

QUALITY OF SERVICE AND CONDITIONS OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION MEASUREMENT

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Abstract: The starting point for the considerations made in the article is to compare such categories as product quality and service quality. An essential part of analysis is devoted to the relation of quality of service and satisfaction with the service. In the article discusses the grounds of designing and preparing customer satisfaction survey of services.

1 Introduction

Quality is perceived as a strategic tool by leading service providers. It should be stressed that in today's economy a customer is a major "engine" of the operating companies. The customer determines whether the operators will remain on the market and/or will develop. Thereby ensuring an appropriate level of quality requires conducting the evaluation of customer satisfaction and monitoring changes in this level. The more that the satisfied customer manifests not only a higher willingness to re-use the services (and therefore it is characterized by a higher rate of loyalty to the service provider), but also to recommend these services to other customers [4].

2 Quality of service and satisfaction with services

The quality of material products (of specific goods) is usually determined in reference to the standard size of the technical parameters established for a particular category of articles. The class of product quality is determined depending on the nature and level of identified deficiencies. However, in the case of services it is extremely rarely possible to refer to a set of specific parameters. This stems mainly from the specificity of provision, which is a service. Cody and Hope [1] pay attention to three characteristics of services, which contribute to the fact that service quality is difficult to delimit and to measure. These are: service intangibility, performance heterogeneity, and customer-producer inseparability.

In the case of the service - justification is therefore not so much discussing the objective quality of service, but rather the perceived quality. According to the classical recognition of Grönroos [2], [8] the service quality assessment carried out by the customer in each case depends on such factors as:

- Technical quality („what?") – and thus the quality of the outcome of the provision that was the subject of the service, which is perceived by the customer as a result of its interaction with the service provider.
- Functional quality („how?") – i.e. the evaluation of the implementation process of this provision.
- Customer expectations with regard to both these dimensions formulated before the initiation of the implementation process of the service (“Imagine”).

The perceived quality of service becomes therefore dependent on: the final result of the provision, the manner of this provision implementation, as well as on the degree of discrepancy between the assessment of the outcome and the method of the service implementation made by the customer, and the expectations, which in relation to the result and the way of the service realization the service recipient formulated. Thus, the category of quality for services should be associated with customer satisfaction with the service (figure 1). And it is connected with satisfaction, identified with the subjective, emotional condition appreciably by the individual due to the comparison of the real process of completion of the service with the expectations held by the individual in terms of this service [3]. Hence, in this article, it was decided to focus attention on the issue of the measurement of customer satisfaction in relation to logistics services.

3 Measures of customer satisfaction

According to the argument presented above, satisfaction with the services should be regarded as the result of¹[10]:

¹Of course, in the literature there is a variety of other service quality models. For instance: *Attribute service quality model* (Haywood-Farmer), *Synthesized model of service quality* (Brogowicz, Delene and Lyth), *Performance Only model* (Cronin and Taylor), *Ideal value model of service quality* (Mattsson), *Evaluated performance and normed*

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- customer needs,
- the whole experience related to the use of a particular type of product / service,
- customer expectations, which (apart from the personal experience) will be influenced by, firstly, the image of the provision (which the client uses or intends to use) created by the service provider by marketing through the media, secondly, the opinions of other customers that are transferred.

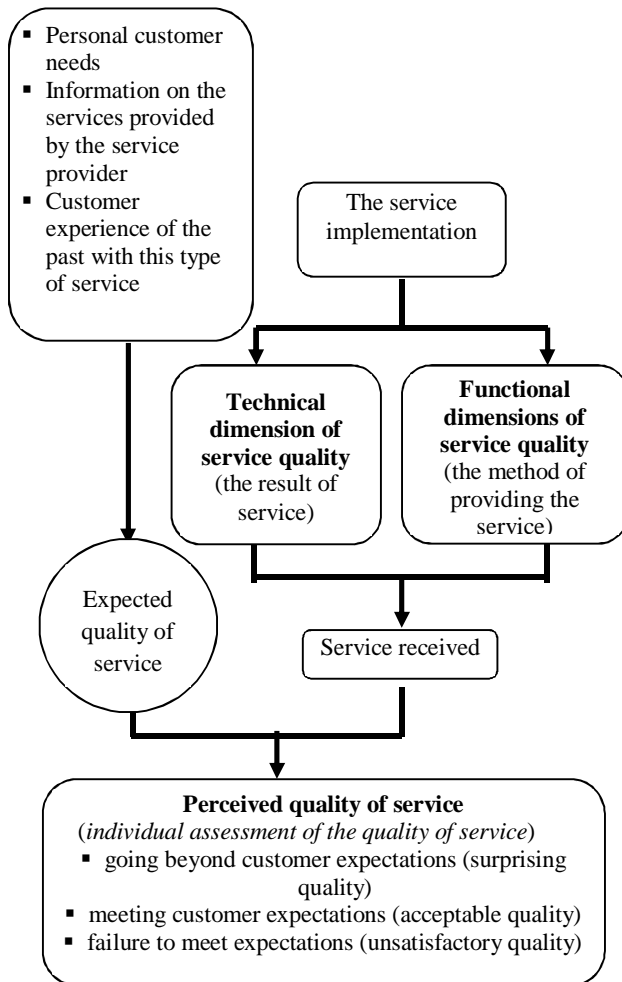


Figure 1 Perceived quality of service [7]

Thus, in the customer assessment service quality deficiencies (so called "quality gaps"), which are responsible for the formation of the perceived level of satisfaction, can arise due to [6]:

- providing the customer adulterated (idealized) image of the standard of services, on the basis of which the level of expectations is formulated,
- incorrect identification (wrong diagnosis) of customer needs and expectations by the service provider, and thus the implementation of activities that do not meet these needs and expectations,
- defective, in relation to customer expectations assessment, quality of service specification - which is synonymous with the appointment of defective quality standards in relation to the implemented provision (as it is the case when the activities carried out in the course of providing services are focused on satisfying insignificant customer expectations, as a result the service can meet the needs of the client, but in a way that does not meet his expectations),
- failure to meet quality standards by the provider of the service (negligence in the implementation of the provision of services by the service contractor).

Hence, it is advisable that the study aimed to measure customer satisfaction with the services, includes:

identifying the needs of customers, their expectations and requirements, both in terms of the expected effect of the service, as well as the way of its implementation (or verifying that previously made assessment is correct in this regard),

gathering customer feedback regarding the outcome and the method to implement the service,

the analysis of the degree of discrepancy between the assessment of the outcome and the method to implement the service made by the customer, and the expectations, which in relation to the result and the way of the service provision was formulated.

The low level of divergence of expectations in relation to the perception of the service received will prove an appropriate level of quality and a high level of customer satisfaction. However, unless, in the case of fully satisfied significant expectations, it is especially necessary to recommend the actions aimed to monitor the level of customer satisfaction, for the purpose of maintaining the quality provided, then in the case of minor expectations it is possible to talk about determining the areas of the service, from the provider's point of view, in which giving up certain activities, the company can seek cost savings. On the other hand, in a situation in which a high degree of discrepancy will be diagnosed between the level of customer expectations and the quality of services they perceive – in the case when these expectations are not relevant, the organization does not require, or does not recommend any action. If, however, the expectations are attributed to the high level of significance by the customers, then in relation to these particular elements / dimensions / aspects of the service it is necessary to look for the opportunities to improve quality of service. For a clear recognition of the above conclusions a matrix of

quality model (Teas), Attribute and overall affect model (Dabholkar), Model of perceived service quality and satisfaction (Spreng and Mackoy), PCP attribute model (Philip and Hazlett), Retail service quality and perceived value model (Sweeney, Soutar and Johnson), Service quality, customer value and customer satisfaction model (Oh), Antecedents and mediator model (Dabholkar, Shepherd and Thorpe), Internal service quality model (Frost and Kumar), Internal service quality DEA model (Soteriou and Stavrinides) [9].

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satisfaction was constructed², within which a declared significance level of the individual elements/dimensions/aspects of the service by customers was included, as well as the degree of the expressed in relation to them satisfaction from customers (Table 1).

Table 1 Matrix of satisfaction

High level of quality perceived by customer	<i>(insignificant elements, high satisfaction)</i>	<i>(significant elements, high satisfaction)</i>
	NEEDLESS SURPLUS: area of searching savings	ADVANTAGE the area to take measures aimed at monitoring the quality and its maintenance
Low level of quality perceived by customer	<i>(insignificant elements, low satisfaction)</i>	<i>(significant elements, low satisfaction)</i>
	STROKE OF LUCK lack of action area	ACHILLES HEEL area to seek opportunities to improve the quality
	The low level of significance for the customer	The high level of significance for the customer

The use of the above matrix for examining satisfaction allows for recommending appropriate courses of pro-quality activities aimed at increasing customer satisfaction.

In the respect to what exactly must be examined - due to the fact that the phenomenon of satisfaction is a largely subjective category and dependent on individual perception of the entity - the specification of all indicators of satisfaction and the strength of their impact in the study is not possible. According to Lisińska-Kuśnierz and Gajewska in the study of satisfaction with logistics services it is necessary to take into account such aspects as [5]: timeliness of deliveries, completeness of deliveries, promptness of deliveries, accuracy of deliveries, flexibility of deliveries, keeping the commitment, transportations conditions, terminal conditions, accuracy of invoice, complexity of services. The specificity of the nature of logistics services leads to the further analysis that should consider such factors as: the level of prices for services, methods of payment, payment terms, ability to obtain a discount, organization of work in the terminal, the overall quality of the rolling stock (purity, labelling, compliance with environmental standards), availability of information about the company, the clarity of the information included in the company's offer, staff appearance, staff helpfulness, ability to respond in emergencies and responding to complaints.

Conclusion

The discussed demands or the principles of conducting the studies on service satisfaction by no means

exhaust the complexity of the issues, nor constitute a recipe for the solution to all problems associated with this type of research. In addition, a detailed consideration is required by issues such as:

- *When* (how often) *to study customer satisfaction?*
- *Who to entrust the study?*
- *Who should take the study?* (carrying out the exhaustive study or based on the selected sample?)
- *What tools should be used?* (standardized or individualized?).

Regardless of the decision taken, it is advisable that the customers, who were included in the study, were fairly and timely informed of the purpose and objectives of the study. As the practice proves (in terms of reliability and quality of the collected data) a strategic point of the study can turn out to be the way to resolve the issue of ensuring its participants an appropriate level of anonymity, as well as the confidentiality of the data obtained through them. The solutions adopted in this regard must be – for the surveyed customers - not only fully legible but also supremely reliable and respected by them. It is also advisable to recognize the margin of tolerance of customers in a range of examined dimensions (in other words, the definition of what constitutes an ideal, and what is an acceptable level of quality in relation to the service). Nevertheless, due to the nature of this kind of research, the discussed conditions and proposed postulates can serve to carry out such studies, which in a thoughtful and knowledgeable way take into account the type and nature of the specific service.

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