

Design of Customer Satisfaction Measurement Index System of EMS Service

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Abstract: *This paper discusses the design of a customer satisfaction measurement index system of express mail service. It presents objectives and principles of the design based on hierarchical structures. We have devised a diagram for modeling customer satisfaction, and a detailed analysis of customer satisfaction is conducted. This paper presents our customer satisfaction model and analysis results.*

Key words: postal service; EMS; customer satisfaction; index system; design; hierarchical structure

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1 Introduction

The concept of "customer satisfaction" first came into use in early 1980s in USA. In mid 1990, transnational companies began to make surveys on customer satisfaction in China. One reason is that the headquarters of the transnational companies request that they, according to their home pattern, regularly acquire information about the customers in large- or medium-sized marketplaces, so as to cope with the challenges they may meet in the process of economic globalization. Second, in the fierce competition, high quality service has become an important element for businesses to win, or even keep an edge on competition^[1]. The third reason is that the companies need to obtain a quantified data from the customers to assess the employees' performance and efficiency at work^[1].

With China's entry into WTO, foreign investments are, partially, and by stage, allowed in many services. This means that more and more foreign invested insurance companies, banks, and communication companies will enter into China. While the international companies compete in this marketplace, they inevitably bring in their advanced management and service, therefore the concept of customer satisfaction begin to be adopted and developed in domestic companies in China. Much attention has come to be paid to the studies of customer satisfaction in service industry. The amount of research in this area has been on the increase. In postal service, although customer satisfaction has already been studied and practiced, the depth and intensity of the studies could not meet the demand of the market, and some

basic concepts are not very clear in these studies, therefore further studies of customer satisfaction become necessary in postal service.

In view of the special features of the postal service, this paper, using the theory of hierarchical structure, put forward a system of customer satisfaction measurement index for Express Mail Service (EMS), with an analytic diagram being drawn and the analytic method expounded. It provided a reliable basis for the postal service in improving their service quality, in enhancing the competitiveness of EMS and enlarging their occupation of the marketplace^[2-3].

2 Basic Concepts of the Design of Customer Satisfaction Measurement Index for EMS Service

In the past, postal enterprises had made great effort in highlighting and strengthening services as well as improving service quality. Incentive measures aiming at postal employees had been taken, such as the assessment of the employees' attitude towards customers, the record to their errors, with their service attitude and errors being connected with the bonus they received. Once customer's complaints occurred, they were also assessed, and classified into reasonable complaints and unreasonable complaints. All these past practices cannot simply be judged as "right" or "wrong". It should be mentioned that these practices had played an active part in promoting the postal organizations and their employees' awareness of quality service, or more exactly to say that these practices had exerted their effectiveness in the era of planned economy.

However, the above-mentioned practice was based on the perspective of the post office. It is self-assessment. Generally speaking, this kind of assessment is usually reasonable. When something is proved to be unreasonable through self-assessment, this often means that serious errors occur. Theoretically, customers' complaints are generally well-founded, since service industries and customers are in two different positions, they have quite different views on the services rendered. The establishment of a customer satisfaction index will radically change the post service's conception of service and their mode of thinking. In this way, the post office may improve its service and adapt itself better to the competitive environment of market economy so as to win a larger share of market in the fierce competition^[4].

2.1 Customers' Cognition and Behaviors are Interactional

The design of the customer satisfaction measurement index system is based on the concept that the customers' cognition and behavior are interactional^[5]. Customers' satisfaction with the service of a company and their decision to buy or use a company's product or service are controlled by their cognition to the company. That is to say, only when the customers truly experienced the services rendered, they are supposed to make their decision of whether to accept or to discard the company's products or services. Customers' cognition and behavior are mutually promoted, and the impetus to this interaction is the perfection of the services rendered in the post office^[6-7].

2.2 Customers' Practice is Primary, Their Expectation Secondary

Customers' dissatisfaction with a company can't be attributed to their expectation. Or customers' higher demand for quality of the products or services of a business is not due to their increased expectation. Since expectations are activities of thinking. And thinking belongs to human consciousness. Therefore expectation is secondary. The generation of consciousness is determined by objective existence, and existence determines consciousness. Objective existence is primary. In this case, the concrete manifestation of the objective reality is that companies in the same area of service may differ in every aspect of their products offered or services rendered. Take courier services as an example. Customers of courier services are concerned with some indexes such as the cost, the delivery time limit, the speed of feedbacks in tracing and tracking. Different courier companies may have differences in these aspects. Owing to the differences in social practice, customers' cognition, originally satisfied, may change from satisfaction to dissatisfaction. And this process must be transitional. it is

a process from discrepancy, to endurance, then to complaint and eventually to dissatisfaction^[4,7].

2.3 Dynamic Mode of Thinking

Unlike designing a product, the design of a customer satisfaction measurement index system is a dynamic process, this measurement system cannot be used for a long time without any change. The effect of social variation on the customers' thinking will change with time. Therefore the mode of thinking in index design must be dynamic. Different people have different way of thinking. And this difference will inevitably lead to the difference in the index designed. The types of discrepancy are diverse. In view of the existence of diversity, the indexes of the design must be dynamic. And the dynamic feature must be embodied in the design of the index system so as to meet the demand of market competition.

3 Design of the Customer Satisfaction Measurement Index System

3.1 Target of the Design

The index system is a central part of customer satisfaction measurement, and to a large extent determines the validity and reliability of the result. Based on the above mentioned internal and international practice and systematic theoretical analysis, the index system in design can manifest in quantified value the real state of customer satisfaction, and make it an important tool and assistant in improving operation and service, in expanding the market.

3.2 Principle of the Design

1) "To let customers orient the index system" is the most fundamental request in establishing a measurement index system. To build customer satisfaction measurement index system, one must definitely know what the customers are demanding, and carefully select the measurement indexes the customers are concerned about most^[8].

2) The measurement index must be manageable^[9]. Customer satisfaction measurement might make customers generate new demands, and impel the postal service to make improvements. But if the postal enterprises do not have the condition and ability to make improvements in one aspect or another, they should not include the index in this area^[7,10].

3) The measurement index must be quantifiable. Quantified values are used in the measurement, so that the indexes designed are easy to be administered, that is, to undergo statistics, computation and analysis^[7,10-11].

4) Features of the competitors must be taken into consideration in establishing the customer satisfaction

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