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## Using customer journey mapping to improve public services: A critical analysis of the literature

### 1. Introduction

One of the tasks of public administration is to provide services whose recipients are people living in a given territory, as well as enterprises and other organizations based there. In order to carry out the tasks entrusted to them effectively and efficiently, and to ensure the highest quality of services, offices are constantly looking for solutions to improve their functioning. This is one of the reasons why, for several decades, many countries have seen a dynamic development of interest in issues related to quality management in public space. In the literature on the subject, there are numerous cases of using such solutions in the public sector as system quality management in accordance with ISO 9001 (Singh and Mansour-Nahra; 2006, Ludwiczak, 2018), lean government (Krings et al. 1998; Hasenjager, 2006, Randor, 2010; Waterman et al. 2012), or TQM (Bowman and Hellein, 1998; Brandmüller, 2009; Matei and Săvulescu, 2011), which as the basic principles indicate the use of a process approach and customer orientation. This means that they should measure, analyze and improve processes in order to fully meet the needs and expectations of customers.

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Organizations today go even further. According to the concept of service domination logic, the client should not only be the entity evaluating the service, but also contribute to its value (Janas, 2016, p. 25, after: Vargo and Lusch 2004; Vargo and Lusch 2008). This approach is particularly important in the case of public services due to their non-commercial nature and the need to improve the quality of life of residents. For this reason, among others, one of the most important currents of research in public administration is the concept of creating value for the customer and co-production of public services. Osborne et al. (2018) emphasize that this topic is currently one of the cornerstones of public policy reform around the world.

Radnor and Johnston (2013) based on research conducted in public administration units applying lean management in Great Britain, point out that an important problem is focusing on improving processes aimed at improving their efficiency, without an understanding supported by evidence, who the client is and what are his/her requirements for the service. Di Pietro et al. (2013) also draw attention to the need to identify the client and his requirements in the process of improving processes in the implementation of lean government. Insufficient use of the client's voice in the process of improving the quality of public services is also confirmed by the author's own research on local government administration units in Poland. Research carried out in selected marshal offices indicate that customer satisfaction measurements are carried out to a limited extent and most often at the level of the entire office, and not in relation to specific service processes (Ludwiczak, 2014). Designing or improving public services without knowing how it is perceived by the client and where significant problems appear in the process that affect his overall satisfaction with the service may reduce the value created in the process. Therefore, it is necessary in this context to look for methods and tools supporting this aspect of process identification and analysis.

The literature on the subject indicates many solutions used in the practice of public administration related to collecting information from the client in relation to his satisfaction with services. The analysis conducted by Pukas (2015, p. 297) shows that the most frequently used method to assess customer satisfaction in the public administration offices it surveyed in Poland are: Customer Satisfaction Index, elements of the SERVQUAL method, as well as calculating the Net Promotor Score. The methods used in the practice of public organizations, such as the above-mentioned Customer Satisfaction Index, usually focus on the overall assessment of the service assessed by the customer in the context of various categories. This allows for an overall

assessment of the quality of services provided, often without the possibility of identifying specific moments or the real causes of problems. In addition, they do not provide complete information to understand the customer in terms of their individual experiences while interacting with the service provider. Customer journey mapping (CJM) is a tool that is part of the above-discussed issues and can be a valuable supplement to commonly used solutions in the area of obtaining information from the customer. This tool is commonly used in business practice to identify customer experiences related to their interactions with a company or organization. Moreover, it is worth noting that the need to identify customer experiences is becoming more and more apparent in the practice of public organizations. This is evidenced by the emerging initiatives of government institutions that encourage greater efforts to improve the quality of customer service, including measuring and managing customer experiences. An example of such an initiative in the US is the update of Circular A-11 which updates the guidelines for managing customer experience and improving service delivery (US OMB 2020: Section 280). According to the guidelines of the above-mentioned document, US government agencies are required to review how they fulfil the basic functions of the “CX program maturity model”. It also provides valuable guidance on how the federal government should implement a customer service framework and information on how to effectively manage efforts to improve customer service quality.

It follows that customer experiences are becoming an increasingly important topic in public service management. In the literature on the subject, researchers try to identify the main research trends related to customer experience mapping (Asbjørn Følstad, Knut Kvale, 2018, Tueanrat, Papagiannidis, Alamanos, 2021). However, they do not focus directly on analyzing evidence of the practical use of this tool in public organizations. The review was conducted for patient travel only (Madathil, Lopes, & Alfred, 2020). This article aims to provide a foundation for a better understanding of customer journey mapping in public services. In particular, identification of practical examples of the use of this tool and the results obtained. It was created on the basis of a critical analysis of the literature and the author’s own research related to the analysis of Polish local government administration offices in the area of system quality management and the concept of continuous process improvement. The conducted research will contribute to the systematization and increasing of knowledge in the subject and may be helpful in determining the directions of future research.

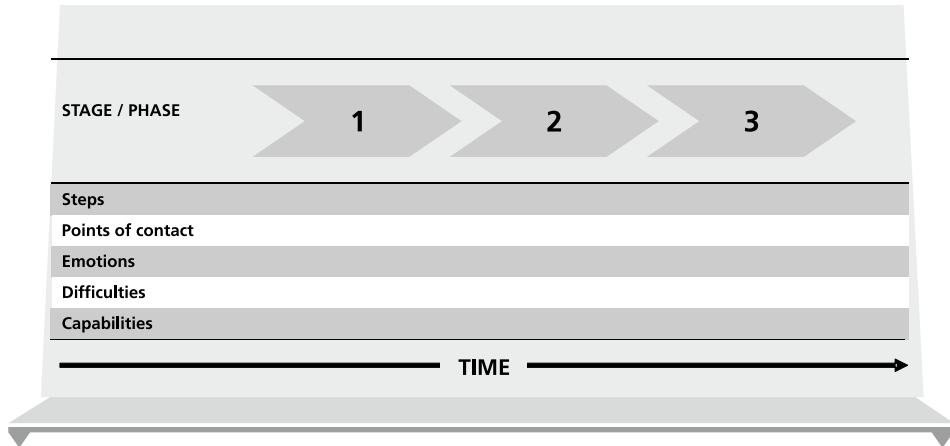
## 2. The client and his experience in public services

A key element in understanding the essence of the customer experience in public services is explaining who the customer is. Explaining the concept of a customer in public services is much more complicated than in the case of commercial services. The cause of the difficulties is both the large diversity of the services themselves and the customers to whom they are addressed. According to the PN-EN ISO 9000:2006 standard (2006, p. 31), the client is “an organization or a person who received a product”, where in the case of public administration, a product may be a specific public service addressed to an individual or the entire social group. Public services are performed by public administration bodies, which include central and local offices (i.e. local government administration). Their specificity results, among others, from the fact that they are provided as part of the performance of statutory tasks entrusted to offices. According to Zawicki et al. (2004, p. 16), these services may include public goods, in relation to which it is impossible to exclude anyone from using them. The authors also emphasize that the distinguishing feature of this category of services is that every citizen has a right to them, and most of them are provided free of charge. The service providers are various public entities, which include, among others: budgetary entities (including offices), budgetary establishments, auxiliary farms. It is also worth noting that every citizen has the right to expect high-quality services from these services. Bugdol (2008, p. 275) also divided the clients of the office into: aware service users (i.e. people who know how and why to use the services offered), unaware service users (people who use services after receiving, e.g. paying taxes), clients “out of necessity” (e.g. clients of tax offices), “politicized” clients (e.g. heads of parties and local groups, etc.). Public services can be divided into three basic groups: administrative services (e.g.: issuing permits, certificates, concessions, administrative decisions), social awareness (e.g. activities related to providing health protection to residents, carrying out tasks related to education and upbringing, and education, residents of social welfare and welfare, public safety), technical services (e.g.: water management – water supply and sewage, waste management and maintenance of order and cleanliness, public greenery) (Zawicki and Mazur 2004, p. 56). Another division of public services emerges from the above classification: services whose recipient is an individual client (e.g. obtaining a building permit) or a collective client (e.g. ensuring security). Based on the above analysis, it can therefore be concluded that public

service customers are much more diverse than in the case of commercial services.

Customer experience can be understood as the internal and subjective reaction that customers have to any direct or indirect contact with the organization. Direct contact usually occurs during purchase, use and service, while indirect contact occurs in the case of unplanned interactions with a product or service, e.g. from conversations, advertisements, press announcements, reviews or press reports. In the case of administrative services, direct contact will include, for example, submitting an application to the office, contacts with employees, correspondence during the service, and receipt of an administrative decision. In turn, an indirect contact may be, for example, searching for information on the Internet how to properly complete the application, talking to friends about their experience and knowledge about the service, tracking changes in legal regulations. Customer experiences in this sense can therefore be a valuable source of information on those points in the process of providing a service that are associated with negative customer feelings and help in finding problems and their causes. The tool that is used to identify customer experiences is customer journey mapping. Customer journey maps can generally be defined as documents that visually illustrate the processes, needs, and perceptions of customers during their relationships with the company (Temkin, B. D. (2010). They make it possible to understand how the organization is perceived by the client as they create a picture of his experience in interacting with the organization. They also support the creation of a system of mutual interactions that will be the most beneficial for both parties (Snarska, 2019, p. 145). The customer journey map visually presents the sequence of events that result from the customer's contact with the organization. These interactions are most often marked horizontally on the map, according to the time axis, which is additionally divided into three periods: before, during and after the service.

The use of CJM as a tool supporting the improvement of public service implementation processes requires its appropriate adaptation to the needs of the conducted analysis. It is necessary mainly due to the specific, non-commercial nature of public services and their clients. Figure 1 shows an example of a customer path map structure that can be used to identify the customer path for a selected administrative service in the context of a continual improvement.



**Figure 1. An example of a customer journey map in chronological order**

Source: own study based on Kalbach, 2017, p. 25

The map is presented in a chronological order that seems to be the most natural for describing human behavior in relations to the analysis of customer experiences related to the use of an administrative service. In the first line, it should be noted at which moments in the timeline the previously described phases begin and end (before, during and after the end of the service). Next, the individual steps that the client has taken to complete the process should be mapped. In the next one, one can mark the points of contact, i.e. the paces or moments where the client interacts with the office. There are three types of contact points: static (i.e. legal regulations, information brochures, public service cards, etc.), interactive (websites, mobile applications, online chats), and taking into account the human factor (i.e. those in which there is direct contact between the client and the office employee). It is important to identify not only the contact points, but also the so-called moments of truth, i.e. critical moments in the user's experience that focus attention on the aspects that matter most. In moments of truth, a relationship may be established or interrupted. The following lines can contain other aspects of the study that are important from the point of view of the study. Kalbach (2017, p. 24) identified typical examples of elements used to describe sensations (i.e.: physical, behavioral, cognitive, emotional, needs, challenges, context, culture, events) and characteristics describing the organization (contact points, offer,

processes, challenges, operations, indicators, evaluation, opportunities, goals, strategy).

The map presented in figure 1 uses three of the above-mentioned elements and characteristics, i.e. emotions accompanying the service at a given moment, difficulties (or challenges) that have arisen in connection with the implementation of a given stage and possibilities, i.e. ideas or suggestions of the client regarding improvement of a given step. It is a basic set of elements describing the points of contact, which can be developed depending on the needs and objectives of the study. Such a set of elements and characteristics will allow identifying and discussing problems with the client and getting to know his ideas for solving them, which can significantly support the process of improving the service. An important element that should be thoroughly analyzed in the case of public services is also the definition of the persona. Persona (or character) reflects the target group (e.g. seniors, disabled, unemployed, entrepreneurs, etc.), i.e. their key behaviors, attributes and goals they set for themselves. It is a narrative description of a single person who represents a specific behavioral segment (Snarska, 2019, p. 153). It is also a description of the user archetype, reflecting typical patterns of behavior, needs and emotions (Kalbach, 2017, p. 89). Therefore, a map of the customer path can be created for individual people who, however, are representatives of a specific group. In the case of public services, this stage can be difficult due to the wide variety of customers using the public service. In the improvement process, it is possible to create any number of maps and then analyze them.

### **3. Customer journey mapping as a tool for identifying customer experiences in the public sector**

In the context of identifying and analyzing customer experiences, customer journey mapping, is a tool that is increasingly appreciated by both management theorists and practitioners. As indicated by Rosenbaum et al. (2017, p. 143) they are used, among others, in strategic management to better understand the customer's experience related to their interactions with the company or organization.

In order to identify the use of customer journey mapping to improve the processes of public service implementation, a literature review was carried out, covering the bases: WoS, Google Scholar and Multi-search engine EBSCO Discovery Solution. The review was limited to scientific articles that in the title, abstract or keywords refer directly to the terms: customer journey mapping and

public services or public administration. The conducted analysis also focused on searching for research confirming the use of the customer path mapping tool in public administration units.

In the first stage of the study, the following were reviewed: titles, keywords and abstracts. Duplicate articles and articles not meeting the above-mentioned conditions were excluded. 28 articles were qualified for the analysis of full texts, of which 6 contained descriptions of case studies of the application of customer journey mapping in public services. They are shown in Table 1. These documents analyzed: the method of using CJM in the practice of public organizations, their results, the impact on improving the functioning of public services and problems related to the practical application of this tool.

**Table 1. Case studies of the application of customer journey mapping in public services**

Author	Method / tool	Sample size	Area of research	Result
Andrews, J., Eade E. (2013)	Focus groups, customer journey mapping	23 participants	University Library	A customer journey map was created and improvement suggestions developed.
Mucz, D., Gareau-Brennan, C. (2019)	Customer journey mapping	40 participants	Public Library	The current state of customer experience with the use of library services has been established. Problems were identified and recommendations for improvement were made.
Parush, A., Levin, M. L., Campbell, C. (2014)	Customer journey mapping	Patients and their families, hospital staff	Clinics in a Pediatric Hospital	It has been identified how patients, service providers and electronic document workflow may intersect with each other during a patient's visit to a hospital. Process improvements and their impact on improving the efficiency of the clinic are presented.
Percival, J., McGregor, C. (2016)	Patient Journey Modeling Architecture (PaJMa)	17 doctors	Mental Health Care	A preliminary evaluation of the comprehensibility of the PaJMa scheme by doctors was presented. The results showed that the modeling approach was valuable to the study unit and understandable to hospital staff.



Borycki, E. M., Kushniruk, A. W., Wagner, E., Kletke, R. (2020)	Customer journey mapping, document analysis	Patient case report - 10 chorych na raka i ich nieformalnych (tj. rodzinnych) opiekunów	Health Care	Authors created and used a novel patient journey map focused on improving continuity of care and safety at a health systems level.
Bridge, C. (2012)	Co-design methodology Customer journey mapping, ethnographic research using social media	DSH customers: older Australians, new parents, people who are homeless, people entering retirement and single mothers	Department of Human Services in Australia (DSH)	A co-design methodology of services was created, of which CJM is a part. Research has shown that co-designing services leads to their better personalization, improves the quality of life, guarantees a wider and better choice of innovative ideas. In addition, it can reduce costs and eliminate processes and activities that do not add value.

**Source:** own study based on the analysis of databases: WoS, Google Scholar, EBSCO Discovery Solution

The conducted analysis showed that there is a small number of studies relating to the identification of customer experiences in public organizations with the use of CJM. However, there is evidence of the positive effects of using this tool in the area of health care (Meyer, 2019, Borycki et al., 2020), in public libraries (Andrews and Eade, 2013; Mucz and Gareau-Brennan, 2019) and in government administration (Johnston and Kong, 2011; Bridge, 2012; D'Emidio et al., 2017).

Customer journey mapping is applied using various methods, for example: ethnographic research, observations, interviews, focus groups or the analysis of medical records describing the patient's experiences. This may be due to inconsistencies in the literature regarding the methodology for identifying customer experiences. The problem is particularly important in the context of public services, which are very diverse and often require an individualized approach adapted to a specific group of clients (e.g. people at risk of social exclusion, patients, elderly).

An often-mentioned effect of using CJM in public organizations is the identification of problems that customers encounter in dealing with the organization, the willingness to understand their emotions and perspectives, and the development of improvements that limit their negative experiences. In most of the analyzed cases, customer journey mapping was one of the tools

used for process improvement. It turned into the development of improvement solutions. Examples of these activities: improving customer service, streamlining information flows between the organization and the customer, and eliminating activities or processes that do not add value to the customer. In the literature on the subject, there is also a noticeable shortage of guidelines on methods for collecting and analyzing data in mapping customer journeys and the need to develop terminology for customer journeys (Følstad and Kvale, 2018). This problem also concerns the application of CJM in public administration.

#### 4. Conclusions

The analysis showed that existing literature does contain many practical examples of the use of customer journey mapping in public organizations. This problem concerns especially central and local government administration. The practical use of CJM in the process of improving public services is additionally hampered by the inconsistency of terminology used in the literature. The review was limited to the analysis of documents that clearly use the terms “customer journey mapping” and “public services” or “public administration” in their titles, summaries and keywords. Therefore, articles in which CJM is not the main subject of research may have been omitted. Despite these limitations, the results were sufficient to identify problems and define general directions for further research. First, the issues related to the terminology of customer experience using public services and the development of a methodology for using customer journey mapping in various types of public services need to be clarified. It is also worth to focus on the problem of CJM integration with other tools used in the improvement process.

Customer Journey Mapping can be an effective tool for identifying customer experiences related to their interactions with the office in relation to public services. The conducted analysis showed that it can supplement the knowledge about the places in the service delivery process, where customers encounter problems affecting their satisfaction. For those public administration offices that apply continuous process improvement, for example as part of the lean management concept or systemic quality management, it can support the analysis of processes, which will be conducted not only based on the results of internal measurements, but also taking into account information from the customer.

In order for the information obtained from the client to be useful in improving the processes, it is necessary to properly define the purpose of the study and the

elements that will be tested during the identification and analysis of subsequent points of contact (e.g. difficulties and reasons for their occurrence, emotions, opportunities for improvement from the customer's point of view, etc.). It should be remembered that CJM does not show the entire course of the process, but only the moments in the process during which the client interacts with the office. In the context of process analysis and improvement, it should therefore complement other methods and tools for process identification, such as Value Stream Mapping (VSM). The use of CJM in public services is a big challenge. Nevertheless, it is worth using them, especially in relation to clients who require special support from public administration, such as people with disabilities, seniors or other groups at risk of social exclusion.

### **Abstract**

#### **Using customer journey mapping to improve public services: A critical analysis of the literature**

Providing clients with public services that will meet their needs and expectations requires not only testing their satisfaction. In order to better improve service processes in the context of customer orientation, customer experiences should be identified and taken into account in the process of continuous improvement. A tool that can be used for this purpose is Customer Journey Mapping (CJM). The purpose of this article is to lay the foundations for a better understanding of customer experience mapping in public services, and to identify and evaluate examples of its use in the public sector. The first part of the study characterizes the client and his experience in public services. Then the results of a literature review on the use of CJM in public services are presented. The last part summarizes the results obtained and sets the directions for future research.

**Keywords:** *customer journey map, customer experience, continuous improvement, public services, public administration.*

### **Streszczenie**

#### **Wykorzystanie mapowania podróży klienta do usprawniania usług publicznych: krytyczna analiza literatury**

Zapewnienie klientom usług publicznych, które będą spełniały ich potrzeby i oczekiwania wymaga nie tylko badania ich satysfakcji.

Aby lepiej usprawniać procesy usługowe w kontekście orientacji na klienta powinno się identyfikować doświadczenia klientów i uwzględniać je w procesie ciągłego doskonalenia. Narzędziem, które można wykorzystać do tego celu jest mapowanie podróży klienta (CJM). Celem artykułu jest stworzenie podstaw dla lepszego zrozumienia problematyki mapowania doświadczeń klientów w usługach publicznych oraz identyfikacja i ocena przykładów zastosowania tego narzędzia w sektorze publicznym. W pierwszej części opracowania scharakteryzowano klienta i jego doświadczenia w usługach publicznych. Następnie przedstawiono wyniki przeglądu literatury dotyczącego wykorzystania CJM w usługach publicznych. W ostatniej części podsumowano uzyskane wyniki oraz określono kierunki przyszłych badań.

### Słowa

**kluczowe:** *mapowanie ścieżki klienta, doświadczenia klientów, ciągłe doskonalenie, usługi publiczne, administracja publiczna.*

### JEL

**Classification:** H40, M100, M310

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