



## THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SERVQUAL METHOD IN THE COURIER SERVICES COMPANY

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**Abstract:** *Servqual method measures the gap between customer expectations and experience. The basic assumption of the measurement was that customers can evaluate a company's service quality by comparing their perceptions with their expectations. In the paper the analysis of the quality of the courier services was conducted. The research took place in one courier company in Poland. 22 statements divided in 5 groups were chosen to carry out this method. The respondents were supposed to define their expectations to every statement and to define the experience (evaluate them) in the research company.*

**Key words:** *Servqual, curier services, quality*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

A quality of a product or service refers to the perception (experience) of the degree to which the product or service meets the customer's expectation.

The quality analysis in case of the services is not as obvious as in the case of the products. Examining the quality of the product we have tangible evidence of the level of quality. We can examine their dimensions, weight, the chemical, physical and mechanical properties, colour, smell, taste.

For services such evidence does not exist due to its immateriality and impermanence. Therefore, in this case, the research is based on the quality of customer feedback. The characteristics of the services that are important to customers and to how the customers perceive these characteristics in the received service should be considered.

Everyone are interested in services of the courier companies: companies, schools, offices and of course households. Therefore, the author decided to make their evaluation. The Servqual method, which takes into account both the expectations and perceptions of customers, is the best way to do it.

## **2 CHARACTERISTIC OF MARKET**

A courier market is currently one of the fastest growing services markets in Poland. Between 150 registered courier-post companies only 15 companies that generate more than 96% of the turnover of the Polish market have an important role.

In the coming years an increase in quality of services will be most of all taken into consideration by customers. Companies that will not care for this factor, do not have opportunities to meet the growing needs and expectations of customers. It can be also expected from these companies extension of the offer, which will provide to customers with comprehensive services.

The courier company X with over 100 years of tradition was chosen as an research object. Nowadays it is a global company, with one of the most famous and most respected brands in the world. It is the largest transport company and a leader in the provision of specialized transportation and logistics services.

## **3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The Servqual method is a simple, multi-scale, by which it can be measured the service quality from the point of view of the customer in order to obtain a lot of valuable tips to improve the quality. It was developed by Berry, Parasuraman i Zeithamel [1-4].

To continually improve, the standard is needed that allows for comparison with it in order to assess the extent to which the excellence objective is achieved. Such a model is SERVQUAL questionnaire assuming the highest attainable standard of the service (absolute performance standard). To this standard all subjective feelings (experience) of the consumer are compared. It is a direct reference to the philosophy of TQM, which consists of a continuous comparison to perfect organization, through models of excellence such as: ISO 9004:2000, EFQM, PNJ, CAF and others [5-7].

The Servqual method treats quality as the difference between customers expectations and feelings (experiences) during the service performance process. The research of the quality with the use of the SERVQUAL method starts with the selection of an appropriate set of determinants of service quality. On the basis of separate criteria a questionnaire composed of 3 parts is created. 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> parts consist of 22 similar number of statements:

- 1<sup>st</sup> part includes the statements connected with expectation of the customer on the service (O),
- 2<sup>nd</sup> part includes the statements connected with evaluations of the service provider (P).

All statements are divided in 5 groups of attributes: service material infrastructure, service reliability, service speed, competence, empathy.

Forming expectations about the various features of the service and evaluations of the fulfilments (experiences) of those expectations are conducted on the basis of the scale from 1 to 7 where 1 – means that customer totally disagrees with the statement, and 7 – is that customer totally agrees with it.

3<sup>rd</sup> part of the survey concerns the identification of a key customer attributes. The customer has 100 points available to distribute among the various groups of attributes at its discretion, pointing the group of the most importance for him. This part of the questionnaire helps to identify what is the most important for the customer when choosing a service provider.

This research was conducted in 2011 among the 125 people who were customers of the research company.

## 4 RESEARCH RESULTS

The results of research connected with the courier services quality with the use of Servqual method in the company X are presented in **Tables 1-6**.

**Tab. 1. Evaluation of the service material infrastructure**

No	Statement in the model courier company	O	No	Statement in the research courier company	P
1.	Staff of the model courier company looks neat.	4.4	1.	Staff of the research courier company looks neat.	3.07
2.	The model courier company is equipped with modern devices.	4.73	2.	The research courier company is equipped with modern devices.	3.4
3.	Promotional material of the model courier company are legible.	4.27	3.	Promotional material of the research courier company are legible.	2.6
4.	The model courier company has modern and nice-looking packages and parcels for delivery.	4.6	4.	The research courier company has modern and nice-looking packages and parcels for delivery.	3.07

**Tab. 2. Evaluation of the service reliability**

No	Statement in the model courier company	O	No	Statement in the research courier company	P
5.	When a client meets problem in the model courier company, its staff can help.	5.2	5.	When a client meets problem in the research courier company, its staff can help.	3.67
6.	When the model courier company undertakes to perform services within the specified time, it does not disappoint.	6.2	6.	When the research courier company undertakes to perform services within the specified time, it does not disappoint.	3.67
7.	The model courier company cares about the opinion of faultless service provider.	5.6	7.	The research courier company cares about the opinion of faultless service provider.	3.0
8.	The model courier company always delivers undamaged and intact packages.	6.23	8.	The research courier company always delivers undamaged and intact packages.	5.67
9.	The model courier company provides services in the right way.	4.07	9.	The research courier company provides services in the right way.	4.13

**Tab. 3. Evaluation of the service speed**

No	Statement in the model courier company	O	No	Statement in the research courier company	P
10.	The staff of the model courier company is never too busy to respond to customer notification.	6.0	10.	The staff of the research courier company is never too busy to respond to customer notification.	3.2
11.	The staff of the model courier company always demonstrates a willingness to help.	5.3	11.	The staff of the research courier company always demonstrates a willingness to help.	3.93
12.	The model courier company always informs about the date of delivery.	5.7	12.	The research courier company always informs about the date of delivery.	4.8
13.	The model courier company takes an order at any time of day or night.	4.0	13.	The research courier company takes an order at any time of day or night.	3.53

**Tab. 4. Evaluation of the competence**

No	Statement in the model courier company	O	No	Statement in the research courier company	P
14.	Behaviour of the staff of the model courier company arouses confidence.	5.67	14.	Behaviour of the staff of the research courier company arouses confidence.	3.07
15.	The staff of the model courier company has the knowledge to respond the customers questions.	3.53	15.	The staff of the research courier company has the knowledge to respond the customers questions.	3.67
16.	Customers of the model courier company are not afraid about services completions.	4.8	16.	Customers of the research courier company are not afraid about services completions.	4.0
17.	The staff of the model courier company is always nice and polite to customers.	4.87	17.	The staff of the research courier company is always nice and polite to customers.	3.07

**Tab. 5. Evaluation of the empathy**

No	Statement in the model courier company	O	No	Statement in the research courier company	P
18.	The model courier company treats each customer individually.	3.6	18.	The research courier company treats each customer individually.	3.27
19.	The staff of the model courier company takes care of the interests of the customers.	4.87	19.	The staff of the research courier company takes care of the interests of the customers.	4.47
20.	The staff of the model courier company understands specific needs of the customers.	5.2	20.	The staff of the research courier company understands specific needs of the customers.	4.67
21.	The model courier company provides services at a time convenient to the customer.	5.6	21.	The research courier company provides services at a time convenient to the customer.	4.13
22.	The staff of the model courier company pays the same attention to every customer.	4.2	22.	The staff of the research courier company pays the same attention to every customer.	5.47

**Tab. 6. Evaluation of the individual groups of attributes**

No	Groups of attributes	Number of points
1.	Service material infrastructure	15
2.	Service reliability	17.3
3.	Service speed	40.03
4.	Competence	16.36
5.	Empathy	12.75

In case of the group: evaluation of service material infrastructure customers have the highest expectations for equipment with modern devices (statement 2). The same statement was the highest evaluated by customers in the research company.

Analysing the service reliability most customers expect the courier company always delivers undamaged and intact packages. This statement (8) had also the highest evaluation.

In the area of the services speed evaluation as the most important expectation the customers say: the staff of the model courier company is notification (10). Unfortunately, in the research company this factor was rated as the lowest of all group.

In the group competence evaluation customers have the greatest expectations in relation to the statement 14, on the behaviour of the staff which arouses confidence. However, this statement and statement 17 concerning being nice and polite were the worst evaluated in the research courier company.

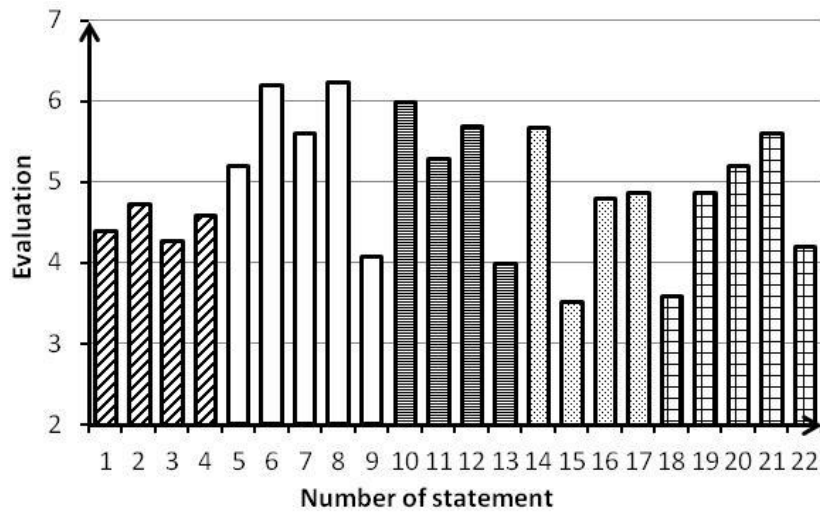
In the empathy customers had the greatest expectations in relation to the provision of services at a time convenient for the client (statement 21). But in the company the customers chose payment of the same attention to every customer (statement 22) as the best.

For the customers of the courier company the service speed is the most important group of attributes, because this group got 40 point out of 100 possible (table 6).

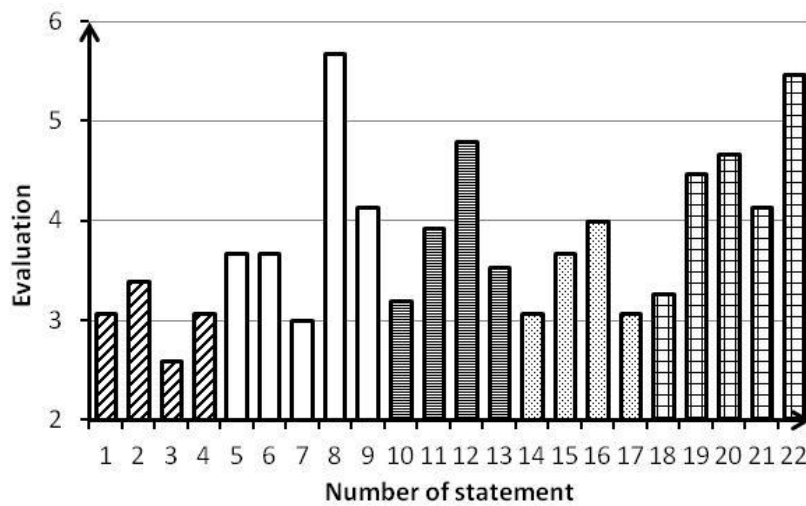
Graphical interpretation of Servqual method for expectation with respect to the model courier company and experience of the research courier company were presented in **Figures 1-3**.

As it is seen in **Figure 1**, the greatest expectations of the customers comparing all research areas were connected with the lack of unreliability, when the comp undertakes to perform services within the specified time (say 6) and provide undamaged and intact items (statement 8). Both statements received the evaluation above 6.

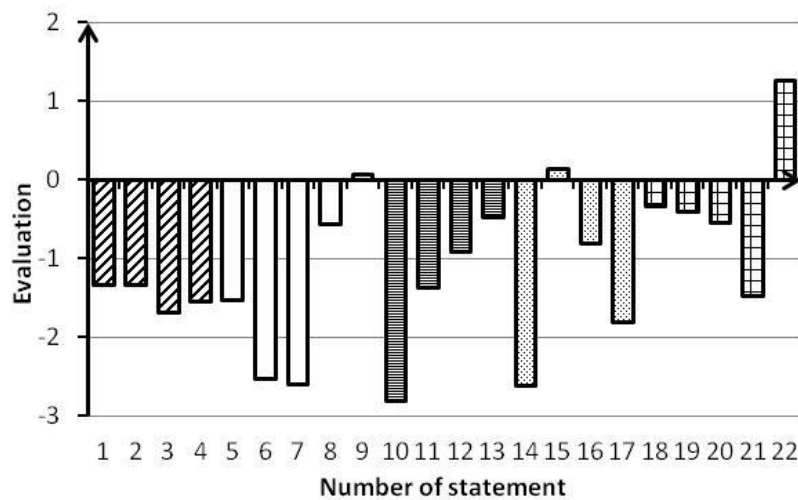
As it is seen in **Figure 2**, in the research courier company the customers have the best experience connected with providing undamaged and intact packaging (statement 8) and paying the same attention to every customer (statement 22). Both statements were evaluation by customers above 5.



**Fig.1** Aggregated results for the expectations of customers in relation to the model courier service



**Fig.2** Aggregated results for the experiences of customers in relation to the research courier service



**Fig.3** Aggregated results for the difference between the experiences and the expectations of customers

Analysing the difference between experience and expectations of the customers (**Figure 3**), it can be noticed that in case of 3 statement this difference was positive. These statements were connected with paying the same attention to every customer (statement 22), providing services in the right way (9) and having the knowledge to respond the customers questions (15). It means that only in these 3 cases the experience of the customers with the research company were higher than expectations. So, they were nicely surprised because they got more than they wanted.

In other cases the company didn't meet the customers expectations. The higher negative difference between customers experiences and expectations was noticed for undertaking to perform services within the specified time (statement 6), opinion of faultless service provider (7), never being too busy to respond to customer notification (10) and behaviour which arouses confidence (14). In all these cases the difference was below 2. It means that for these 4 statement the customers were very disappointed, and therefore the improvement of these areas is needed as fast as possible.

The average values for different groups of attributes were calculated. The individual arithmetic averages were:

Service material infrastructure	=-1.465
Service reliability	=-1.432
Service speed	=-1.385
Competence	=-1.265
Empathy	=-0.292

The total average value of services quality according to Servqual method was:

$$S = \frac{-1.465 - 1.432 - 1.385 - 1.265 - 0.292}{5} = -1.168$$

Multiplying the average for each group by weight (evaluation of the individual groups of the attributes) it was obtained:

Service material infrastructure	=-21.975
Service reliability	=-24.77
Service speed	=-50.44
Competence	=-19.43
Empathy	=-3.723

The weighted average of services quality according to Servqual method was:

$$S = \frac{-21.975 - 24.77 - 50.44 - 19.43 - 3.723}{100} = -1,204$$

It should be noted that the average differences in each group of statements are negative, which means that the company does not meet the expectations of customers in all 5 areas.

It is evidently seen that the greatest difference between the perfect state (expectation) and the state that the customer felt (experience) refers to the service material infrastructure (-1.465). In the area the biggest and fastest improvement is needed. However, in case of empathy the difference is the smallest and is only 0.292. In this area, the research company is the closest to the customer expectations.

The total quality average value according to Servqual method was -1.168. This points to the fact that the company is far from perfection and there is still a lot to check and fix. The weighted average was even higher (-1.204).

If taking into account the importance of customer individual attributes, the research company should improve the most the quality of service speed. The weighted factors was -50.44.

## **5 CONCLUSIONS**

It can be concluded that customers have the greatest expectations in relation to the lack of unreliability, when the company undertakes to perform services within the specified time and providing undamaged and intact items. However, in the research couriers company the customers gave the highest evaluations to the providing undamaged and intact items and paying the same attention to every customer.

It should be noted that in the company only in 3 cases the difference between experiences and expectations of the customers was positive. In other cases negative difference means dissatisfaction of the customers. So mostly the company was not able to meet the customers expectations

The research courier company should think about fast improvement. Particular attention should be given to the statements connected with undertaking to perform services within the specified time, opinion of faultless service provider, never being too busy to respond to customer notification and behaviour which arouses confidence.

Company, to remain on the market, must follow the requirements of the clients. It can not afford to have their disappointment, because the customers choose the courier company not opposite. On the Polish market there are many large and small courier companies that offer customers a variety of solutions and have a different approach to the customers, so the competition is very high. The customer does not only choose the courier company watching the price of the delivery but also the quality of the service. That is why their satisfaction is so important.

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