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The logistics aspects of customer satisfaction

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The article reveals the concept of customer satisfaction and its role in logistics activity of a company. The importance of customer orientation in business and, particularly, logistics activity is discussed. The customer logistics-based expectations were defined. The service quality model and its dimensions is considered. The relationship between logistics customer service and customer satisfaction through SERVQUAL model was established.

Keywords: customer satisfaction, customer service, logistics, service quality, SERVQUAL model.

Мазоренко О.В. ЛОГІСТИЧНІ АСПЕКТИ ЗАДОВОЛЕНОСТІ СПОЖИВАЧІВ

У статті висвітлено поняття задоволеності клієнтів та її роль у логістичній діяльності компанії. Обговорюється важливість орієнтації на клієнта в бізнесі та, зокрема, логістичній діяльності. Були визначені очікування споживачів у сфері логістики. Розглянуто модель якості обслуговування та її характеристики. За допомогою моделі SERVQUAL встановлено зв'язок між логістичним обслуговуванням споживачів та задоволеністю споживачів.

Ключові слова: задоволення споживачів, обслуговування споживачів, логістика, якість сервісу, модель SERVQUAL.

Мазоренко О.В. ЛОГИСТИЧЕСКИЕ АСПЕКТЫ УДОВЛЕТВОРЕННОСТИ ПОТРЕБИТЕЛЕЙ

В статье раскрывается концепция удовлетворенности потребителей и ее роли в логистической деятельности компании. Обсуждается важность ориентации на потребителя в бизнесе и, в частности, в логистической деятельности. Были определены ожидания потребителей в сфере логистики. Рассматривается модель качества обслуживания и ее характеристики. С помощью модели SERVQUAL была установлена взаимосвязь между логистическим обслуживанием клиентов и удовлетворенностью клиентов.

Ключевые слова: удовлетворение потребителей, обслуживание потребителей, логистика, качество сервиса, модель SERVQUAL.

Problem grounding. Keeping customers satisfied is essential to building a successful, growing business. While many companies work hard to increase sales, they may overlook the little things that keep customers happy and buying more. It is easier to accelerate the business by cultivating the customers company already has rather than constantly working to attract new one.

When a company meets customer expectations, it is ensuring customer satisfaction. However, in this competitive marketplace when customers receive value or benefits beyond what they had expected, the company and the customer service representative has delighted the customer. A truly delighted customer will be more loyal to the company and products than a merely satisfied customer.

The logistics service quality is the most important factor of customer satisfaction.

Logistics contributes to a company's success by accommodating customers' delivery and inventory availability expectations and require-

ments and the focus is on creating or adding value for the customer [1, p. 43].

Analysis of recent researches and publications. Problems of customer satisfaction were investigated by following scientists: B. Kong and M. F. Choe, I. Meidutė-Kavaliauskienė, A. Aranskisa, M. Litvinenko, A. Ghoumrassi [1; 2; 3]. Impact of logistics on customer satisfaction were considered by T. Gajewska, G. Evangelos, J. Tschohl, R. Oliver and others [4; 5; 6]. But nowadays the vital role in customer satisfaction plays logistics functions and activities. Therefore this problem needs deep investigation.

The aim of the paper is the theoretical justification of customer satisfaction and establishing a relationship between logistics customer service and customer satisfaction.

Main findings. The customer service takes a great place in company activities. According to American Management Association loyal customers, who buy from company again and again just because they like it's customer service, provide on average 65% of company's turnover [5, p. 5].

J. Tschohl [5, p. 10] defines customer service as providing a quality product or service that satisfies the needs/wants of a customer and keeps them coming back. Also, customer service includes the entire process of filling the customer's order (either manual or electronic), managing the payment, picking and packing the goods, shipping the package, delivering the package, providing customer service for the end user and handling the possible return of goods.

Service should provide the customer with more than just a product or action taken on his behalf. It should provide satisfaction. Customer satisfaction defined by R. Oliver [6, p. 33] as "a function of the similarities between the consumer's expectations and the perceived performance of the purchase". Customer satisfaction measurement is one of the most important issues concerning business organizations of all types, which is justified by the customer-orientation philosophy and the main principles of continuous improvement of modern enterprises [4]. The concept of customer satisfaction can be defined in different ways by different authors.

Let's conduct a morphological analysis of the concept "customer satisfaction" (Table 1).

As a result of concept analysis it can be concluded that customer satisfaction is an overall assessment of customer experience before, during and after transaction with a particular company and assessment of the level of customer's happiness with goods purchased or services obtained, which encourages the customer to come back again.

In today's competitive environment, the pursuit of customer satisfaction highly depends on the organization's overall service quality. R. Oliver [6] indicated that the logistics service quality is the most important factor of customer satisfaction.

As authors [2, p. 332] mention, logistics service quality is the result received comparing customers' expectations with customers' perception of service quality. Clients, prior to ordering the service, already have expectations of what the service provider should offer them. Therefore, the quality of logistical service perceived by the client is the difference between the perceived service and expectation.

J. Tschohl [5, p. 10] pointed out that the functions of the service are to save existing customers, attract new customers and create a desire and a need for all customers to continue cooperation with your company. He said, that the tasks of service quality are:

- maintaining the customer base;
- customer base development.

Customer satisfaction depends on various factors such as the perceived quality of service, customer mood, emotion, social interaction, customers' associates' experience and other specific subjective factors. In addition, it is necessary to keep in mind that customer satisfaction with the quality of service is not the objective assessment of the real situation, but an element of emotional nature [2, p. 333]. Also B. Kong and M. F. Choe in [1, p. 45] support the view of A. Parasuraman, V. Zeithaml and

Table 1

Morphological analysis of the concept "customer satisfaction"

Definition	Key words	Author, source
A function of the similarities between the consumer's expectations and the perceived performance of the purchase	Function	B. Kong, M. F. Choe [1, p. 44]
A summary psychological state resulting when the emotion surrounding disconfirmed expectations is coupled with the consumer's prior feeling about the consumption experience.	Psychological state	R. Oliver [6, p. 34]
An overall assessment of customer experience in the purchase and using of the products or services provided by these companies.	Assessment of customer experience	T. Tarelkina [7]
The state felt by a person who has experienced a performance (or outcome) that has fulfilled his or her expectations	State	P. Kotler, A. R. Andreasen [8]
A "feel good" factor, which affects both customer and staff, and which encourages the customer to come back again.	Factor	M. Gregory [9]
A recognised of the disconfirmation which arises from discrepancies between prior expectations and actual performance.	Function	J. Gunning [10, p. 23]

L. Berry, who have identified ten customer logistics-based expectations as follows:

- reliability;
- responsiveness;
- access;
- communication;
- credibility;
- security;
- courtesy;
- competency;
- tangibles;
- knowing the customer.

In order to make a customer happy it is necessary to identify customer service characteristics [11]: the availability of items; after-sales

service; order convenience; competent technical reps; delivery time; reliability; demonstration of equipment; availability of information material.

For maintaining customer satisfaction company has to provide high service quality. Most studies confirm that there is a relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. The most popular model that found a positive relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction is service-quality model or SERVQUAL, that was developed by A. Parasuraman, V. Zeithaml and L. Berry [12]. In SERVQUAL model there are 5 dimensions and 22 items (Tables 2–3).

Table 2

The dimensions of customer service quality according SERVQUAL

Dimensions	Description
Reliability	ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.
Assurance	knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence.
Tangibles	physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel
Empathy	caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers.
Responsiveness	willingness to help customers and provide prompt service.

Source: generalized by author according [1; 4; 12]

Table 3

The functions of each dimension of customer service

Dimensions	Functions
Reliability	Providing service as promised
	Dependability in handling customers' service problems
	Performing services right the first time
	Providing services at the promised time
	Maintaining error-free records
Assurance	Employees who instill confidence in customers
	Making customers feel safe in their transactions
	Employees who are consistently courteous
	Employees who have the knowledge to answer customer questions
Tangibles	Modern equipment
	Visually appealing facilities
	Employees who have a neat, professional appearance
	Visually appealing materials associated with the service
Empathy	Giving individual attention to customers
	Employees who deal with customers in a caring fashion
	Having the customer's best interest at heart
	Employees who understand the needs of their customers
	Convenient business hours
Responsiveness	Keeping customers informed as to when services will be performed
	Prompt service to customers
	Willingness to help customers
	Readiness to respond to customers' requests

Source: generalized by author according [1; 4; 12]

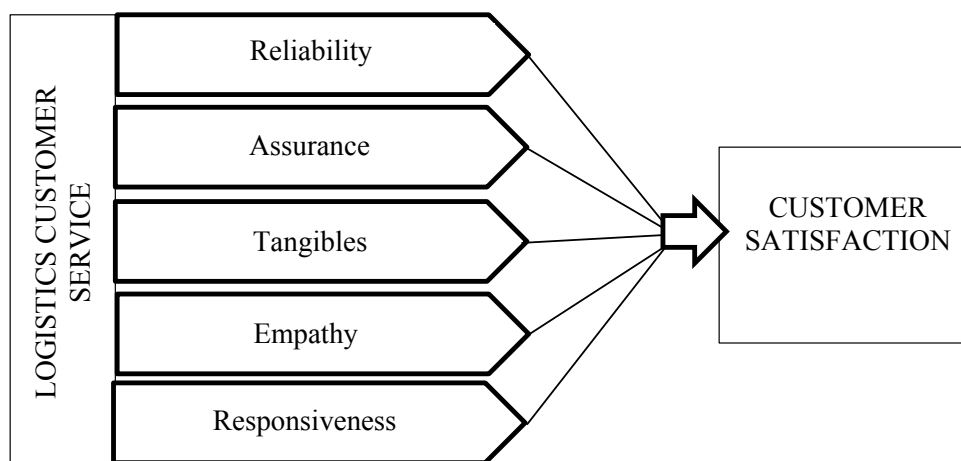


Fig. 1. Input of logistics service quality variables for customer satisfaction

Source: developed by author

There is detailed information about functions that are included in each dimension of customer service.

Customer service interaction starts with what customer thinks and what will happen or what is he expect. Overtime, as the customer uses the service, this dimension changes tittles and becomes past experience. How the customer has been treated in the past will affect what the customer expects to happen on a particular encounter. Factors that have repeatedly indicated the customer's choice in the product selected are reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy and responsiveness (Fig. 1).

So, logistics managers and marketers of a company should pay attention and perform these functions to satisfy their customers and increase the service customer rate.

It is important for logistics companies while carrying their activities to show that their actions and deeds are concentrated on customers. I. Meidutė-Kavaliauskienė [2, p. 332] emphasized that in the current competitive environment it is dangerous to be a non-customer-ori-

ented company. It is important to note that each customer's expectations are different. This may depend not only on the personal interests, but also on the environment, area, the type of business in which those expectations are formed. Thus companies' ability to be flexible and adapt may help to gain an advantage over other companies. Examining logistics services, flexibility is a particularly important aspect. Flexibility in logistics is a possibility to a company to quickly and effectively respond to the changing needs of the customer.

Conclusion. Thus, both logistics service quality and customer satisfaction is especially important in the current business environment, as the relationship between the company and the customer is usually long-term (or at least it is attempted to keep them as such). One of the most significant elements is the support and development of relationship with the customer. For the relationship to be long-term, a company has to provide a logistics service in line with the customers' expectations, leading to the appropriate level of customer satisfaction.

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