

CHARACTERISTICS OF QUALITY IN SERVICES SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Concerns in the quality of services field are more recent (20-30 years) than those of product quality (over 100 years). Service is unique in its own way. Ideal is that the service could be adapted for customers needs, depending on the level of adaptability of the provider in order to customize his services.

Services can not be stored and preserved for later consumption. Typically, services can be provided only by integrating external factor.

Compared to products, services have some features that Philip Kotler characterized by: „Although the basic service is immaterial, it can be accompanied by a material component”.

Keywords: *quality management, public services*

1. INTRODUCTION

Concerns in the quality of services field are more recent (20-30 years) than those of product quality (over 100 years). Many of the specific problems of the quality of products can be adapted to the particularities of specific services. In support of this statement comes from the series of international quality standards (ISO 9000:2000) from which we can conclude that wherever we use the term "product" we can also find the concept of "service".

2. DEFINITION OF „SERVICE”

The concept of "service" can be defined in terms of:

- Potential - that is, provider capabilities (knowledge, skill, motivation) that he obtained during the educational process, which enables him to provide services;
- Process - it is a valuable creative activity made in the clients account; the focus is on simultaneous production and consumption;
- Result - the result identifies the service's provision of material (service = material good).

From the three approaches we shows that services are actions, activities that can be traded on the market and which are involving the participation directly or indirectly of the potential provider. This requires the combination of internal and external factors in the provision of activities, in order to obtain positive effects on people or on objects belonging to them.

The service is an intangible product. The notion of product is defined as the result of specific activities and processes. A product can encompass both immaterial and material sides. When the share of an intangible component (so defining for services) of a product increases, it is registered a weight loss of materials composition.

The concept involves the entire service sector of "infrastructure services" as a complex system of activities and interactions that do not end in producing material goods, but is a vital operation for the state economy.

- The concept of "service" has the following meaning in economic practice, namely:
- The sector is the production of intangible goods;
- The products that are sold to the customers go together with material goods or either eparately;
- It is an occupation which refers to the workforce engaged in "nonproductive" activities in all economy sectors ;
- As a function that includes persons involved in service activities. Hence, the service includes a variety of economic sectors characterized by different production processes, different modes of supply, different customers, suppliers and market structures.

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF SERVICES

Compared to products, services have some features that Philip Kotler characterized by:

- Intangibility or imateriality;
- Inseparability between the moment of production and moment of consumption;
- Variability or heterogeneity;
- Perishability.

a) Intangibility:

Services, in their vast majority can not be touched, seen, felt before being purchased ("can not be put in the bag"). Although the basic service is immaterial, it can be accompanied by a material component (Fig. 1.1). For example, in retail trade there is the material part of consumers goods, which is accompanied by service supply, transport, sale - holding a significant share, but less than the material part (actual products).

Hotel services are characterized by a growing share of large intangible component (activities from reception, cleaning, driving, room service, leisure, environment, politeness, etc..) But not to be neglected the material component (rooms with electrical equipment, electronics, textiles, furniture), and those in the common areas, all providing comfort and environment at high levels which is reflected favorably on perceived customer service.

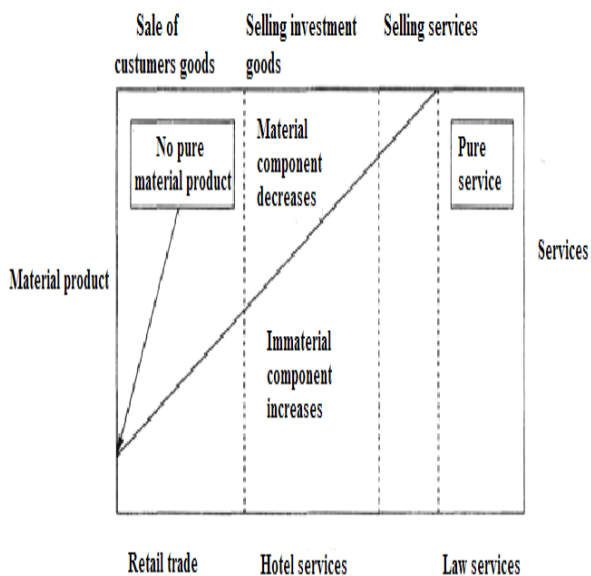


Figure 1 The share of composition of intangible (service) of a product

(Source: Wilhelm Brakhahmn and Ulrike Vogot, ISO 9000 for services. Quick and safe for certification (translation), Ed. Tehnica, Bucharest, 1998.)

Advocacy services have a much smaller material component, related to the office equipment and supplies (paper, toner etc). The share of pure services is relatively small. Here we include consultancy services, information, etc. .

b) Inseparability

It is a specific characteristic of services because, mostly, they are consumed at the time of their occurrence can not be separated in time and space by the provider, nor the client, he is usually involved in that particular process, fact that confirms a provider - client interaction . Therefore, the role of human resources is very important, especially in education, tourism, trade, medical, cultural, sports, where customers perceive the quality of service connecting with the staff: teacher, doctor, actor, athlete, salesman, receptionist, etc. .

c) Variability or heterogeneity

Service is unique in its own way. Therefore, services can not be standardized nor totally copied from one firm to another.

Ideal is that the service could be adapted for customers needs, depending on the level of adaptability of the provider in order to customize his services. Services must be designed to meet satisfy customer's highest expectations, so that there will be no significant differences between the "desired quality, expected quality" and "effective quality" perceived by the customer.

d) Perishability

Services can not be stored and preserved for later consumption. If a service is not used when it is available then it is wasted, creating difficulties in matching offer and demand. Typically, services can be provided only by integrating external factor. For example, a student can "consume" service offered by a "course" only if he personally attends to that course.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Service specific features cause difficulty in assessing their quality. If in a "factory of goods" employees may have some wrong attitudes, or dissatisfaction about work, customers will never know about this issues , and they will not be influenced by the perceived quality of products, unless the dissatisfaction is reflected negatively on activities to achieve performing products, as, indeed, might justify the appearance of defects. If we find in "service factories", such as a banks, hospitals, universities inappropriate attitudes, or staff dissatisfaction , it immediately affects quality which is usually much reduced from what we expect.

5. REFERENCES

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