



7th International Conference on Engineering, Project, and Production Management

Models and Methods of Measuring the Quality of Logistic Service

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Abstract

The main aim of the article is the identification and critical assessment of the most commonly used models and methods of measuring service quality. The last part of paper is dedicated to the overview of measurement issues taking into account the specific features of logistics service. The paper was based on the research method of systematic literature review and critical analysis of research achievements. The article includes: (i) definitions of service quality, (ii) identification of the most popular models of service quality, (iii) overview of measuring methods of service quality, and (iv) the main research achievements on account of logistics service quality.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the organizing committee of EPPM2016

Keywords: service quality; service quality models and methods; logistics service quality

1. Introduction

It has been widely recognised that logistics quality is one of the crucial factor determining customers' satisfaction and position of logistics enterprises on the competitive market. In changing conditions and increasing clients' demands, logistic enterprises are forced to react quickly and introduce new innovation solutions [1]. That is why service measurement and monitoring has recently been one of the key issues of both logistics service providers but also researchers. Nevertheless, scholars and practitioners in logistics have never agreed to a universal approach to the definition of the concept of quality in logistics service and its associated dimensions. Though several authors have so far touched on this subject, their conclusions and proposals are largely different mainly in terms of dimensions and attributes of logistic service quality. It also appears that there has been very little research done in logistics service on how its quality is defined and attributed. Moreover, the literature review shows that both definitions and measurement

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tools are rather adapted to the logistic specificity from the research output considering service quality in general. However, some authors make an attempt to create their own original approach considering logistic service quality. For the managers' point of view, it is important to know a variety of quality models and measurement methods in order to analyse service quality in the most complex way. Therefore, the paper begins with the overview of definitions considering service quality in general. Next, there are presented the most popular service quality models and measurement tools. Then, the last part describes the research achievements on logistic service quality. The main aim of the article is to overview and then critically assess chosen models and methods of measuring service quality taking into account the specific features of logistic service. The paper was based on the research method of systematic literature review and critical analysis of research achievements.

2. Review of different approaches to service quality

Even though there are many definitions of service quality used in literature, authors emphasize that it is not possible to find one complex and proper definition describing the service quality [2]. The reason of this fact can be found in the specificity, multi-attribute character of service but also the different understanding of service quality within the organization and by customer. Moreover, the researchers also define this term in many ways, therefore the analysis of different meaning of the service quality was the subject of discussion conducted by many Polish authors, who tried to classify these definitions [3–6]. Some researchers suggest that service quality can be defined on account of the academic achievements on product quality. For example Kachniewska groups the service quality definition into five principal approaches proposed by Garvin i.e. the transcendent, the product-based, the user-based, the manufacturing-based, and the value-based [7, 8]. The first one, having the origin in philosophy, is undefined but easily understood category meaning the perfection and excellence. The product-based approach describes the attributes of products, which has to fulfill the perceived expectations of customer so the better the product features, the higher the quality [9]. The user-based approach is based on individual customers' opinion of perceived product quality. The difficulty in assessment the quality from clients' perspective is connected with the different needs of each person and then subjective opinion of product quality. In order to maintain or reach clients, the organization should recognize and respect their expectations while designing product and monitoring service. According to the manufacturing-based definitions, quality means as conformance to requirements and standards so every deviation from the prescribed requirements is treated as not-fulfilling required quality. This approach based on slogan of "no failures" formed by service guru – Crosby was later used in ISO 9000:2005 [10]. This definition is said to be the most useful especially in production industry but also in service sector. Finally, the last value-based approach describes quality as the degree of excellence of services at the approved price and acceptable cost level.

Together with the development of service sector, many researchers noticed that the quality definitions and measuring tools utilized in goods industry cannot be directly used in case of service sector. The specific characteristics of service must be acknowledged for a full understanding of service quality and finding suitable tools to measure it. First of all, service is intangible and unstable that is why it is extremely difficult to set requirements and then to measure the effect. Secondly, the differentiated range of service and the heterogeneous character does not allow to form one universal tool to measure its quality. Thirdly, production and consumption of many services are inseparable, as a consequence client in most cases is actively involved in the process of providing services. Moreover, each client individually determines what level of service satisfies him but also do not allow any level of tolerance for mistakes in the process of providing the service [3].

Taking into account these specific characteristics of service and different points of views on defining the service quality, the researchers formed many concepts and models of service quality [11]. Urban claims that the authors do not search for one universal definition but rather try to discover many differentiated aspects of service quality. Moreover, he mentions three reasons of diversity of service quality understanding in literature: many dimensions of service, the role of client in service assessment and the connection with methods of quality management [6]. In the paper, there will be presented the most popular quality models with their critical analysis: technical and functional quality model, GAP model and potential, process and result service model.

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