stage, analysis stage, development stage and launch stage.

Froehle and Roth (2007) also conduct an empirical study (i.e., multiple rounds of interviews and card-sorting exercises with senior service managers) to detail the description of NSD practices within each dimension, and based on this exploration they

suggest 45 detailed constructs for NSD related practices. However, the aggregated top-level NSD practices dimensions are not discussed in light of empirical findings. Consequently, there is a risk that if these aggregated levels are irrelevant for NSD, the 45 detailed constructs they derive are inaccurate.

Another example of a conceptual study suggesting a framework of NSD practices dimensions is den Hertog et al. (2010). Based on insights mainly from the strategic management literature, the authors discuss conceptually what activities firms should undertake to build the capabilities needed to succeed with NSD. Although the authors do not use the term “innovation practices”, their suggested framework may be perceived as a framework describing the practices firms undertake to build (service) innovation capabilities, thus a framework of NSD practices. Perceived like this the framework suggested by den Hertog et al. (2010) consists of six dimensions of NSD practices: 1) signalling user needs and technological options, 2) conceptualizing, 3) (un-)bundling, 4) co-producing and orchestrating, 5) scaling and stretching and 6) learning and adapting. The frameworks are set out in Table 1.

Table 1. The frameworks for new products and service development practices

Source	Froehle and Roth (2007)	den Hertog et al. (2010)	PDMA (2011)
Framework	7 dimensions for best practices for management of service innovation	6 dynamic service innovation capabilities	7 dimensions of best NPD practices
Dimensions	<i>Process oriented practices</i> 1) design stage 2) analysis stage 3) development stage 4) launch stage <i>Resource oriented practices</i> 5) intellectual resources 6) organizational resources 7) physical resources	1) signalling user needs and technological options 2) conceptualizing 3) (un-)bundling 4) co-producing and orchestrating 5) scaling and stretching 6) learning and adapting	1) strategy 2) portfolio management 3) process 4) tools 5) metrics 6) market research 7) teams, people, and organizational issues

From these frameworks, little can be understood about the actual activities taking place and how these activities are performed. The frameworks of both den Hertog et al. (2010) and Froehle and Roth (2007) are based on theoretical discussions where the theoretical insights are used to derive relevant practices dimensions. There is a risk, however, that these theoretically derived “maps” are inconsistent with the real activities or practices implemented by firms. Furthermore, there is little focus on customers and customer interaction. This is particularly concerning since client interaction and co-production is in extant research regarded as highly relevant and important in service development (Chesbrough, 2011; Fosstenlökken, Løwendahl, & Revang, 2003; Gronroos, 2000; Løwendahl, 2005; Normann & Ramirez, 1993; Ramirez, 1999; Skjølsvik, Løwendahl, Kvålshaugen, & Fosstenlökken, 2007; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). To extend knowledge on the actual activities being performed during service development, we lean on practice theory. Practice theory has been used in numerous empirical studies to identify what people actually do (Jarzabkowski, 2003; Orlikowski, 2000; T. R. Schatzki, 1996; Whittington, 2006)

2.3 Practice theory

Studying the practices of service development requires an understanding of the activities involved. Practices consist of activities, which again are different actions of doing and saying (T. Schatzki, 2010, 2012). These doings and sayings are bodily actions, which are intentional actions for the sake of performing a project towards a given end. Action is what is done, while the activity is the performing and the doing. A practice is composed of multiple activities involving teleological orders that are normative regarding what should be done and what is accepted within a specific practice. The activities of a practice are performed by multiple people; the practices are social phenomena (T. Schatzki, Knorr Cetina, & von Savigny, 2001). T. Schatzki (2005) argues that practices are non-individualist phenomena: "It is people, to be sure, that perform the actions that compose a practice. But the organization of a practice is not a collection of properties of individual people. It is a feature of the practice, expressed in the open-ended set of actions that composes the practice" (p. 480). The activities of a practice are performed by using material entities such as ICT (Orlikowski, 2007; T. Schatzki, 2012). Thus, organized human activities are practices.

Uncovering the practices of NSD, thus requires us to identify the different activities involved to reach a new service. Therefore, instead of deploying a top-down conceptual approach like den Hertog et al. (2010) and Froehle and Roth (2007) to derive the relevant innovation practices dimensions for NSD, we start with the activities to uncover the practices, and then these practices are aggregated into practices dimensions on higher levels.

3 Research methods

To view the recurrent activities performed while developing services, we chose a qualitative case oriented research approach to identify NSD practices. The study is based on empirical case materials derived from interviews with twenty-five informants from five large international Scandinavian service firms. The five firms selected operated in both business to consumers and business-to-business markets; they all provided services both to other firms and to consumers. The five firms provided different types of services: One firm provided telecom services, three firms provided financial and insurance services and one firm provided logistics services. All firms were successful in the market, as they had expanded beyond the national border to more than three countries.

Between four and eight employees in each firm were interviewed. We followed a semi-structured interview guide, where the informants were asked open questions about how they conduct innovation activities. Each interview lasted between one and two hours. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. To reflect the overall NSD practices of the firms, informants with different roles, and from different levels of the firm, were chosen: Top/line managers, project/innovation managers and specialists. During the interviews, we investigated what the employees did, the types of problems the employees solved, what kind of tools they used and how the actors interacted. Table 2 provides details on the interviews.

Table 2. Data sources

	Key informants	Management	Innovation	IT	Other	Total
Insurance	1	1	1	1		4
Telecommunications	1	2	2	2	1	8
Banking	1	1	1	1	1	5
Mail services	1	1		1	1	4
Insurance & banking	1	1	2			4
Total	5	6	6	5	3	25

To make sense of the data, the analysis progressed in several stages. First, the material was thoroughly discussed and made into presentation form in Power Point. The aim was to present it to selected employees and managers in the firms to validate the data's veracity and enhance the trustworthiness of the analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Second, the data was examined in light of the research question, specifically looking at how service innovation was performed in the firms, and the data was coded in two main steps which focused on informant centric and research centric coding respectively (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). According to what the practitioners told us that they did, we coded their explanations according to the language they used into first-order categories. Then we clustered them together into different groups, being researcher induced concepts and second-order themes. Further, these second order themes were assembled in overarching dimensions to gain a theoretical framework that linked the practitioners' explanations of their ways of performing service innovation.

4 Analysis

The findings from interviewing those who were involved in and managed NSD in the case organizations resulted in the identification of a great number of detailed first-order categories of successful NSD practices. A small, but representative, selection of these first-order categories is provided in Table 3 in the form of representative quotes. The clustering of these first-order categories of NSD practices resulted in the identification of six second-order NSD practices categories: 1) initiating projects, 2) focusing on customers, 3) legitimizing, 4) convincing, 5) involving units and 6) collaborating. These six second-order categories of NSD practices were then grouped into the following three overarching key dimensions of NSD practices: 1) identifying needs, 2) assuring support, and 3) dividing work.

Table 3. Empirical data supporting interpretations of NSD practices

1st order dimensions of NSD practices (representative quotes)	2nd order dimensions of NSD practices	Overarching dimensions of NSD practices
"I started out by asking, 'Ok, what do we want? Why shall we stake a lot on the youth segment? What do we need?' ...I do not want ideas, as the only things that count are deliveries. And ideas are not a problem when you know what you want...it is about rewinding and asking what kind of needs do we solve... it is a handcraft, to be worked on, using time and energy, to systematize and try	Initiating project	Identifying needs

1st order dimensions of NSD practices (representative quotes)	2nd order dimensions of NSD practices	Overarching dimensions of NSD practices
to think of customer scenarios. Try to think which areas are suitable to compete in and deliver something..."		
"So, I started with a concrete area where there would be substantial differences for the customers and went on to prove it. I then got responsibility for the project 'Simplification' and took on that project. It suited me well to start here due to the 275,000 customers involved."	Focusing on customers	
"It is a fine line: What do customers want? And we ask in many forums, like 'What can we do better?' Then we ask questions covering what customers think we should solve. And there are a lot of good answers. That is one way of doing it. Another way is to try to think what customers need that the customers don't know that they need. Because I work in a bank, I know that this and that would be damn good for the customers to get. So, then I try to catch both these perspectives."		
"I got the project... And I made a budget which I presented to the steering committee. As all projects do. There is a steering committee for all the projects I lead...I put forward a document to the steering committee and held this presentation: what are we going to do, what is the solution, what are we changing, a gross prototype, yes we have to work with the first page...When I presented this to them, we found out that it was a good idea...There were logical arguments mixed with ethos: our competitor had done it, and pathos: we can't rule this out. All together it made them say yes, go for it."	Legitimizing	Assuring support
"It is as if my job is a talking job, I go around and talk and talk, and I get so fed up of my own voice. And I get people to meet and often it gets to, 'Why don't you talk with him, why don't you know each other?' Then they answer, 'I have never talked to him' and I reply, 'But I know that he is sitting and working on exactly the same things as you do.' I take it for granted that people collaborate, if not we won't make it. That is why all these ideas have been lying around unsolved, because they have not collaborated...So mainly it is about walking around, talking to people and making them talk together."	Convincing	
"What I did? I approached the management group, for instance, for e-business and marketing and asked who the right human resources were and got the manager for the unit to recommend me. And from then on I have worked very closely with e-business and marketing."	Involving units	
"We have some agencies that we have an overall agreement with. For instance, an advertising agency and they are really good in digital services, and then we have a PR agency as well. So, it is not about getting more agencies on board, but on using the agencies we have an agreement with, the right way. Because then we have the network, we know they deliver. And then I have worked a lot with some people in our IT department who are way ahead in relation to services. And that is so much fun. A thing I just initiated: There is a conference named 'Innovate' taking place in London and San Francisco twice a year, and I took one person from IT and one from e-business there to assure that we have the same understanding since we are dependent on each other to succeed in what we do."	Collaborating	Dividing work

Source: Authors' research.

From a NSD point of view *identifying needs* refers to the activities conducted by employees to focus on customers' needs and initiate NSD projects (sometimes in the reverse order) to become more competitive and to differentiate the services from others in the market. *Assuring support* refers to the activities conducted by employees to

legitimize and convince the group of internal decision makers (e.g. boards and managers) and other internal stakeholders (experts and “ordinary” employees) that investment in the NSD project is worthwhile. *Dividing work* refers to the activities conducted to involve both internal and external people, and define their tasks and roles, to enable the successful implementation of the NSD project.

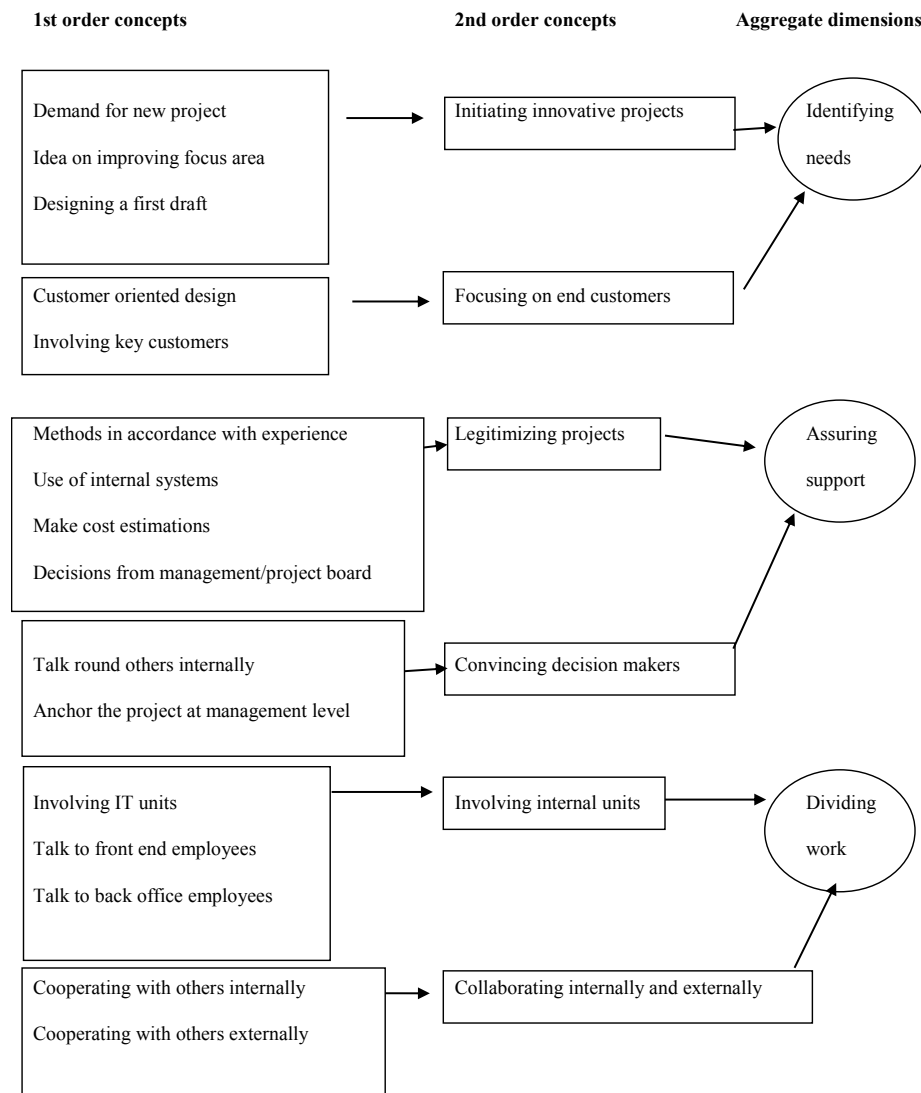


Fig. 1. NSD practices framework. Source: Author’s work

5 Discussion

Our study is an empirical contribution to the ongoing discussion on what the key dimensions of NSD practices are. To answer our research question – What are the key aggregated dimensions of NSD practices that firms undertake to succeed with their NSD efforts? – we compared the existing frameworks, used practice theory to uncover activities performed for new service development and identified empirically different dimensions than those already theoretically derived. When we compare our findings with the NSD practices frameworks suggested by prior conceptual research (den Hertog et al., 2010; Froehle & Roth, 2007) we observe that we have relatively different findings (Table 3). For example, our findings suggest that the resource-oriented practices dimension suggested by Froehle and Roth (2007) should not be perceived as an overarching dimension since intellectual resources, organizational resources and physical resources are integral parts in all the dimensions. Our findings suggest that such intellectual, organizational and physical resources are integrated into the different activities and they should hence not be separate parts. Thus, for NSD it does not seem to be relevant to build a set of general NSD resources that can be used during the entire NSD process. Rather, it seems to be important to focus on what is needed for the different activities to be performed, then facilitate, and enable the resources that are needed for these activities (our second-order themes).

Our findings are more similar to the framework suggested by den Hertog et al. (2010); den Hertog et al. (2010) dimensions called “signalling user needs and technological options”, “conceptualizing” and “(un-)bundling” correspond to a certain degree with our “identifying needs” dimension, and den Hertog et al. (2010) dimensions called “co-producing and orchestrating”, “scaling and stretching” and “learning and adapting” correspond to a certain degree with our “dividing work” dimension. However, there seems to be one important distinction between our framework and that of den Hertog et al. (2010): Our overarching dimension called “assuring support” seems to be lacking (or at least hidden in sub-dimensions) in den Hertog et al. (2010) framework, whereas our findings suggest that this is a key dimension of NSD practices.

Table 4. Key dimensions of new service development practices

Key dimensions (the present study)	NSD activity focus (the present study)	NSD project focus (Froehle & Roth, 2007)	NSD capabilities focus (den Hertog et al., 2010)	NPD process focus (PDMA, 2011)
Identifying needs	1) initiating projects 2) focusing on customers	1) design stage 2) analysis stage [5) <i>intellectual resources</i> 6) <i>organizational resources</i> 7) <i>physical resources</i>]	1) signalling user needs and technological options 2) conceptualizing 3) (un-)bundling	1) strategy 6) market research
Assuring support	3) legitimizing 4) convincing	3) development stage 4) launch stage		2) portfolio management 5) metrics

Key dimensions (the present study)	NSD activity focus (the present study)	NSD project focus (Froehle & Roth, 2007)	NSD capabilities focus (den Hertog et al., 2010)	NPD process focus (PDMA, 2011)
		[5] <i>intellectual resources</i> 6) <i>organizational resources</i> 7) <i>physical resources</i>]		
Dividing work	5) involving units 6) collaborating	[5] <i>intellectual resources</i> 6) <i>organizational resources</i> 7) <i>physical resources</i>]	4) co-producing and orchestrating 5) scaling and stretching 6) learning and adapting	3) process 4) tools 7) teams, people, and organizational issues

Source: Authors' research, (den Hertog et al., 2010; Froehle & Roth, 2007; PDMA, 2011).

By comparing the different dimensions in existing NSD and NPD frameworks, it becomes clear that the key focus of the different frameworks varies (see Table 4), e.g.:

- Froehle and Roth (2007) have a NSD project focus as all their dimensions are related to the stages of NSD projects with a prime focus on the resources needed to conduct the projects. In contrast, our findings suggest that the prime focus should be on the activities to be undertaken and the resources form integral part of these activities.
- den Hertog et al. (2010) have a NSD capabilities focus, as their dimensions expose service innovation capabilities within an organization. However, a focus on capabilities has a viewpoint on the organization. Our focus on activities highlights what to do, where agency is integral.
- The PDMA (2011) framework exposes dimensions with a focus on managing NPD processes. The PDMA focus exposes what the organizations should have in place, instead of what to do for new service development as in our activity framework.

In contrast, the key focus of the framework resulting from our empirical approach is the NSD activities. Our findings expose key activities that focus on customers and work division, indicating who is involved during NSD activities. Our findings thus confirm earlier research that has found that a focus on customers and customer interactions is important for service development (Fosstenlökken et al., 2003; Gronroos, 2000; Løwendahl, 2005; Skjølvsvik et al., 2007), and research highlighting the importance of involving relevant actors (de Brentani, 2001). However, our findings show which activities are performed during NSD and reveal that customer focus is at play, extending the existing frameworks. Furthermore, our activity focus exposes what is necessary to do for the actors involved. Our activity focus is therefore different from the other frameworks: which resources are necessary to have (Froehle & Roth, 2007); or which capabilities to enable (den Hertog et al., 2010); or what an organization needs to have in place for NSD (PDMA, 2011).

6 Conclusion

By using practice theory and empirically exploring what actors actually do, we have identified three aggregate dimensions of service innovation practices. The implication of these three aggregate dimensions to extant innovation management theory is that they integrate the dimensions suggested in prior research. The three dimensions suggested reveal the different dominant focus previous studies have had on the different aggregate dimensions involved in service innovation. By comparing and contrasting frameworks suggested in existing research we show how these largely overlap and focus on the NSD project, service innovation capabilities or what the organizations need to have for the actual NPD process. In addition, extant frameworks emphasize to a limited degree customer interaction and the allocation of work.

The new framework of NSD practices suggested in the paper may serve as a valuable guiding map to managers aiming to improve the NSD practices of their firm. By using practice theory, the normative advices are integral, since we highlight which activities are at stake within the practices of developing new services.

However, our research design does have limitations since the research has been conducted in a specific service sub-sector, i.e. large service firms providing standardized services at a large scale, and it is difficult to assess whether the findings are generalizable to firms in other service sectors. Due to the small sample size, the findings cannot be generalized which is why we urge future studies to test the framework. Another limitation is that we have not performed a practice-based study, following all the activities through participant observation during a NSD project. Instead, we opted to ask several involved practitioners in retrospect to uncover the different activities involved in several firms. Thus, further empirical research is needed in different service contexts to validate and confirm the relevance of our findings for NSD in general.

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