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Logistics in the Function of Customer Service – Relevance for the Engineering Management

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Abstract

In the modern business environment, which is characterized by the market globalization, rapid development and usage of new technologies, logistics activities have specific implications on business processes. Authors start from the hypothesis that the logistics management and customer service management can create a basis for continuous sustained growth of operating incomes, and at the same time it provides their own positive corporate image in the market. The management of logistics activities in the function of satisfying the consumer has become one of the most attractive areas of the strategic management in the last ten years, therefore, managers seek for strong competitive weapon in the development of own logistic system in order to differentiate their offers in comparison to others.

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1. Introduction

In modern business conditions, managers must pay great attention to logistics activities that are best manifested through adequate customer service, which attracts new customers and retains old ones, therefore, it directly affects the competitive advantage of the company in the market. Customer service is one of the key aspects of the offer to

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the customer of services, which essentially enables the company to differentiate its offers from competition. The main objective of the logistics management is to deliver the right product or service at the right time in the right place and in the desired amount, whereby it must always be taken into account and be careful so that the costs of organizing and conducting a high-quality customer service do not threaten the profitability of the business. On the other hand, the main task of the logistics management is to fulfil the function of an adequate customer service, primarily by defining goals and policies of the customer service and the implementation of the selected strategy.

In the last decade of the last century, logistics management has become one of the most attractive areas of strategic management the world. Top managers of large and medium-sized companies seek for a new and a very competitive tool in the logistics domain for differentiating their offers from other major competitors in the market [1]. There is no substantial differences in the decisiveness of top managers of companies that the customer service is the "golden wire" that represents the connecting link between marketing and logistics, both on domestic and international market.

In the literature, there are opinions according to which it is difficult to determine precisely which activities belong to the customer service [2]. In that connection Fawcett, McLeish and Ogden present the customer service through several definitions that illustrate very well the breadth of the extent of this term, without opting for any of these particular visions [3]:

- Customer service is the quality of performances of the distribution system,
- Delivery service represents different dimensions of the implementation of the process of ordering along with the sales promotion,
- Customer service means adjusting a part of offers to a specific demand,
- Customer service is a direct result of the connection between sales activities and the delivery process, which begins with the order and ends with the delivery, but in some cases it continues with the post-purchase stage of the product usage.

When it comes to foreign literature, the essence and the form of the logistic view on the customer service can be understood the best in the works of Lambert and Stock. They see the customer service as an output of the logistics system of the company which is positioned in the marketing mix. Customer service represents a measure of the efficiency of the logistics system in creating time and space value for the product, including after-sales activities of the company. According to them, the policy of the customer service is not created just for current customers, but it is a process which has the task to attract as many new customers as possible [4]. The level of the customer service is directly connected with the market share of the company, with total logistics costs and with the profitability of the company as well [5]. This term can be defined as follows: customer service indicates the willingness of manufacturers and merchants to deliver the right product at the right time, in an appropriate quantity and at the requested place, with acceptable costs - final price of goods. This definition includes all the main items within customer service activities: provision of the required quantity of the demanded product at the requested time and place. In this way, it represents the output of the system of the marketing logistics, or more precisely, the physical distribution of the final products of any company. A well placed customer service and adjusted to market requirements, is indeed a product of the entire logistics operations and at the same time a reference through which users assess the validity of the entire system of marketing logistics of an enterprise.

2. Logistics through the prism of commercial-distributive understanding of the customer service

Research efforts of a large number of relevant authors in the field of marketing, trade management and logistics management, generally, coincide and match. Many authors analyse different problems in similar way. Customer service is present in the field of marketing research and the creation of the marketing strategies of a company, but it is also more than relevant to the field of distribution and logistics management. Leading theorists in the field of trade (and marketing) management, Berman and Evans, point out that the customer service involves in itself a set of recognizable, but as a rule, intangible activities undertaken by sellers. In addition, the customer service is seen as a supportive activity to basic activities of the company-production or sale of products and/or services [6]. In the highly

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