

# Measurement of Customer Satisfaction with Service Quality: Study of Fashion Chain Stores in Lithuania

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## Abstract

As the needs and expectations of customers for the quality of products and services grow, companies are constantly faced with challenges in order to remain on the market, build customer loyalty and to be competitive. Companies, operating in a fashion industry encounter an extremely dynamic business environment – continuously changing and renewing the product range makes it even more difficult to retain customers. In this case, the efforts of the company and every employee to understand customer expectations and to provide a positive purchasing experience becomes a must. Therefore, it becomes crucial for fashion retailers to continuously measure customer satisfaction with the service quality, identify factors that affect customer satisfaction and, accordingly, to look for opportunities for improvement. SERVQUAL methodological approach and, the specifically five-dimensional model of Assurance, Reliability, Tangibility, Empathy, and Responsiveness was applied measuring customer satisfaction with the service quality of international fashion chain stores in Lithuania. Research revealed the typical demographic and psychographic profile of fashion chain customer and most important factors, affecting customer satisfaction, i.e. the knowledge, and skills of the employees (Assurance dimension), as well as the physical factors related to the interior, layout and pleasant appearance of the employees (Tangibles dimension).

**Keywords:** Customer satisfaction, service quality, fashion industry

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## Introduction

Under the conditions of intense competition, even well-known companies are faced with a rather complicated problem: how to preserve the existing market share and to ensure that the company's activities continue to be effective. For a long time, it was believed that the competitiveness of a company is only determined by the quality and price ratio of the products or services it provides, but due to changing customer behavior, more and more attention is now paid to factors such as customer needs and expectations, perception of added value, customer experience and satisfaction with the product or service, quality of service. It is precisely the provision of customer positive experiences that is a prerequisite for customer satisfaction and the company's competitiveness.

The topic of customer satisfaction with service quality and its operationalization is very popular among scientists (Fornell et al., 1996; Parasuraman et al., 1988; Vavra, 1997) and for the last decades new approaches have constantly been developed, especially in the case of specific business areas and companies, e.g. electronic service (McKinney et al., 2002; Parasuraman et al., 2005), manufacturing companies (Griffin et al., 1995; Arefi et al., 2010; Chou, et al., 2014), health care (Kravitz, 1998; Reisberg, 1996), catering (Liao & Cheung, 2008; Grigaliūnaitė and Pilelienė, 2014) or banking sectors (Mahmood et al., 2013). Despite the great scientific interest in customer satisfaction and service quality and its unceasing popularity among practitioners, research in the field still poses a number of critical questions and issues for management scholars. Moreover, what works in one industry sector or country may be quite different from what works in another.

There are certain companies in the market that operate in a highly dynamic and competitive business environment. One such area is a fashion industry, which has also attracted considerable attention of scholars (Leung and To, 2001; Saricam et al., 2012; Islam et al., 2012). Fashion and apparel companies are constantly updating, changing and improving their product range, which is one of the most important success factors in this area. Besides that, fashion and clothing retailers have to pay particular attention to the interior of the store, the creation of a pleasant environment with plenty of hints and ideas for customers, interested in fashion, and the highlight of the brand. And most importantly, fashion stores have to set and ensure compliance with employee appearance, behavior and customer service standards, continuously monitoring shop and customer service, and conducting customer satisfaction and experience surveys, delivering results and recommendations for improvement.

In this regard, this paper seeks to explore customer satisfaction in the fashion industry and aims to measure customer perceptions of service quality of international fashion chain stores in Lithuania. Specifically, the logic of a multiple-item scale for measuring service quality SERVQUAL (e.g., Parasuraman et al., 1988; Parasuraman et al., 2005) is applied to identify the factors influencing the positive or negative customer experience and its impact on customer satisfaction.

## **Theoretical aspects of customer satisfaction and its antecedents**

Although the concept of customer satisfaction seems clear and understandable to all, most scientists agree that this concept is much wider and ambiguous. There are many definitions of customer satisfaction in scientific literature - Pajuodis (2005) argues that customer satisfaction is a true measure of the quality of a product or service, understood as the result of a comparison process, according to Day (1984), customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction is the user's reaction to differences between expectations and experience of goods and services. Some authors believe that customer satisfaction is a strategic goal for organizations, as customer satisfaction ensures customer retention and profit (Li & Liu, 2014), and customer satisfaction is one of the most valuable assets of any companies Morgan (2017). As a result, the management of all forms of customer satisfaction must be a priority and the responsibility of every individual in an organization.

Analyzing customer satisfaction as a phenomenon, the European Primer on Customer Satisfaction Management (2010) states that:

- Customer satisfaction changes over the time - new experiences, increasing awareness are changing customer needs and their expectations (potential level of satisfaction);
- Customer satisfaction is usually composite, i.e. combines customer experience before, during, and after the starting point;
- The reasons for customer satisfaction are usually more difficult to identify, especially in terms of less measurable aspects of a product, service or experience than the causes of dissatisfaction.
- Understanding the causes of customer satisfaction is very important in the long run.

Often referred to as a pioneer in customer satisfaction research, Cardozo (1965) argues that customer satisfaction is a prerequisite for repeated purchases, recommendations, etc., so understanding what factors affect customer satisfaction is very important for every organization, since retaining existing customers financially is a priority against attracting new customers, in other words, customer loyalty based on satisfaction is the goal of every organization that wants to maintain competitiveness. The satisfaction of customers can essentially be defined as everything related to the purchase of a product or service. However, what is considered to be the start and end of the purchase of a product or service, i.e. as stated by Rawson et al. (2013), focusing on increasing customer satisfaction only at the time of actual purchase can create a distorted picture of the situation.

In terms of customer satisfaction as a process, the two most important aspects are customer expectations and customer experience. Customer satisfaction is a consequence of the evaluation process (Grigaliūnaitė and Pilelienė 2014), in other words, comparing

customer expectations with experience, or to put it in an equation: Customer Satisfaction = Customer Expectations - Customer Experience (Khadka and Maharjan, 2017).

According to Stašys and A. Malikovas (2010), customer expectations are usually considered as a comparative function, i. e. attempts are made to determine whether or not the expectations of product use or service have been met. According to Gures, et al. (2014), customer expectations are inseparable from satisfaction - only by recognizing the needs of customers and meeting their expectations, high customer satisfaction can be achieved. Meehan (2015) points out that with the advancement of cutting-edge technology, consumer expectations are also growing fast - customers expect answers without asking questions. The author distinguishes the key elements of consumer expectations that, according to her, remain in the rapidly changing relationship between businesses and customers, these are comfort, individualization, speed, effectiveness, accessibility, integrity, simplicity, authenticity, value.

Stašys and Malikovas (2010) believe that purchasing experience in the past, the informal and formal recommendations, the price of the product or service, the communication and image of the company selling the goods or services in society, and of course the personal needs, influence customer expectations. Customer expectations should be complemented with such elements as keeping a promise and customer care. Companies have to live up to their promises – customers expect it, and it is directly related to company's reputation. The concern of the customers includes the duty of the company to protect its customers from mistakes, which every customer expects to be addressed by a professional.

It is noteworthy that in the past, customer satisfaction was only a matter of customer expectations and responsiveness, but more recently, the focus is on customer purchasing experience. In literature (Gentile et al. 2007), purchasing experience is divided into six dimensions of experience:

- A sensory dimension that includes the experience of five human senses (vision, hearing, touch, taste, and smell) and how they stimulate admiration for a good or service;
- Emotions - feelings that the purchase has evoked;
- The cognitive dimension associated with thinking, conscious decision making, problem-solving;
- Pragmatic (functional), comprising the practical-functional evaluation (utility) of the goods or services purchased;
- A lifestyle dimension that enables the identification of customer values, attitudes and determinants of satisfaction;
- A community of relationships describing a user's membership of a particular social group (Gentile et al., 2007).

According to Cross (2018), customer experience is best defined as the perception of the company's customers, including customer service, personalized interactions, satisfaction or exceeding expectations. Every company provides its clients with experience, and whether it is bad or good, depends on the company's approach, values, goals (Richardson, 2010).

It is important to mention that the decision of companies to invest in the improvement of customer experience is a bold decision - results and benefits are usually not felt immediately (Morgan, 2017). However, while the success of a product or service is still determined by advertising tools, recent trends and research of customer habits shows that it is not the promises that are made, but what has actually been delivered matter most.

Looking at the concepts of customer expectations, experience, and satisfaction, it can be said that, according to many authors, all these three elements are important for every business, not only to operate in the market but also to ensure business continuity and competitiveness. In today's society, with the introduction of innovative and advanced technologies, customer expectations change, and the requirements for experience and satisfaction are increasing, so it is important for businesses not only to care for their customers but first of all to understand what they want, expect and what's in it for them.

## **Methodology**

In order to investigate how customers evaluate the service quality of international fashion chain stores located in Lithuania, Kaunas, quantitative research method was applied in order to obtain as objective and accurate data as possible. According to Tidikis (2003), quantitative methods allow deeper and more accurate analysis of dynamic and statistical regularities, as well as practical application of research results and forecasting. In addition, quantitative data are based on measurable values and can be verified, resulting in less biased data analysis and more objective results. Since the object of the study is composed of elements of individual consciousness (needs, interests, evaluations, etc.), and the population being studied is large, it was decided to conduct a survey.

Specifically, a multiple-item instrument SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Parasuraman et al., 1988; Parasuraman et al., 2005), that has been the predominant method widely *used* across the industries and around the world for assessing service quality (Vargo and Lusch, 2014), was adopted as an approach. This model suggests that “the key to ensuring good service quality is meeting or exceeding what customers expect from the service” (Parasuraman et al., 1985: 46) and is a set of gaps where perceived service quality is viewed “as the degree and direction of discrepancy between customer’s perceptions and expectations” (Parasuraman et al., 1988: 17). The five SERVQUAL dimensions are: 1) Tangibles - Appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials; 2) Reliability - Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately; 3) Responsiveness - Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service; 4) Assurance - Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence; and 5) Empathy - Caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

Instrument to measure customer satisfaction of service quality at fashion stores in Lithuania comprised questions, related to the customers' habits and purchase decisions, groups of statements related to 5 SERVQUAL Dimension of Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy, and demographics. All statements were formulated positively and respondents were asked to evaluate them on the five-point scale (from "completely disagree" to "totally agree").

Since the exact population size is unknown (it is impossible to determine the exact number of the fashion retailer customers), the sample size was derived using historical data of an average number of sales (buying customers) at one particular fashion chain store in Kaunas during the pre-planned survey period (2 weeks). Accordingly, the population from which the sample was made was  $N = 900$ . Altogether,  $n = 315$  questionnaires were returned. All completed questionnaires were suitable for analysis. In this way, the confidence interval was calculated using the online sample calculator by Raosoft<sup>2</sup>. The calculation was based on the following Formulas (1):

$$E = \sqrt{\frac{(N-n) \cdot x}{n \cdot (N-1)}},$$
$$n = \frac{N \cdot x}{((N-1) \cdot E^2 + x)}, \quad (1)$$
$$x = Z(c/100)^2 \cdot r \cdot (100-r),$$

Where:  $N$  is the population size,  $n$  is the sample size,  $E$  is the confidence interval,  $r$  is the fraction of responses,  $c$  is the confidence level, and  $Z(c/100)$  is the critical value for the confidence level.

Calculations were performed using a confidence level of 95 % and showed that the minimum sample size should be  $n = 270$  with the margin error of 5 %. Margin error with a sample size of  $n = 315$  would be  $\pm 4.45\%$ . Therefore, the sample size of  $n = 315$  allows generalizing to the population with the confidence level of 95 % and the margin error of  $\pm 4.45\%$ .

The survey was conducted in the period of 2 weeks from 18 April 2018 until 2 May 2018. Printed questionnaires were distributed to fashion store customers in Kaunas after shopping, informing them about the study, its purpose and asking to fill in the questionnaires. All respondents were informed about the anonymity of the survey and the use of the survey results exclusively for research purposes. The study complied with the ethical requirements of research (Tidikis, 2003), secured the anonymity of respondents, the confidentiality of answers and research results. All respondents were free to participate in the survey.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html?tfm=5>

Table 1 below shows demographic characteristics of the sample ( $N = 315$ ).

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Females	301	95.6
	Males	14	4.4
Age	18-25	104	33
	26-35	82	26
	36-45	108	34.3
	46-55	17	5.4
	>56	4	1.3
	Education	Secondary	44
	Secondary with vocational qualification	23	7.3
	College	76	24.1
	University	171	54.3
	Other	1	0.3
Social status	Student	60	19
	Working part-time	21	6.7
	Working full-time	222	70.5
	Unemployed	3	1
	Retired	4	1.3
	Other	5	1.6
Income	There is no income at this time	6	1.9
	<500 Eur	67	21.3
	500-1000 EUR	69	21.9
	1000-1500 EUR	96	30.5
	1500-2000 EUR	54	17.1
	2000-2500 EUR	22	7
	>2500 EUR	1	0.3
Marital status	Single	43	13.7
	In partnership	86	27.3
	Married	175	55.6
	Divorced	10	3.2
	Not specified	1	0.3

Respondents were asked to indicate how often they buy in fashion chain stores, what they usually buy and in which fashion retailer's store. The analysis of the results showed that 37.8 % of respondents indicated that researched fashion stores are their favorite and they buy the majority of clothing and accessories there. 39.4 % of respondents indicated that they shop at these stores once or twice per half a year, 19.4 % of respondents once per year or even less often. 3.5 % indicated that they were buying for the first time in the focal fashion store.

Respondents were also asked to indicate the reasons for the purchase decision at the fashion store order to identify and understand their expectations and intentions. Respondents from the list of options were able to choose some of the most relevant statements for their motives. Analyzing the results, it was found that most of the respondents' decision to buy was determined by the assortment, and its correspondence to the needs and style of respondents (59 %), the quality of clothing and accessories (58.7), acceptable prices (56.8) and kind attention to customer (47.6). The rarest choice for purchase decision was a cosy environment of the shops and the layout of the ware (21.9).

The analysis of the survey respondents' characteristics and shopping motives revealed the typical demographic and psychographic profile of international fashion chain customer in Lithuania. The majority of respondents were young and middle-aged women, having higher (university) education, full-time job, family and receiving a salary from 1000 to 1500 EUR per month. It was also found that the majority of respondents are buying regularly - at least once a year, and mostly because of the assortment, meeting their needs and style, as well as good quality and favorable prices.

### Research results

The survey data were analyzed using the descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) method, which allows determining the statistical regularities of socio-economic phenomena and processes (Valkauskas, 2007). The data obtained during the study was compiled and analyzed by the mathematical statistics program IBM SPSS Statistics 22. Relating perceived customer satisfaction of service quality to demographic variables of gender, age, education, social status, income, and family status, a cross-tabulation procedure was run and a Chi-square test was performed to determine statistically significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Considering that the SERVQUAL methodology was applied, the reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha) determining the internal consistency of the items in a survey instrument was performed. As Table 2 shows, the service quality inventory was found to be highly reliable and the consistency of statements for each dimension is appropriate for further data analysis ( $\alpha > 0.7$ ).

Table 2. Scale reliability analysis

Dimension	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
Tangibles	4	0.935
Reliability	6	0.962
Responsiveness	5	0.968
Assurance	7	0.975
Empathy	4	0.942

In order to determine how respondents evaluate the physical environment of researched fashion stores, e. g. interior, design, an appearance of employees, etc., four statements were formulated. Respondents were asked to evaluate each statement on a

scale from 1 to 5, when 1 = "I completely disagree", 5 = "I totally agree". The results of evaluations of the *Tangible* dimension are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Results for customer satisfaction of Tangible dimension

Items	M	SD
The store is in a good location and easily accessible	4.03	1.168
Interior of the store is tasteful and attractive	3.98	1.171
The store layout is neat and comfortable	4.03	1.115
The appearance of the staff is always pleasant and tidy	4.05	1.134

As it is shown in Table 3, respondents appreciate the appearance of employees most ( $M = 4.05$ ,  $SD = 1.134$ ), the worst evaluations are given for shop interior ( $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = 1.171$ ).

In order to evaluate customers perceptions of fashion stores' ability to provide the service properly and provide reliable information, respondents were asked to express their opinion on six statements. The results of the Reliability dimension statements are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Results for customer satisfaction of Reliability dimension

Items	M	SD
The company's brand is seen positively in society	3.98	1.104
Company advertising and published information always correspond to the services provided	3.97	1.100
Company employees provide professional and error-free services	4.04	1.125
All company's employees serve and provide services equally well	3.99	1.147
When buying here, I always hope to buy a quality product	4.04	1.150
Company always responds promptly and in kindly to customer complaints	3.96	1.168

As shown in Table 4 respondents most favourably assess fashion store's professionalism and quality of goods -  $M = 4.04$  ( $SD = 1.125$  and  $1.150$ ). The worst is judged fashion store's capability to handle customer complaints ( $M = 3.96$ ,  $SD = 1.168$ ).

The Responsiveness dimension includes factors related to the company's willingness to assist customers, to ensure prompt and efficient service delivery. Respondents were asked to evaluate five statements reflecting their attitude towards speed and efficiency of service delivery. The results of the evaluation of the statements are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Results for customer satisfaction of Responsiveness dimension

Items	M	SD
I get immediate help at this fashion store, if necessary	3.99	1.162
Company's employees are always willing and helpful to their clients	4.07	1.156
Company's employees always provide all the necessary information about the assortment	4.03	1.138
In the event of a problem, company's employees are always happy and quick to try to solve it	3.99	1.169
Shopping here is always fast and enjoyable	4.07	1.160

As it can be seen from Table 5, respondents appreciate the statements about the willingness of employees to help their clients and the quick and enjoyable experience of shopping at the fashion store most - the average mean of both statements is 4.07 ( $SD = 1.156$  and  $1.160$ ). Less experienced by respondents is rapid support from employees and the resolution of problems ( $M = 3.99$ ,  $SD 1.162$  and  $1.169$ , respectively).

In order to determine customer satisfaction of the knowledge and abilities of employees to provide the service, respondents were asked to evaluate seven Assurance dimension statements (Table 6).

Table 6. Results for customer satisfaction of Assurance dimension

Items	M	SD
The fashion store is conveniently located, easily accessible by both public transport and a private car	4.13	1.140
Information about fashion stores and the assortment is clear and easy to find	4.08	1.154
Company employs only competent staff	3.98	1.174
Company's employees always provide correct, clear and useful information	4.04	1.121
Company's employees have a pleasant and respectful relationship with all customers	4.06	1.168
When providing services, company's employees always listen to the needs of their customers and make a genuine effort to help	4.03	1.172
Shopping at this fashion store and communicating with employees always creates a positive experience	4.02	1.171

As shown in Table 6, respondents value convenience of fashion stores most ( $M = 4.13$ ,  $SD = 1.140$ ), as well as clarity and availability of information about fashion stores and assortment ( $M = 4.08$ ,  $SD = 1.154$ ). Meanwhile, the most negative opinion is about company's employees' qualification ( $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = 1.174$ ).

The Empathy dimension of SERVQUAL methodology, as stated by Poškutė and Bivainienė (2011), shows the company's readiness and ability to provide personal services to each customer. The results of the estimation of the four Empathy dimension statements are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Results for customer satisfaction of Empathy dimension

Items	M	SD
When I buy here, I always get the individual attention of employees	3.92	1.190
I feel sincere company's interest in my needs and interests	3.91	1.203
I feel that company's employees are always willing to help me	3.96	1.188
Fashion store's working hours are convenient to me	4.12	1.165

As shown in Table 7, respondents are most satisfied with fashion store's working hours ( $M = 4.12$ ,  $SD = 1.165$ ), while its interest in customers' needs could be improved ( $M = 3.91$ ,  $SD = 1.203$ ).

Summary of the customer satisfaction with service quality of international fashion chain in Lithuania according to the dimensions of SERVQUAL is displayed in Table 8.

Table 8. Distribution of average means for SERVQUAL dimensions

Dimensions	Mean average ( $\bar{x}$ )
Tangibles	4.03
Reliability	4.00
Responsiveness	3.23
Assurance	4.05
Empathy	3.98

As shown in Table 8, customers are most satisfied with the knowledge and skills of the employees of researched fashion chain (Assurance dimension), as well as the physical factors related to the interior, layout and pleasant appearance of the employees (Tangibles dimension). Responsiveness dimension, related to the willingness to assist customers is least valued by the respondents. However, it is important to note that all dimensions have been evaluated pretty well - the averages of the ratings are close to the high "agreement" level, which means that customers believe that the services provided by researched fashion stores are of high quality.

In order to determine the dependence of the evaluations on the demographic characteristics of the respondents, the character frequency analysis (Crosstabs analysis) was performed and the Chi-Square coefficient revealing the dependency level was calculated, which allowed determining statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) differences. Analyzing the distribution of the evaluations according to the characteristics of the

respondents, it was observed that the most satisfied customers are 26-35-year-old, women, having full-time jobs, higher education, and families. On the other hand, there is also a lower level of satisfaction among older, less educated respondents and those who are divorced or living alone.

## **Discussion and conclusion**

For a long time, customer satisfaction was thought to be determined solely by the price and quality of a product or service, but in the long run, with increasing customer demand, a supply of goods and services and fierce competition, customer satisfaction began to be seen as a process driven by many different factors. As the literature analysis has shown, the concept of customer satisfaction has many meanings, nevertheless, there is an agreement that the main elements of customer satisfaction and perceived service quality are related to customer expectations and experience. Factors that determine customer satisfaction can be divided into cultural, social, personal and psychological, and into those that companies can influence by their actions and those that cannot be influenced and controlled. However, businesses that are seeking customer satisfaction need to be aware of all possible ways and actions that can influence customer behaviour, lead to the purchase and repeated return decisions and the highest perceived quality of service.

The international fashion chain brand is well known and appreciated in Europe - the company emphasizes its history and its environmental and social responsibility activities. The company takes care that customers remain satisfied with both the quality of the goods and the service and purchasing experience. However, the company's turnover for the last five years shows a noticeable decline in revenue - in 2017, compared to 2013, return decreased by more than 11%. International fashion chain entered Lithuanian market in 2007. Currently, there are 9 company's fashion stores in Lithuania.

In order to investigate the perceived quality of services provided by fashion chain stores in Kaunas a descriptive study was conducted using the SERVQUAL model. Analysis of the results showed that the quality of services provided is evaluated positively. The respondents most positively evaluated the statements related to the competence of the employees, the pleasant communication and the sincere willingness to help the clients, as well as the factors related to the information received from physical objects and entities (shop environment, interior, appearance of employees).

It was found that respondents were less satisfied with problem solving, information and assistance. The analysis of research results also revealed that the most favourable factors are related to the dimension of Assurance, the worst - factors related to the Responsiveness dimension.

Analyzing the demographic characteristics of the respondents participating in the research and the habits and motives of the purchase at researched fashion stores, it was established that the main factors determining the decision of young and middle-aged educated and busy women to buy at the fashion stores are the assortment and the ratio of quality and price. Respondents' shopping frequency analysis showed that company's customers tend to shop regularly - once or twice a season. Considering this, it is expedient

to create a customer loyalty system oriented to the statistical buyer of international fashion chain in Lithuania, who regularly purchases in the company's stores, encouraging more frequent visits and more purchases (e.g. attractive promotions for loyalty system participants only, cumulative discount points for each shopping, special offerings, etc.).

The analysis of the evaluation of the Tangibles dimension revealed that the information received from physical objects and entities was evaluated quite favourably - the averages of the evaluations of all statements except the interior of the store exceeded the high "agree" level of evaluation. Considering the fact that the research was carried out in the fashion shops in Kaunas, and the majority of respondents indicated that they were buying at the particular fashion retailer store, where the interior and equipment were refurbished at the earliest, compared to the others, it is proposed to make a major shops repair, according to the latest company's interior concept, as well as to change the store equipment (mannequins, shelves, etc.) in Kaunas and other fashion shops all over Lithuania.

Analyzing the evaluation of the Assurance dimension statements, it was found that the overall assessment of the statements of this dimension is high, however, respondents were rather concerned with the competence of company's employees. While analyzing the estimates of Reliability dimension statements, it has been found that company's ability to respond to problems and complaints is evaluated worse than other statements of this dimension. Considering that these statements are related to the staff, it is recommended to develop the competencies of employees related to conflict management, as well as to develop practical guidelines for customer service for employees, ensuring that all clients of international fashion chain stores are always noticed and, well consulted if necessary.

Besides that, most of company's salespeople-consultants are young girls who usually combine work with studies, so they are often under-motivated, do not seek to deepen their knowledge and improve the quality of the services they provide, and tend to change jobs frequently. For this reason, company, as an employer, is recommended to focus on a senior employee with greater customer and life experience. In order to maintain the competitiveness of fashion chain, improve its activity and increase customer satisfaction with the quality of services provided, it is proposed to carry out regular evaluation of service quality, apply the results, and to evaluate the gap between the expectations and experience of the company's customers. These efforts should improve the quality of services in international fashion chain stores, increasing customer satisfaction, loyalty and competitiveness of the company.

Although the study included one international fashion chain brand in Lithuania, the main message for business companies in fashion industry is to use the knowledge about the drivers of customer satisfaction as a guide but not a pattern identifying and articulating the particular elements of service quality customers can expect – bringing a true sense of fashion and a unique value.

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