USE OF THE SERVPERF METHOD TO EVALUATE SERVICE QUALITY IN THE TRANSPORT COMPANY

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ABSTRACT

Transport services are one of the most common services in Poland and abroad. Especially passenger transport is very popular. For those without a car or travelling in large groups, such transport is a big convenience. On the market there are many companies that offer this kind of services. Decisions about the particular service provider shall be based on own experiences of customer, opinions of others people and quality analysis results which are often available on many different websites. In such quality analysis special types of methods are used, among which the Servqual method and its variation the Servperf method should be mentioned. In the article the Servperf method was used to evaluate the quality of transport services in the chosen company. In this method the customer does not evaluate his expectations for the service, but only the final service. According to the customers of the research company, its services in about 65% met their expectations. Their also indicated which determinants had the highest positive and negative impact on the quality of these services.

Keywords: *Servperf, transport services, quality*

1. INTRODUCTION

On the market of transport there is big competition. Customers have a choice of wide range of services such as transport of people or goods, in Poland and abroad, for individual customers and groups. It is up to the customer what kind of company he decides to choose. His decision is influenced by many factors related to the quality of services offered by the company. Transport of passengers and goods shall be treated as a service, not as a product.

The service can be defined as a useful immaterial product, which is produced by human labour (activity) in the production process, by affecting the structure of a specific object (human or material object) in order to satisfy human needs (DASZKOWSKA, 1998). The service quality and its analysis is much more complex problem than the products quality. Evaluation of level of service quality depends, inter alia on: objective and subjective factors, the level of the requirements set by a customer, the reference point or mood of the customer (STOMA, 2012). Therefore, some tools which are used to evaluate the service quality were created.

One of the most used tool of the service quality analysis is the Servqual method (Service Quality). It is used by many different companies, first of all by such as hotels, banks, hospitals, shops. It was created by Berry, Parasuraman and Zeithaml (KONSTANCIAK, 2012; INGALDI; JURSOVA, 2013). The Servqual method uses a multi scale, by means of which it is possible to measure of the service quality from the point of view of customer, to get many hints associated with the directions of the quality improvement. This method treats quality as the difference between customer expectations and actual perceptions of the service. The analysis of the service quality by the Servqual method begins with selection of the appropriate set of service quality determinants (KADŁUBEK, 2011).

The Servperf method (Service Performance) is less known, however, an interesting method of the service quality analysis. It was created as a contrast proposal to the Servqual method. The basic assumption the Servperf method is to improve the service quality. It was created by Cronin and Taylor, who found out that we cannot examine customer expectations, because the expectations belong to the ambiguous and variable category. They can change very easily. The Servperf method, unlike the method Servqual, examines only the level of quality of the

received, realized service (perception), and compares it to the ideal services (STOMA, 2012). This method gets rid of the subjectivity, because the customer does not specify in advance its often unreasonable expectations about the service. The general formula of the method is very easy, which from a practical point of view makes it easier to apply. The service quality is compared to customer perception (KUCIŃSKA, 2007; KUCIŃSKA; KOŁOSOWSKI, 2009). This method is therefore easier to use and less time-consuming compared to the Servqual method (GILMORE, 2003).

Evaluation and measurement of the quality service in the Servperf method is based on determinants derived from the Servqual method. Measurement of the service quality is made with a seven semantic rating scale (Likert scale), where the lowest level of the scale is: weak, and the best: excellent – so similar like in the Servqual method. The better service quality examined by this method is, the closer the individual scores to the maximum value is (GARCZARCZYK, 2000).

Nowadays, most people are focused on their continuous movement. They like to spend their free time far away from home, they want to run their business not only in the place of work, employers want to send their employees to the conferences, fairs, exhibitions, social events. For this purpose they use their own cars or decide to use public or private transport. So they benefit from a wide range of services offered by different transport companies. On the market there are many companies which offer such services. It is important that the customer based on his experiences or experiences of his friends, available information, is able to choose the offer of high quality.

The purpose of this article is to evaluate the quality of transport services offered by one of companies from southern Poland. For this purpose the author decided to use the Servperf. The analysis allowed to determine what is the level of services offered by the research company, according to customers and to provide suggestions for future directions of the company's activities. Another purpose of the article was to show that the Servperf method is more objective and easier than the Servqual method.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

In the research presented in this chapter 134 customers of chosen transport company took part. The research had a form of the Internet survey about which fulfilment were asked customers after using the services offered by the research company. Electronic form of the survey provides greater anonymity, and at the same time facilitates data collection and sorting of results.

The survey was conducted among customer of one of the transport companies from Czestochowa. The company offers the transport services of passengers by buses, minibuses in Poland and European countries. Among the offers a customer can find daily transport of children and young people to the pool or to the cinema, school trips, transport of employees, transports of guests to events, transport of groups to exhibitions, fairs, conferences, social events, tours.

The proper preparation of the survey is very important element of the research. It should be remembered that the survey must be written in simple language that everyone can easily understand, and questions should not be too long, not be boring for the respondent. Appropriate questions must also provide as much information about the quality of the test service as possible (LESTYÁNSZKA ŠKŮRKOVÁ; INGALDI, 2014; DZIUBA; SZOŁTYSEK; KOZYRA, 2011).

In Table 1 all determinants, which were evaluated during the research, divided into five basic groups, were presented. In Table 2 the original part of the original survey about empathy of the staff with its determinants were shown. The customers were supposed to evaluate every determinant according to the Liker's scale presented in this Table. Table 3 includes weights of all individual groups of determinants (also part of the original survey). The respondents had to divide 100 points between the individual groups. It can therefore be noted that the survey itself is very similar to the survey of the Servqual method, only the part concerning expectations for the service is omitted.

Table 1: Statement in the survey Servperf (own study)

No	Group of determinants	Statement (determinant)
1.	Service material infrastructure	The research transport company is equipped with modern transport fleet.
2.		The research transport company has a modern computer system.

3.		Staff of the research transport company looks neat.
4.		Promotional materials and Internet website of the research transport company are legible.
5.		The research transport company is placed in a convenient location.
6.	Service reliability	The research transport company keeps the conditions of the contract.
7.		The research transport company has a flawless documentation relating to individual contracts.
8.		The research transport company undertakes to perform services within the specified time, it does not disappoint.
9.		The research transport company is sensitive to the needs of individual clients.
10.	Staff responsiveness	Staff of the research transport company always demonstrates a willingness to help.
11.		Staff of the research transport company inform the customer about the conditions of the service.
12.		Staff of the research transport company is ready for fast response on the customer's need.
13.		Staff of the research transport company works smoothly and quickly.
14.	Service assurance	Staff of the research transport company is well qualified.
15.		Staff of the research transport company has the knowledge to respond the customers questions.
16.		The research transport company cares about the current updates of its offer.
17.		Staff of the research transport company behaves plausibly.
18.		Staff of the research transport company is always nice and polite to customers.
19.	Staff empathy	The research transport company treats each customer individually.
20.		The research transport company provides services at a time convenient to the customer.
21.		The research transport company employs workers who devote their full attention to the customer.
22.		Staff of the research transport company understands specific expectation of the customers.

Table 2: Evaluation of chosen group of determinants - part of the original survey (own study)

	Statement (determinant)	Evaluation according to Liker's scale						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Staff empathy	The model transport company treats each customer individually.							
	The model transport company provides services at a time convenient to the customer.							
	The model transport company employs workers who devote their full attention to the customer.							
	Staff of the model transport company understands specific expectation of the customers.							

Table 3: Weight of individual groups of determinants - part of the original survey (own study)

Group of determinants	Number of points
Service material infrastructure	
Service reliability	
Staff responsiveness	
Service assurance	
Staff empathy	

In case of each individual determinant, the average evaluation was calculated. Only these results were presented in the graphical way. Different type of graphic forms were used. At the beginning with use of the histogram average values for each determinant were presented, to identify those that got the highest evaluations. Then with use of the same kind of graphic the comparison of the average value of individual determinant was compared to ideal evaluation (percentage fraction to evaluation 7). Then with use of the reversed histograms wages and average values for each group of determinants were presented. The arithmetic average and the weighted average for all determinants were calculated and then they were compared to ideal evaluation. For the calculation of the weighted average, weights of the individual groups of determinants were used.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In figure 1 the average values of evaluations given by respondents to individual determinants were presented. While in Figure 2 these value were compared to the ideal evaluation (evaluation in Liker's scale).
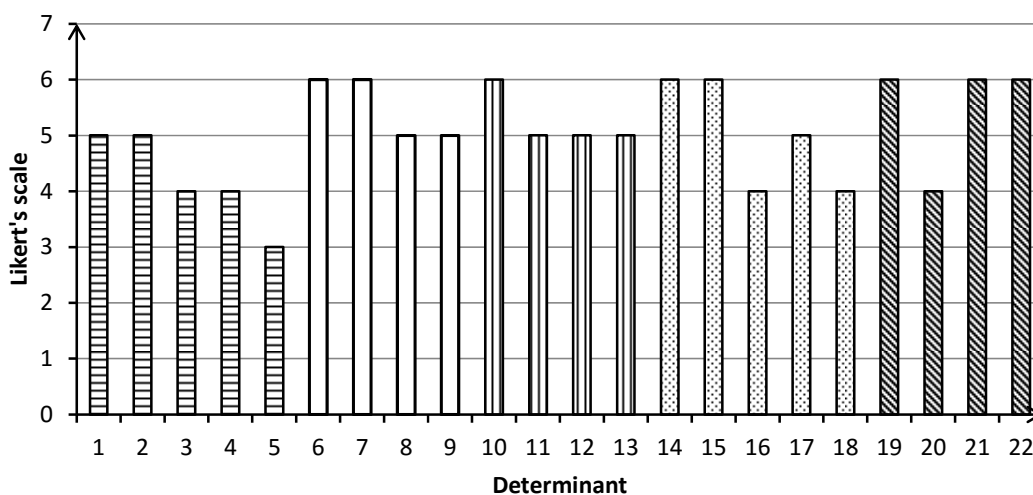

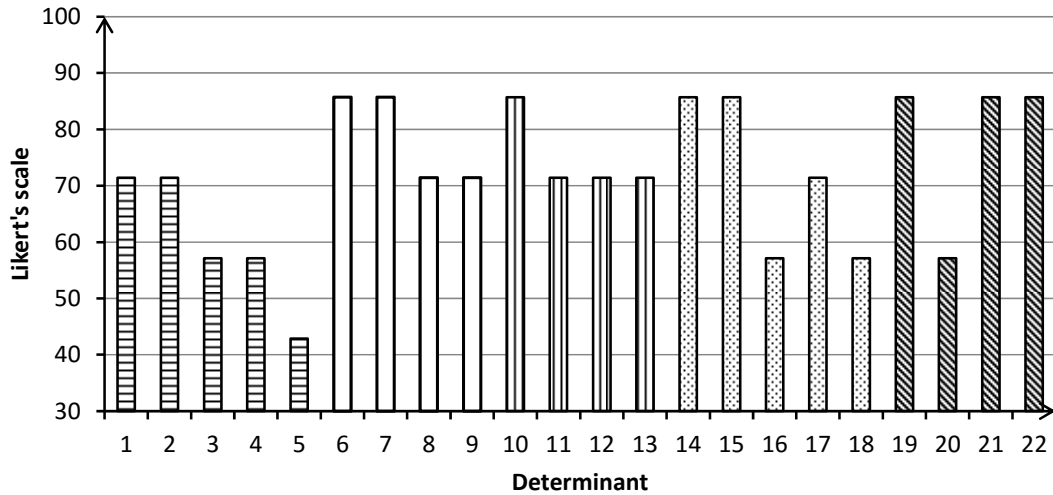Figure 1: Aggregated results for the Servperf method (own study)

Figure 2: Percentage in relation to the Likert's scale for the Servperf method (own study)

From Figures 1 and 2 it can be concluded that determinant, which received the highest evaluation from customers, and thus its percentage is closer do ideal evaluation, was determinant 19, i.e. individual customer treatment. It results from the fact that it is the transport company that performs specific services requested by customers.

The other high evaluated determinants were determinants 14, i.e. well qualified staff and 20, i.e. provision of services at a time convenient to the customer. For the customer it is important that the bus driver was suitably qualified and experienced, and the service is performed, when customers want.

Customers evaluated the worst promotional materials and Internet website (determinant 4). In the Internet century well organized website is the key to success of the company and collection of information for customers. Lack of adequate promotional material makes that the customers choose different transport company, which more accurately describes its services and whose information is easier to find. Another poorly evaluated determinant were smooth and quick work (determinant 13) and transport fleet (determinant 1). The first determinant can surprise, since it is smooth and quick work that influences whether or not a customer will change his mind about ordered services and not go to the competitors. If it comes to transport fleet, it depends on the income of the company and its size. Often the customers have very high expectations about the quality and appearance of the coaches, so later they evaluate them badly.

In Figure 3 weights of each group of determinant given by respondent were presented while in Figure 4 average values of each group were shown.
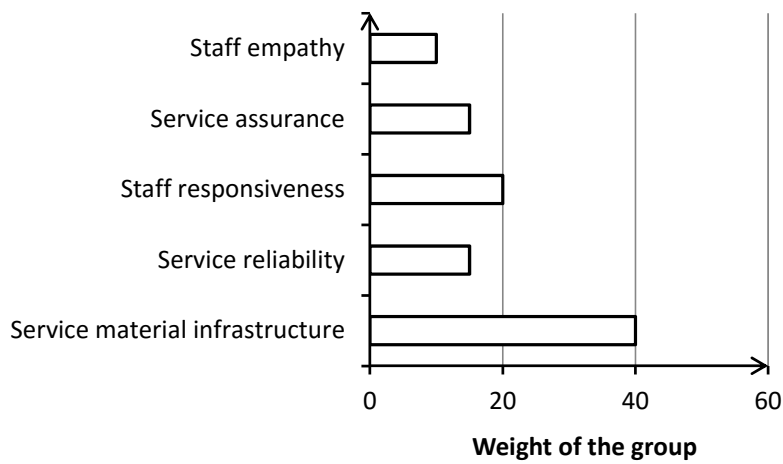

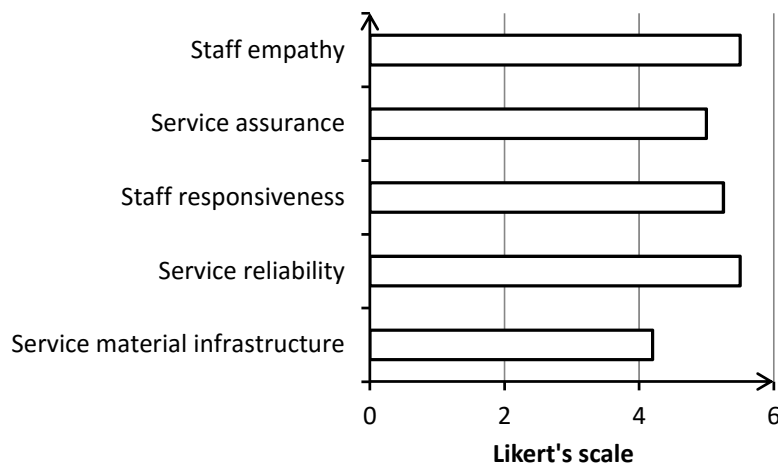Figure 3: Weights of individual group of determinants (own study)

Figure 4: Average values of individual group of determinants (own study)

From the conducted analysis (Figure 3) it results that the customers most frequently pointed to the service material infrastructure (average more than 45 points out of 100). Transport service is very specific, in spite of its immateriality; to perform it the company needed certain material factors. For the customer transport fleet, which is used to perform the service, look of staff and location of the company, are the most important elements for the customers.

In case of the research transport company the determinant of staff empathy got the highest average evaluation (Figure 4). Employees of the company treat each customer individually by offering their services at a convenient time. It should be noted, however, that this group of the determinants had at the same time the lowest

weight (Figure 3). The service material infrastructure got the lowest evaluation and at the same time had the highest weight.

The total average value for all determinants was also calculated. This calculation was made in two different ways: as an arithmetic average XA and as weighted average XW.

XA = 4.72

XA = 4.52

On average, determinants were evaluated at 4.72, after taking into account weights the average was 4.52 (it was not too much lower than the arithmetic average). It means that the determinants were evaluated at a level above the average (over 4 points). Referring both averages to ideal evaluation, it was 67.43% and 64.52%. It means that the transport service offered by the research company on average approx. 65% meet customer expectations.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The service quality analysis is very important due to the development of the service sector in the Polish and world economy, and because of the difficulty associated with the fact that services have non-material form and it is often difficult to tell what really is evaluated. The service quality and its analysis are completely different from the products quality. Therefore, to analyse the service quality separate research methods, such as Servqual, or its variant Servperf method were created.

In the article to evaluate service quality in the chosen transport company the Servperf method was chosen. It is less popular than the Servqual method, but according to the literature (STOMA, 2012; GILMORE, 2003) more objective due to the fact that the customer does not evaluate his expectations for the service, but only the final service, which may have an impact on the objective research result.

The conducted research let show that the customers, who decided for the transport services of the research company, on average estimated that these services in about 65% met their expectations. The determinants that had the highest positive impact on the results were: individual customer treatment, well qualified staff and provision of services at a time convenient to the customer. The determinants that had the lowest positive impact on the results were: promotional materials and

Internet website, smooth and quick work and transport fleet. These determinants should be taken into account by the management of the research transport company in order to improve the quality of its services.

The research showed also that the customers pay much attention on service material infrastructure. This is a group of the determinants which can be seen, touch and it is easier to evaluate.

The transport market is very vigorously growing market, where there is a lot of competition in the form of smaller and larger companies. Therefore, every company like this should evaluate the quality of its services in order to know what factors of the services decides if that the customer is satisfied, and what should be improve.

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