

THE EXTENSION OF THE GAP-MODEL FOR SERVICES

DINA ASWAD¹

Abstract: The customer oriented marketing has significant correlation with logistical concept, only its tools and methods are different; therefore, the logistical services should be implemented in to the gap-model. The goal of the model is to identify the gaps between the customer's expectation and the services provided at different stages of services and to disappear the gap and improve the customer services. In my work, the original model [5] has been completed with additional elements including buyer's and worker's aspects and the analysis of "service bridges" which are developed connections between the sellers and the customers determined by unexpected additional value for the customers.

Keywords: time dependent development of logistical aims, customer value, extended gap model, bridges in services.

1. Satisfactory factors in services

According to Hakansson's interactive model [3] business connection includes various interactive, embedded processes and the involved partners' personal relationships, which have created and shared values [1]. Business connections have been supported by the analysis of expectations and satisfactions of the consumers, suppliers, employees and the competitors as well.

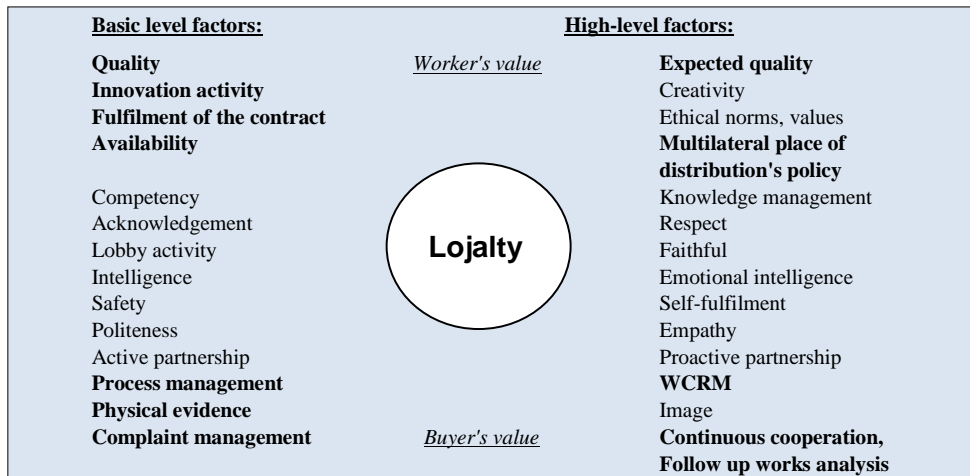


Figure 1. Buyer's and worker's satisfactory factors
Source: based on personal research.

¹ sales director, FUX ZRT.

aswaddina@gmail.com

H-3527 Miskolc, Vásártéri út.8., Hungary

The model above should be modified by inter cultural differences and the basic level factors later include the high-level factors. Elements might be expanded by the standards of social and corporation culture.

The lack of just one basic component can cause dissatisfaction or total interruption in the business connection. The more high-level factors are fulfilled the highest is the possibility to reach loyalty based on satisfaction.

The customer value integrates achievements, expectation and customer's will. The recognized value is equal to the recognized customer's preference in connection with the characteristics of the products and services. Logistics is a service on its own including physical background, well-organized processes and skilful human workforce.

Based on 4C (consumer's need, cost to satisfy, convenience to buy, communication) the original place of distribution matches the convenience to buy and directly influences price, which is the cost of satisfaction from the buyers' point of view.

S U P P L I E R S	FIELDS OF SERVICES	COMPANY			C U S T O M E R S
	Stock management	Purchase	Production	Sales	
	Material Process Management	Raw material stock	Semi- half product stock	Final product stock	
	Information management	Supplement, Storage	Material handling, Storage	Deliveries, Storage	
Supply management, Supplier database		Production program and process database	Demand management, Customer database		

Figure 2. Structure of logistical system
Source: Chikán [2]

Logistics has been integrated to the whole service process, which means much more than the delivering of products likewise planning, operation and controlling of information flow in order to serve the customer's demands (American Logistics Council, 1993).

The logistic system, trade, marketing services and HR activity can be considered as a service on the field of industrial products. In many cases, the producers not only sell the products and the related services but also organize proactive processes among the consumers and the producers (creates the term: prosumer).

The heterogeneity of the different services both on supply and demand side should be reduced by standardizing different working processes, qualification and methods of trading, logistical processes etc. The different seasonal and production peeks and recessions can be over bridged by supporting activity of logistical and marketing tools.

The buyer's demand has been supported by the extension of value added logistical innovation. The costumer oriented marketing concept itself has significant correlation to the above logistical concept only its tools and methods are different; *therefore, the logistical services should be implemented in to the gap-model.*

The sellers provide more and more product service-combinations on the B2B markets meanwhile the subjective sides of the services are arising as well.

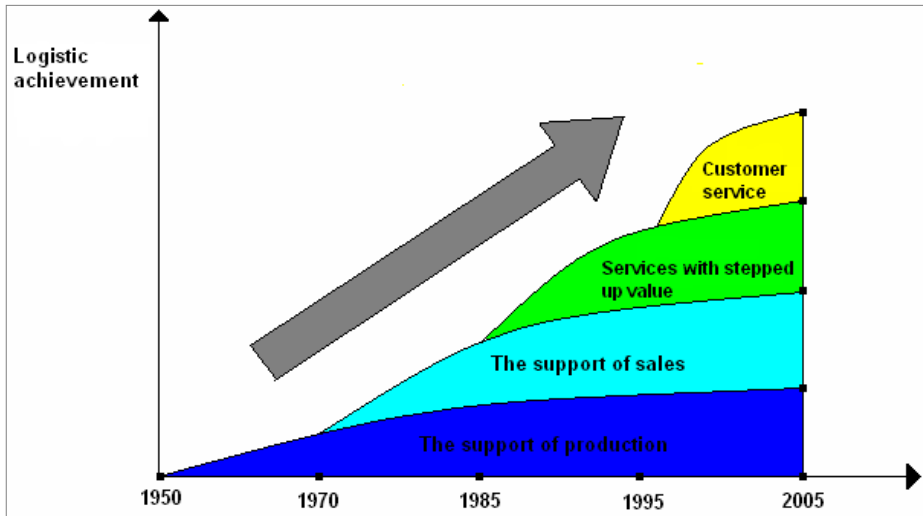


Figure 3. Time dependent development of logistical aims
Source: Szegedi, Prezenszki [6]

Due to the cognitive ability of customers:

- the most sufficient solution can not be defined exactly by the buyer,
- getting information takes time and money therefore selection and analysis of information have been restricted,
- the buyers' aim is satisfaction so if a possibility exceeds the level of their expectations this will be selected without any further research.

2. Completed Gap model for services

In my work, the original gap-model has been completed with buyer's and worker's aspects and with the analysis of "service bridges".

The goal of the model is to identify the gaps between the customer's expectation and the services provided at different stages of services and to disappear the gap and improve the customer services.

Recently in the big competition on the market the customers, expect high quality product together with high quality services. Producers don't always offer excellence quality consumer services that meet the expectations of consumer are hard to sustain in a competitive market.

From customer's point of view, customer service is considered as important part of the product.

Five different gaps have been identified by Parasuraman:

1. The Customer Gap between the Consumer expectation (what the customer expects according to available resources, and it is influenced by cultural

background) and the customer perceptions (it is very subjective, it is based on the customer's interaction with the product services). The best way to disappear the gap is to know well the customer's expectations and needs.

2. Gap between customer's expectation and management perception: in this case, the companies are trying to meet wrong customer needs. Managers don't understand the customer's expectations in relation to the product or the services of the company.
3. The gap between management's perception and services quality specification. The reason to appear is that the management's translation is incorrect of the services policy into rules and guidelines for employees.
4. Gap appears between service quality specification and service delivery, where the gap exposes the weakness in employee performance.
5. The gap between service delivery and external communications appears when the customers are disappointed because the promised and advertised services and products don't match their expectations.

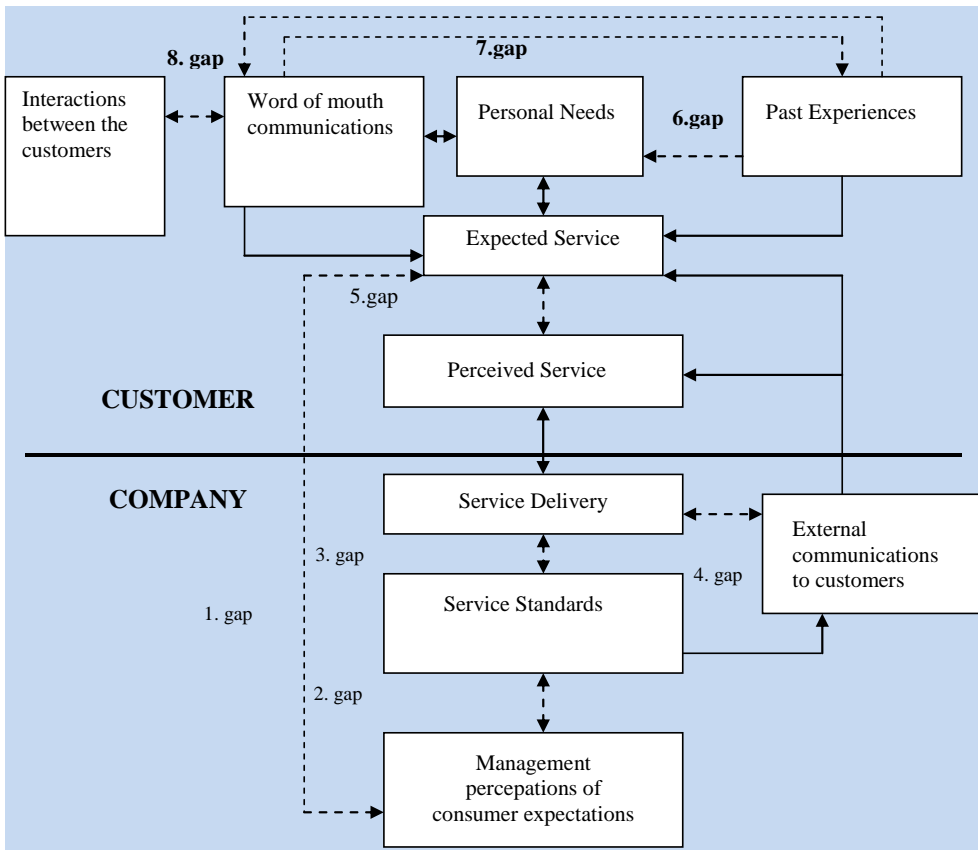


Figure 4. Gap model

Source: Parasuraman, [5] Gap model based on personal research

Based on my further analysis an extended model has been implemented including additional gaps and bridges (positive direction gaps).

6. Gap between past experience and customer needs: the basic model excludes the research of mutual connections among the starting sectors, determined by the customer expected services. Direct connection can be found between the past experiences and the personal needs. Therefore, gap or a bridge should be built in the context of the connection's direction and power.
7. Gap between word of mouth communication and past experiences: there is additional direct connection between the past customer experiences and the company's customer communications. An effective external communication can modify the customer's past experiences, to give new focus point for the quality of the product and the services. This process can accelerate gap-reducing influence.
8. Gap between interaction among the customer and word of mouth communications: the basic model doesn't deal with the internal customer's communication and the external Company's communications. Effective external communications can positive impact on the customer's interactive communication of the product and the services. The relevant research of the customer needs should be restricted by the uncertain customer's expectation.

My own theory has been created for the bridge definition: bridge is a developed connection between the seller and the customer, which can be born parallel with the gap's existence or before that. The gaps can be defined as insufficient factors of services, the bridges can be determined by unexpected additional value for the different process stages of the services.

The first intensive level of bridges operates parallel with the gaps and in these case they result only the gap's reduction.

Second intensive level of them exits before the shaping of the gaps, so they result the positive attitude of customers.

The bridges should be built up continuously as a process and implemented to the whole activity of the marketing innovation. The customer loyalty should be strengthened by giving financial and social benefits and shapes structural connection [4].

The communication of too much additional information can reduce or even cease the bridge between the expected and the perceived services.

The expected services are not only future orientated, and can be modified but also the customer needs are present orientated and can be shaped in smaller degree. The customer's needs have negative influence on satisfaction and the expectation can have positive and negative aspects as well.

Summary

In comparison with the original model the developed model contains the following new elements: the disfigurement at the second gap is caused by the leadership's business approach instead of customer-minded way of thinking, besides the five original gaps, there are other multidimensional level gaps, equivalent attention should be paid to the workers and the management's opinion in connection with the customer needs.

The final conclusion is, that the basic gap model should be extended by new elements and at the same time, the positive differences and the higher possibility of the expected services should be revealed.

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