



Agnieszka Cepielik

The School of Banking and Management in Krakow

Dominika Woźny Ph.D.

The School of Banking and Management in Krakow

CUSTOMER LOGISTICS SERVICE – ANALYSIS OF DHL EXPRESS COMPANY’S CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Introduction

Customer satisfaction, which is influenced, among other things, by service processes, is a crucial element of operations in a modern company. Company’s success in the area of customer service, including logistics, determines customer loyalty and attachment. The main objective of customer logistics service is to ensure a high level of customer satisfaction by the provision of specified services and products. Customer satisfaction with logistics services is a key element that affects the choice of a given company and also creates its positive image on the market.

The aim of the article is to present the essence of customer logistics service and to analyze the satisfaction of the DHL Express company’s customers.¹

1. The essence of customer logistics service

The objective of customer logistics service is to meet the expectations and requirements of customers in an effective and efficient way with regard to the time, place and availability of a particular product². Customer logistics service includes all activities related to the acceptance, preparation and execution of orders by a company while ensuring the correctness of the process and taking appropriate actions to eliminate damage in case of errors. This also involves a reliable delivery to customers in line with their requirements. Thus, customer logistics service involves all the areas of business that aim at customer satisfaction while meeting supplier goals³.

¹ The article is a synthesis of research conducted within the framework of the undergraduate thesis of Agnieszka Cepielik supervised by Dr Dominika Woźny – the thesis was defended on 12.05.2022 at the School of Banking and Management in Krakow.

² Z. Jedynek, *Logistyczna obsługa klienta w przedsiębiorstwach handlu detalicznego wielkopowierzchniowego*, „Logistyka” 2018, No. 6, p. 1046.

³ M. D. Dobrzyński, *Strategie obsługi klienta w zarządzaniu łańcuchem dostaw*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, Białystok 2007, p. 23.

Customer service is primarily characterized by all the elements that have an impact on an effective meeting of customer expectations during a particular transaction⁴. The delivery of products on time and place results in the satisfaction of the customer, who disseminates positive information about the supplier. The definition of customer logistics service can be interpreted with regard to the way it is perceived. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that the assumptions of the definition come down to the three following approaches:⁵

- customer logistics service is understood as the process of fulfilling orders for customers, which includes preparing the company for the execution of orders, taking orders, managing customer relationships, stock management, proper order preparation, the delivery of orders to customers, order settlement, the option to assemble the ordered products, the fulfilment of the warranty and return conditions as well as the investigation of any complaints;
- customer logistics service is understood as the assurance of appropriate standards with regard to customer expectations. The standards primarily relate to the comfort of order placing, the time, flexibility and frequency of deliveries, the completeness of orders and stock availability of goods. The above standards should be strictly met to ensure a desired level of consumer satisfaction;
- customer logistics service is defined as an element of the concept of management and mission of a given company. Company strategy aims at maximum customer satisfaction through meeting their needs and expectations. Such company policy may ensure high competitiveness and market position⁶.

It should be mentioned that adequate customer relationship management is crucial at every stage of customer service so that a long-term mutual relationship is built. Moreover, the following service components should be considered to maintain an appropriate level of customer service:⁷

- pre-transaction stage – the activity that consists in determining customer preferences and the level of meeting them through the development of appropriate standards and company policy. The most important element of this stage is the determination of the standards of the executed orders on the basis of customer needs. In order to analyze thoroughly customer preferences, market research should be conducted. In

⁴ D. Kempny, *Logistyczna obsługa klienta*, PWE, Warszawa 2001, p. 15.

⁵ M. Ciesielki, *Logistyka w biznesie*, PWE, Warszawa 2006, p. 128.

⁶ Ibidem, p. 129.

⁷ D. Kempny, *Logistyczna obsługa klienta*, op. cit., p. 19.

most cases, company policy is presented in the form of a document that contains a description of the rules of conduct in the area of customer service; additionally, this document is intended for the employees of a given company.

- transaction stage – the activity that aims at providing adequate communication with the customer, which influences their decisions. At this stage, customer service policy is implemented that can adapt to the constantly changing customer preferences by setting appropriate rules. The rules concern communication forms with employees responsible for the contacts with the customer and the execution of orders. Employee training to develop their qualifications is an important aspect of the transaction stage. This stage is responsible for the process of customer logistics service.
- post-transaction stage – the activity that aims at measuring the level of customer satisfaction with the service. This stage also takes into consideration the after-sales stage: complaints, returns or warranties. The post-transaction stage complements the logistics operations that take place at pre- and transaction stages which make it possible to analyze and evaluate the executed orders⁸.

Depending on the specifics of companies, the components of service can maintain certain differences in each of the above-listed stages. Moreover, the quality of customer logistics service depends mainly on the pre- and transaction stage of the service. It is worth emphasizing that the standards that are set at the pre-transaction stage make it possible to determine the policy of customer logistics service within which company services are executed. What is more, the compliance with this policy indicates the achievement of an appropriate level of excellence of the services provided.

Customer logistics service should consider the needs of customers and implement them with respect to the following elements⁹:

1. Order processing time – the time between placing an order by a customer and receiving the product.
2. Reliability – this parameter includes the following logistics service elements:
 - certainty – the conviction that the order will be delivered to the customer in a proper way, without any damage,

⁸ M. Kramarz, *Elementy logistycznej obsługi klienta w sieciach dystrybucji. Pomiar, ocena, strategię*, Difin, Warszawa 2014, pp. 47-48.

⁹ M. Kramarz, *Elementy logistycznej obsługi klienta w sieciach dystrybucji. Pomiar, ocena, strategię*, op. cit., pp. 54-55; D. Kempny, *Logistyczna obsługa klienta*, op. cit., pp. 19-24.

- completeness – the compliance of the order with its terms,
 - timeliness – the compliance with the guidelines to the contract.
3. Convenience – this parameter includes the following elements of logistics service:
- stock availability – adjusting the stock level to the actual needs of the market,
 - flexibility – the capacity to adjust the order to such nonstandard customer needs as time, product quantity or form,
 - product personalization level – adjusting the product to individual customer needs,
 - product range – a large selection of products,
 - frequency – the number of deliveries executed in a certain period depending on the organization of the supplier's work,
 - minimum delivery batch – the completion of a minimum acceptable order,
 - transport convenience – company location, car parks.
4. Communication - this parameter includes the following elements of logistics service:
- competencies of the service personnel – their product knowledge, advisory skills,
 - order transmission methods – the convenience in order placing,
 - information about order completion – informing the customer in real time about the status of the order,
 - technical support – consulting, after-sales commitments,
 - specification quality – clarity and completeness of the order documents,
 - IT to support communication – communication via the Internet or telephone, CRM.

Customer logistics service that is conducted in line with adequate company standards may result in several benefits such as an increase in market position, company's dynamic development, an increase in profits from sales, a better company image, customer loyalty, new customer acquisition¹⁰.

2. Customer satisfaction and selected methods of its measurement

Satisfaction is an emotional state related to the feeling of pleasure that is caused by needs being satisfied, experiencing benefits or profits, or solving difficult situations¹¹ while customer satisfaction (pleasure) puts emphasis on the customer and his/her needs. The recognition of the

¹⁰ M. Ciesielki, *Logistyka w biznesie*, op. cit., p. 133.

¹¹ M. Kramarz, *Elementy logistycznej obsługi klienta w sieciach dystrybucji. Pomiar, ocena, strategie*, op. cit., p. 44.

needs and the provision of products that meet customer expectations determine the fulfilment of customer's needs and, consequently, the company's success¹². Customer satisfaction is the emotional reaction to the delivered product (service) that has particular features. Customer satisfaction is also influenced both by the quality of the product (service) and the amount that the consumer is obliged to pay for a given product/service. Personal factors as well as the surrounding circumstances should also be taken into consideration. That is why, customer satisfaction is individual, temporary and related to a particular product or transaction. Customer satisfaction is perceived as the degree of meeting customer needs. The customer evaluates the quality of a given product through the information obtained in the process of its use. The degree of product excellence as the definition of quality indicates the level of customer satisfaction.

High quality is a key factor of customer loyalty that is expected by producers/suppliers. If a customer is satisfied with a given product, he/she will probably be a loyal customer. However, when the purchased product or service does not give the customer a sense of satisfaction, he/she may turn to a competitive company. It is worth noting that customer satisfaction can be graded as the customer may be partially satisfied with the purchased product or service. This happens most frequently when a given product has characteristics that suit the buyer and also the ones that do not suit him/her. Satisfaction plays a particularly important role when the consumer wishes to obtain repeatedly the same product or service¹³. It should be added that a proper process of service is an important factor influencing customer satisfaction. An ongoing study of customer satisfaction is crucial in the provision of a high-quality service to the customer.

Customer satisfaction measurement methods include qualitative and quantitative methods. In qualitative methods, selected aspects of a given company's operations are assessed according to specific standards, whereas in quantitative methods, survey research is conducted among the company's customers.

Qualitative methods include, among other ones, the analysis of customer complaints and grievances and *Mystery Shopping* research, i.e. a study conducted by a mystery shopper. Quantitative methods include such methods as the Servqual method, customer satisfaction index (CSI) and critical incidents technique (CIT)¹⁴.

¹² F. Mroczko, *Zarządzanie jakością*, WWSZiP w Wałbrzychu, Wałbrzych 2012, p. 41.

¹³ Ibidem, pp. 42-43.

¹⁴ J. Frańś, *Wybrane instrumenty pomiaru jakości usług logistycznych*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego” 2014, No. 803, pp. 300-301.

In the Mystery Shopping method a qualified person conducts a survey. A mystery shopper pretends to be a normal customer who uses the services of the company under investigation. After the research, the shopper completes a questionnaire where all the elements of the service are evaluated. The employer is not aware that he/she is being evaluated and, consequently, behaves in a usual way. Moreover, the shopper is objective and his/her actions are dictated by facts, not emotions. The effectiveness of this method depends on careful preparation of each of the research stages and their proper implementation¹⁵.

The Servqual method follows the rules of the Total Quality Management (TQM). In the method, service quality is assessed by the comparison of customer expectations before obtaining the service in relation to the perception of the service received. The method distinguishes five gaps that have an impact on customer dissatisfaction with the service. Due to its universality, this method is one of the most effective measurement tools that make it possible to investigate the characteristics of a particular service. Moreover, the gaps make it possible to define exactly the elements that have the greatest impact on quality¹⁶.

The critical incidents technique (CIT) consists in the analysis of critical incidents i.e. such interactions (incidents) between customers and company employees that are particularly satisfying or dissatisfying¹⁷. The information about incidents is collected in the form of focused interviews during which the respondents talk about their feelings; the role of the investigator is to direct the interview to the points that are adequate and to obtain as much information as possible. The application of this method results in the development of groups and categories that make it possible to keep the record of critical events.

Another method of customer satisfaction analysis is the Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI). This method measures and analyzes customer satisfaction from the point of view of customers and the requirements concerning the elements that are important to them¹⁸. This method is also based on a survey research which consists in the assessment of customer satisfaction in the area of importance and the degree of fulfillment of their expectations. CSI is calculated by the following formula:

$$CSI = \sum_{i=1}^N W_i * C_i$$

¹⁵ J. Frańś, *Wybrane instrumenty pomiaru jakości usług logistycznych*, op. cit., p. 311.

¹⁶ R. Karaszewski, *Servqual - metoda jakości świadczonych usług*, „Problemy jakości” 2001, No. 5.

¹⁷ J. Frańś, *Wybrane instrumenty pomiaru jakości usług logistycznych*, op. cit., p. 307; M. Krzyżanowska, R. Wajdner, *CIT – metoda badania jakości usług*, „Problemy Jakości” 2000, nr 11, p. 10.

¹⁸ J. Frańś, *Wybrane instrumenty pomiaru jakości usług logistycznych*, op. cit., p. 309.

where:

CSI – customer satisfaction level

i – successive number of the investigated expectation,

N – number of expectations determined in a given survey,

W_i – indicator of importance of the weight of the i^{th} expectation,

C_i – customer satisfaction level with the i^{th} expectation.

The basic advantage of the above methods is the fact that they enable identification of the reasons for customer dissatisfaction, indicate problematic events and, as a result, make it possible to improve customer service.

Finally, one should also mention that the literature on the subject describes other methods of customer satisfaction measurement such as, for example, Customer Retention Rate (CRR), analysis of complaints and grievances, telephone interviews with customers, benchmarking¹⁹.

It is worth adding that the choice of a particular method of customer satisfaction measurement depends on the specifics of the sector where the company operates, the type of products offered or services provided, and the objective of the investigation.

3. Customer satisfaction with the logistics service of the DHL EXPRESS company

In order to assess customer satisfaction with the logistics service of the DHL EXPRESS company, a survey research was conducted in March 2022 among individual customers of the company. The research tool was a 14-question questionnaire²⁰, which was posted on the Internet. The respondent selection technique used was the snowball technique in which a link to the survey questionnaire was sent to 18 persons who then recruited subsequent respondents. Finally, forty correctly completed survey questionnaires were obtained. The authors of the article are aware that the sample obtained is an insignificant subgroup of the whole population and the research participants may have tended to recruit people who they know well and consequently have similar characteristics. Nevertheless, the research results can lead to general conclusions and may be a premise for further, in-depth analysis in this area.

¹⁹ More about these methods, inter alia in: E. Słowińska, *Przegląd metod oceny zadowolenia klienta* [in:] *Zarządzanie jakością*, J. Bagiński (ed), Oficyna Wydawnicza Politechniki Warszawskiej, Warszawa 2004; M. Gienza, *Satysfakcja klienta w polskich organizacjach zarządzanych przez jakość*, „Problemy Jakości”, 2008 No. 1; M. Gienza, *Bezpośrednie metody pomiaru satysfakcji klienta*, Akademia Ekonomiczna w Krakowie, Kraków 2013; M. Hałat-Łaś, M. Łaś, M. Gawel, Ł. Makowski, *Modele i metody badania satysfakcji klienta*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Bankowej we Wrocławiu”, 2014 No. 6(44).

²⁰ Due to a limited volume of the article, it contains the analysis of the responses to selected questions.

The research involved 16 women (40%) and 24 men (60%). Respondents aged 26-30 were the most numerous group (21 respondents, 52%). Over one fifth of the respondents were aged 18-25 (9 respondents, 22%) and also one fifth were in the age range of 31 – 40 (9 respondents, 22%). Only one respondent was over 40. Based on this age structure of the respondents, it can be concluded that only young people (up to 40 years of age) took part in the research – perhaps they are the most frequent users of courier services.

When asked about the quality of services provided by DHL Express, more than half of the respondents (21 respondents – 52%) stated that the quality of these services met their expectations. Almost one third (12 respondents – 30%) stated that the quality of the services partially met their expectations, only 2 individuals (5%) thought that the quality did not meet their expectations, and 5 respondents (13%) had no opinion on this issue. Therefore, it can be concluded that DHL services are of high quality but it would be worth knowing the opinion of the 13% of respondents who, for unknown reasons, did not express their opinion.

A crucial issue of the research was the respondents’ assessment of the degree of their satisfaction with the service. The results indicate that half of the respondents (20 persons – 50%) think that the degree of their satisfaction with the DHL service is high. Moreover, 14 respondents (35%) stated that they were fairly satisfied with the service and 5 respondents considered the service to be of very high quality. Only one person (2%) assessed the satisfaction degree as low. It should be pointed out that none of the respondents indicated a very low level of satisfaction. The analysis implies that a vast majority of DHL customers are satisfied with the service.

One of the questions presented eight service elements and the respondents were asked to rank these factors from the most important (by assigning “1”) to the least important (by assigning “8”). Table 1 shows the result of the ranking.

Table 1. Significance of particular service elements to DHL Express customers

Significance (from the most to the least significant)	Service element
1.	Fast and effective delivery
2.	Service time
3.	Contact with the courier
4.	Online tracking of the order
5.	Complexity of the service
6.	Convenience in placing orders
7.	Contact with customer service office
8.	Service availability

Source: Based on the results of the authors’ survey research.

The most important service element for the DHL Express customers is the speed and effectiveness of delivery while the least important element is its availability. Perhaps, the element „service availability” was ranked last because the respondents considered it as something obvious due to the fact that DHL Express services are commonly available and there are many places where a parcel can be dropped off/ picked up.

An important factor that proves customer satisfaction is the willingness to recommend products or a company. The analysis shows that 17 respondents (43%) would recommend DHL Express to other people and 9 respondents (22%) would definitely recommend it. 11 respondents (27%) have no opinion on this subject, while 3 respondents (8%) would not recommend this company to their acquaintances. It is interesting why such a significant percentage of respondents was not able to decide whether they would recommend these services or not. However, one can say that the company under investigation enjoys a good reputation among its customers and is frequently recommended by them to other people.

Conclusions

Modern market environment, including modern technologies, and the changing needs of buyers require companies to improve their customer logistics services. It must be emphasized that a long-term success of a company depends to a large extent on the level of customer satisfaction with the service processes, including logistics.

Based on the authors research survey that was conducted among DHL Express customers, it can be stated that the quality of the service provided by this company meets the expectations of its customers – a half of the respondents have the opinion that their satisfaction level with the service is high. The examination of service elements leads to the conclusion that the customers of the company under investigation value most a fast and effective delivery and the service time. It should be added that the satisfaction of the DHL Express customers with the service is confirmed by their willingness to recommend the company to their acquaintances, which is admitted by a vast majority of respondents.

In conclusion, it should be noted that these considerations do not fully exhaust the issue under investigation. It would be interesting, for example, to conduct a survey research on satisfaction with DHL Express logistics services among the company’s customers aged over 40 and then to compare the results obtained.

Bibliography

- [1] Ciesielki M., *Logistyka w biznesie*, PWE, Warszawa 2006.
- [2] Dobrzyński M. D., *Strategie obsługi klienta w zarządzaniu łańcuchem dostaw*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, Białystok 2007.
- [3] Fraś J., *Wybrane instrumenty pomiaru jakości usług logistycznych*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego” 2014, No. 803.
- [4] Gienza M., *Bezpośrednie metody pomiaru satysfakcji klienta*, Akademia Ekonomiczna w Krakowie, Kraków 2013.
- [5] Gienza M., *Satysfakcja klienta w polskich organizacjach zarządzanych przez jakość*, „Problemy Jakości”, 2008 No. 1.
- [6] Hałat-Łaś M., Łaś M., Gawęł M., Makowski Ł., *Modele i metody badania satysfakcji klienta*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Bankowej we Wrocławiu”, 2014 No. 6(44).
- [7] Jedynek Z., *Logistyczna obsługa klienta w przedsiębiorstwach handlu detalicznego wielkopowierzchniowego*, „Logistyka” 2018, No. 6.
- [8] Karaszewski R., *Servqual - metoda jakości świadczonych usług*, „Problemy jakości” 2001, No. 5.
- [9] Kempny D., *Logistyczna obsługa klienta*, PWE, Warszawa 2001.
- [10] Kramarz M., *Elementy logistycznej obsługi klienta w sieciach dystrybucji. Pomiar, ocena, strategie*, Difin, Warszawa 2014.
- [11] Krzyżanowska M., Wajdner R., *CIT – metoda badania jakości usług*, „Problemy Jakości” 2000, No. 11.
- [12] Mroczko F., *Zarządzanie jakością*, WWSZiP w Wałbrzychu, Wałbrzych 2012.
- [13] Słowińska E., *Przegląd metod oceny zadowolenia klienta [in:] Zarządzanie jakością*, Bagiński J. (ed.), Oficyna Wydawnicza Politechniki Warszawskiej, Warszawa 2004.

Abstract

The article deals with the issue of customer satisfaction with regard to logistics service. It presents the idea of customer logistics service, customer satisfaction and the selected forms of its measurement. Moreover, in the light of the author's survey research results, customer satisfaction was analyzed with the logistics service offered by the DHL Express company.

Key words

Customer logistics service, customer satisfaction, service quality, logistics company.