

UTILIZATION OF GAP MODEL IN PROVIDING OF SERVICES IN THE RAILWAY FREIGHT TRANSPORT

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Summary: The contribution describes in detail the GAP model and its use in railway freight transport. Contribution points on five basic gaps in the quality of transport services, which are provided by railway undertaking. This paper contains the partial result of research which was implemented in Railway company Cargo Slovakia, a.s.. The paper is supported by the VEGA Agency by the Project 1/0188/13 „Quality factors of integrated transport system in the effective provision of public transport services in the context of globalisation“, that is solved at Faculty of Operations and Economics of Transport and Communication, University of Žilina.

Key words: quality, model, service, customer.

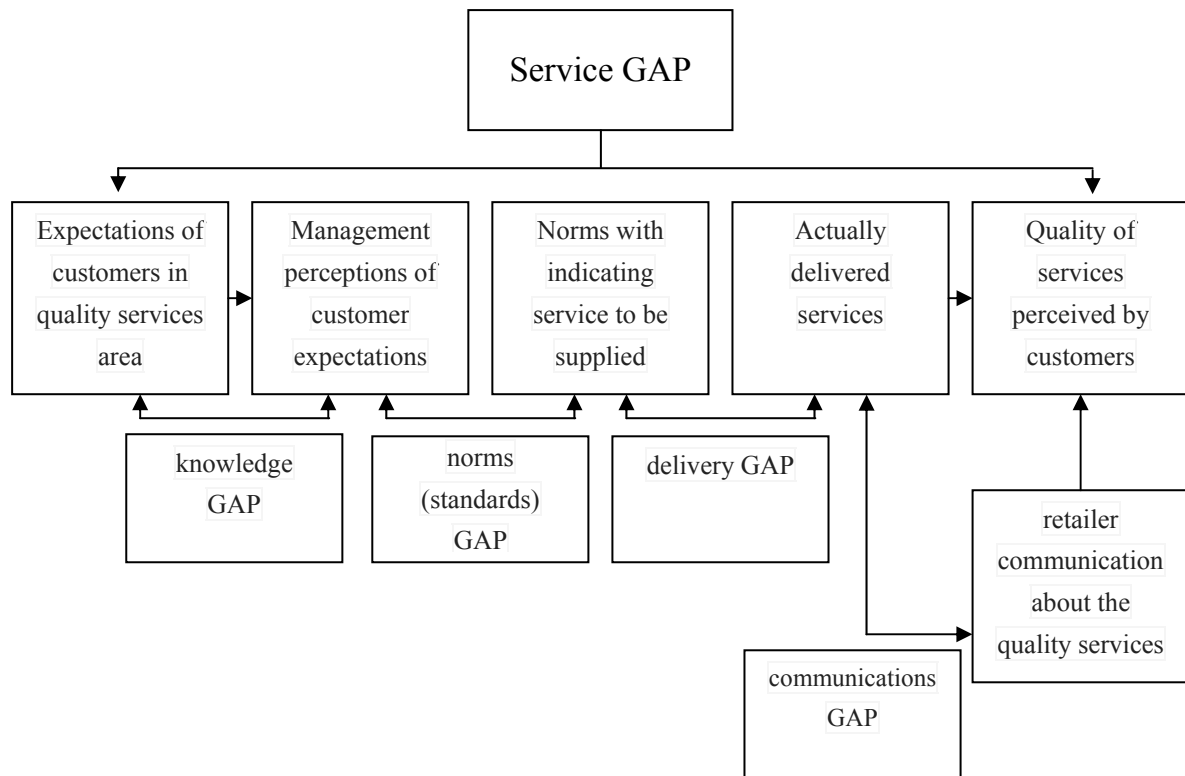
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INTRODUCTION

Quality of provided services is main observable file of characters for end customer when choosing a services supplier. If the customers perceives the services as a satisfy their needs, there is a great precondition, that the customer will the services accept. Inner emotional speech of customer's is the manifestation on the offered service. If it is positive, is possible with a great probability assume the formation of partnership. Therefore, in evaluating level of quality services is necessarily based of real opinions and feelings of customers. Not from the suppliers service ideas about the requirements of customer GAP model is based on the expectations of customers and compares the services offered with their expectations. Thus arise the gaps, either positive or negative. Observed gaps are clearly shown in the figure 1.

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Source: processed by (1)

Fig. 1 Figuration of services with gaps in the GAP model

Figure 1 shows emerging gaps in the GAP model and the gaps in knowledge, which is describe as a GAP4 in the next part.

1. GAP MODEL USED IN THE UNITED STATES

Model of service quality, also known as GAP model, was developed by a group of authors Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry in 1985 in the United States. The model is universal and is currently exploited also in large corporation around the world. Model puts the main emphasis on five key points, so-called gap, that will guarantee the providing of services at the required level of quality and simultaneously lead to the successful provision of quality services. The authors based on the knowledge that customers generally have tendency to compare the service with the service that they expect. If the services offered do not conform to the expectations of the customer, arises ‘a negative gap’.

These “gaps” is necessary measured and it measures difference between the expectations of customers and offered of service. The basic assumption of the measurement is that customers can evaluate the offered of service quality by comparing their perceptions with their expectations. (2)

1.1 GAP1 – the difference between customer expectations and management perceptions

This gap arises when the management does not correctly perceive what the customers want. For example – in the trade with textile the management of a company may think that

customers want expert advices on choosing fashion clothes, but in fact the customers want more the clothes made from high quality materials. Key factors leading to this gap are:

- insufficient market research,
- incorrectly interpreted and incorrectly understood information about customers, about their expectations,
- research is not focused on requisite quality,
- too many layers of management in company,
- poor communication in company.

1.2 GAP2 – the difference between what customers expected and what management perceived about the expectation of customers

This gap arises when the management or service provider might correctly perceive what the customer wants, but may not set a performance standard. An example would be that in trade with fresh meat may management of company tell the processor of the meat to respond to a request quickly, but may not determine, for security reasons, more quickly as safety standard permits. The gap may arise in company from following reasons:

- insufficient planning,
- insufficiently declared liabilities of leadership,
- unclear or ambiguous service acts,
- non-system processes.

1.3 GAP3 – the difference between service quality specification and quality of services provided

The gap may arise in the process of service creation. It could also happen in the production facilities, but most frequently is caused incorrect service or incorrect intervention or progress of employee of the company. Here is necessary realize the fact that human factor exercise an influence on quality of service with important share. The possible main reasons for this difference are:

- deficiencies in human resources policy, for example in recruitment a new employees,
- incorrect system of quality evaluation,
- incorrect system of reparation,
- insufficient staff training,
- ineffective internal market,
- violation of declared supply or demand,
- insufficient education and vocational training.

1.4 GAP4 – the difference between service delivery and external communication

Consumer expectations are highly influenced by statements made by company representatives and advertisements. The gap arises when these assumed expectations are not fulfilled at the time of delivery of the service. For example – if a travel agency declares in the printed documents which providing accommodation in clean and neat rooms, but in fact these parameters of the rooms do not fulfill, because they are not maintained. In this case, the

customer's expectations are not met. The discrepancy between actual service and the promised one may happen to the following reasons:

- purposely promising external communication campaigns,
- inability to handle expectations of customers,
- failure to perform according to the specifications,
- incapable contractors,

1.5 GAP5 – the difference between expected service and experience that the customer has

This difference arises when the consumer misinterprets the service quality. It is the difference between expected service and experience. This gap arises when the consumer misinterprets the service quality. The waiter may serve several times the regular customer, as it is habit, but the customer may interpret this as an indication that something is really wrong.

The factors that may influence the appearance of gap. By 1990, the authors used these basic factors:

- reliability,
- guarantee,
- long-term tangible assets,
- empathy,
- responsiveness.

In a given period development of the society caused also expansion of the model, that after 1990 the authors extended to other factors:

- **competence** and power, reach power, reach power, ability to execute specific activity. For this is necessary to have knowledge and skills to perform the service. For example, the competence in the area of knowledge and skills of employees at the first contact with the customer, or knowledge and skills of staff on the operation itself or its support.
- **courtesy** is reward for the customer's trust and time, or his property. The employees express the courtesy clean and elegant appearance, and not only employee who are at the first contact with customer but also manager of company. The employees so manifesting respect and friendship to the customer.
- **credibility** is the factor such as belief and honesty. The employees to deal with customers with the best interests for the best service. It may be influenced by company name, company reputation and the personal characteristics of the contact employees.
- **security** is the factor to be considered fulfill when the customer feel without danger. The feel without danger or without doubt, including physical safety. It also includes financial security and confidentiality.
- **access** is accessibility and ease of contact with the customer. For example – convenient locations office on the ground floor and convenient office operation hours.
- **communication means** both informing customers in a language they are able to understand and also listening to customers. A company has to adjust its language for the varying needs of its customers. Information might include, for example explanation of the

service and its price, the expenses connected with services and duration of guarantee. The information must be submitted to the customer in the manner suits the customer in order to avoid problems.

- **knowledge** the customer means making an effort to understand the customer's individual needs, providing individual attention, recognizing the customer. For example, knowledge of the customer names in personal contact him immediately delight and so rising the credibility factor above the expectations of the customer.
- **tangibles** are the physical evidence of interest in the service, for example, the appearance of the physical facilities, machine and equipment used to provide the service, workbench, staff, communication materials and the presence of other customers in the service.
- **reliability** is the ability to perform the promised service in a dependable and accurate manner. This service is performed correctly on the first time, the accounting is correct, records are up to date and plans are kept.
- **reaction** is to the readiness and willingness of employees to help customers in providing prompt timely service, for example, mailing a transaction slip immediately or setting up appointments quickly.

2. UTILIZATION OF GAP MODEL IN SERVICES IN PROVIDING SERVICES IN THE RAILWAY FREIGHT TRANSPORT

Gaps of GAP model may be applied in company providing transport services in the railway freight transport. The model utilizes tracking incurred 'negative gaps' in the move away from the required quality. These gaps must be measured so that it will be possible reduce with remedies and compare it with the previous state. (3) This is only possible by providing quality services and regular detection what the customer perceives, in order to satisfy its requirements. For these gaps were examined utilization the model of GAP model in Railway company Cargo Slovakia, Inc. in region of Žilina. In the contribution is presented partial results of utilization to introduction of GAP model.

2.1 Methodics of monitoring level of quality of transport services with using GAP model

In the Railway company Cargo Slovakia, a.s. in Žilina region was set the goal of quality in terms of reduced the number of complaints. In the methodics was set the basic fixed structure, which is specified in the next steps:

1. Selection of the basic errors where there is arises the space for poor quality service and subsequently submitting the claim.
2. Determination of the maximum quantity of complaints which may be solved during the one month.
3. Determination of liability and sanctions, if in the complaint it proves mistakes from the side of railway company and its employees.
4. Designation of corrective actions leading to the elimination formation of errors.
5. Determination of the maximum length time of solutions complaints.

2.2 GAP1 in the transport services

Based on internal surveys performed in the company where employees themselves reported deficiencies, there was indentified gap in the perception of quality services on the part of management and customer. Suitable option to arise GAP 1 is regular psychological training and courses such as course of control of communication techniques, course how lead the conference, course of right decision, or rationalization and standardization work for mangers of Railway company Cargo Slovakia, Inc. and contact employees, for example, in the course of the rules telephony, course of behavior, rationalization and effectivity own work, psychology and personality. (4) GAP 1 may be tracked and consequently further reduced by increasing the quality services provided by Railway company Cargo Slovakia, Inc. and its regular research between customers. The research should be centered on monitoring communication between contact employees and customers. One of basic benefits is that we may define criterions which will evaluate communication between employee and customer. (5)

Criteria for evaluation of communications between employee and customer were in the research set out as follows:

- competence,
- customer knowledge,
- behaviour,
- ability of empathize to the customer requirements,
- willingness and speed with which staff are trying to solve customer problems,
- civility and credibility of staff,
- clarity of the provided information.

Point scale for evaluation the above criteria was determined as shown in table 1.

Table 1. Point scale for the review of employee

Verbal rating	Number of points
great	91- 100
very well	81- 90
well	71- 80
satisfactorily	61-70
enough	51-60
insufficient	0-50

Source: Authors

2.3 GAP 2 in the transport services

This gap arises between management of railway company understanding level quality services and customers perceived quality. The customers want that the mistakes do not arise, in fact we can only approach to that, because the real railway operation is very large and influence by a lot of factors. (6) But factors as insufficiently planning, declaration of management commitments, administrative service operations, unsystematic mistakes and processes can influence the possibility to minimize these errors. GAP 2 can be influenced by

setting clear goals and continuous control of the achieved level of service quality. It is possible through using the tool FMEA (definition priority of risks). Out of the completed questionnaires from customers resulted that one of the biggest mistakes is unprofessional staff services. Therefore, based on research with utilizing the GAP model, in Railway company Cargo Slovakia, Inc. was made measures to create standardized procedure of customers service which was proposed by the authors, and it is listed in the following model example in picture No. 2. Employees also absolved the specialized training in accordance with the Code of Ethics.

2.4 GAP3 in the transport services

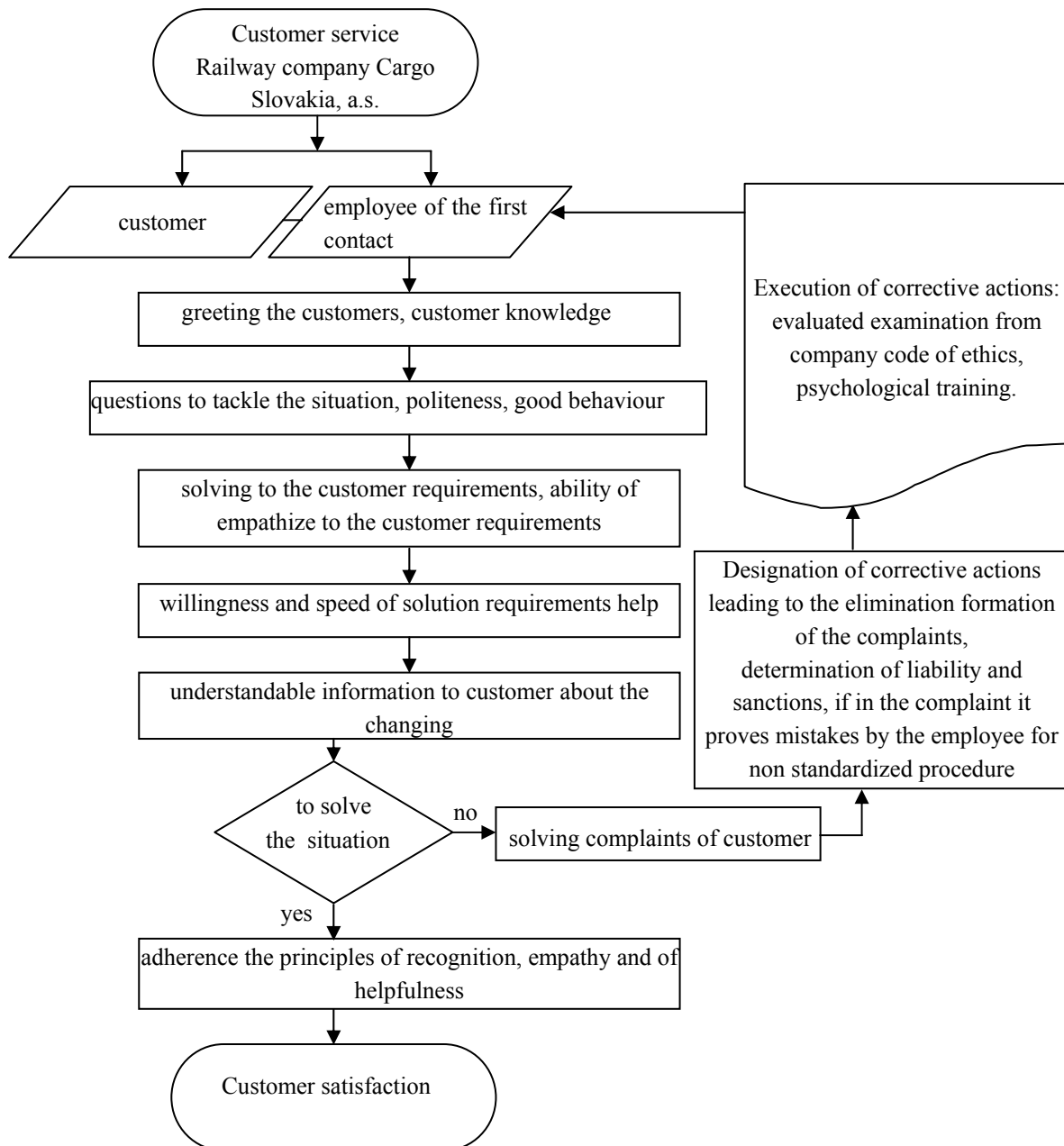
This gap arises between the specification quality of shipping services and actually provided performance. In the railway freight transport is often the cause bad organizations of employee work, bad team work, missing qualifications, using out of date machine and technology, or incorrect specified criteria of control. A possible proposal to reduce this gap is increase motivation. Out of the questionnaire for the employees resulted that is absent of financial motivations, but also qualification growth through professional courses. (7)

2.5 GAP4 in the transport services

This gap arises between the really rendered transport services and communications oriented to the customer. This gap relates to marketing tools i.e. support of sale, so this is the advertising of true. (8) In the railway transport, in the area of marketing, are missing the required experts. Therefore a large gap in knowledge and thereby arises losses for the company, especially the losses of opportunities, what can be very difficult to quantify. (9)

2.6 GAP5 in the transport services

This gap arises between customer expectations and experience which they have with shipping service. This gap can be reduced in the railway freight transport only by providing quality services and regular research. Also these activities are perceived by customers and assist in meeting their requirements. This gap is affected by the important factor - knowledge of the customer's by employee. The completed tests of employees indicate that in this area are large gaps, which the company resolves continuously by regular training.



Source: Authors

Fig. 2. Figuration of standardized procedure of employee of the first contact.

CONCLUSION

The condition for securing of permanent innovations still more quality services is continues control of level of the quality. This is possible ensure also by the application of GAP model in the area of railway transport services geared on the offer. This method points out to gaps that create mainly deficiencies of quality of services, ignorance customers and their requirements by employees of railway company, the differences caused by management communication and employee of the railway company and other facts, that are actual topics for continued research. The utilization of models for the control of quality of service and constant monitoring of quality defects leads to better understanding them and in the

economically aspect to reduce the cost of quality, which invested the railway company, but ultimately also company as a whole serves to ensure that services meet defined standards or customer's expectations .

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