

## **Consumer Complaints About Shipment Services: A Content Analysis**

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### **Extensive Summary**

#### **Introduction**

Consumer complaining behavior has been subject to research beginning from 1970s (Fornell & Westbrook, 1979); and has been studied extensively in the literature in both consumer behavior and managerial perspectives. In general, authors have focused on the antecedents of consumer complaints (Fornell & Westbrook 1979, Richins 1983, Day 1984, Bolting 1989, Blodgett et al., 1993, Sharma et al..2010, Ekinçi et al..2016) and the classification or taxonomy of complaint responses (Singh 1988, Blodgett & Granbois 1992, Crie 2003, Huppertz et al., 2014).

In case of a product or service failure, consumers may voice their complaints directly to the seller, to their family and friends, or to third parties such as legal institutions or consumer agencies (Singh, 1988). With the rapid diffusion of the internet, digital platforms have also been a channel of communicating consumer complaints. In this context, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) is defined as individuals' forwarding electronic content to one another through e-mail, instant messaging or other easy-to-access digital media (Ho & Dempsey, 2010). E-wom is an important source of information for consumers who search for product or service information on the web, as well as it is for companies that want to reach consumer comments about their products or services.

In addition to personal blogs, e-mails and forums, there are websites that focus primarily on consumer comments or complaints. On these websites, consumers may share their opinions about their consumption experiences. This study focuses on [sikayetvar.com](http://sikayetvar.com), which is one of the prominent websites of Turkey in terms of website traffic and number of users. Consumer complaints about shipment services in [sikayetvar.com](http://sikayetvar.com) are analyzed using content analysis; aiming to reach a better understanding regarding the antecedents of consumer complaints.

#### **Methodology**

[Sikayetvar.com](http://sikayetvar.com) has been the subject of previous academic research; i.e. Cevher (2016) has examined the complaints about university education and Unur et al. (2010)

has analyzed the dimensions of complaints about package tours in the tourism industry. In accordance with the literature, the complaints about shipment services are examined using content analysis. The reason of selecting shipment services is that, while various studies can be found about the service quality of logistic activities in different cultures and in different industries; there are relatively few studies focusing on shipment services in the literature.

The dimensions that are used in the coding process have been adopted from SERVQUAL (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988). The rationale for selecting SERVQUAL scale as the basis of coding is that SERVQUAL has been used in similar studies in various industries such as education, insurance, banking, tourism and health services (Yücel, 2013). The complaints in the sikayetvar.com website are categorized and coded by using the dimensions of SERVQUAL scale, which are reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy and responsiveness (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988).

The shipment companies that will be included in the content analysis are selected by a pilot study. For this purpose, 30 participants are requested to recall and write down the first 4 shipment firms in Turkey. The first two companies that received the highest score have been included in the content analysis. 200 complaints that are directed to these two firms on the sikayetvar.com during March 2017 are selected for the content analysis.

### **Findings**

The complaints are analyzed using descriptive statistics and frequency distribution for each dimension of SERVQUAL. The first dimension is tangibles, which includes the uniforms of the service staff, and the documents and equipment used in the shipment services. According to the results of the content analysis, there has been no complaints about the documents, where the complaints about the uniforms of service staff and shipment equipment have been 0.5% and 4.5%, respectively.

The second dimension of service quality is reliability, which can be explained as the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988). 92.5% of the complaints have been related with the delivery of the shipment service timely and as promised. 65% of the consumers have mentioned about lacking of sincere solutions to deliver problems, and 35% of consumers have complained about the inaccuracy of company records about the shipment services.

In responsiveness dimension, 76% of the consumers have complained about the reluctance of service staff in providing help. Moreover, 87% of the complaints are about the late service delivery, consumers complain about the promptness of shipment services. 82% of the complaints have been about the service staff, stating that they have provided poor service.

The fourth dimension of SERVQUAL is assurance, which is composed of the knowledge and courtesy of service staff, and the ability of the employees to inspire trust in the consumers (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988). According to the content analysis, 43% of the complaints are about the distrustful feeling inspired by the service staff. 20.5 % of the consumers complain about the discourtesy of employees, where 11.5% of the consumers state that service staff has inadequate knowledge about their

job. In total, 47.5% of the consumers have complained about the fact that they do not feel confident regarding the shipment service.

Finally, the empathy dimension is conceptualized as caring about the customers and providing individualized service to consumers (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988). This dimension is adopted as providing service in flexible hours and offering convenient service hours. In the study it is seen that only 5.5% of consumers have complained about the service hours of shipment services.

### **Conclusion**

Shipment services have been one of the prominent business partners of manufacturers. With the diffusion of the internet and increase in e-commerce, the business volume of shipment services is increasing. Consequently, with the increasing volume of digital retail sales, e-WOM can be easily spread for shipment firms. In the competitive environment of e-business, offering a high quality service, obtaining customer satisfaction and loyalty, and receiving positive comments from customers are extremely important for firms. In this context, this study has focused on the consumer complaints about shipment services that are shared on sikayetvar.com.

Consumer complaints have been analyzed by content analysis, with the coding frame based on SERVQUAL scale. Providing the promised service promptly, timely delivery of good service and responsiveness of staff in providing help to customers have scored the highest frequencies among all consumer complaints. On the other hand, consumers have complained relatively less about the uniforms, equipment, and documents related with shipment services.

The limitation of this research is the analysis of complaints that are directed to two shipment firms in a specific time period, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Research can be extended by including complaints about other shipment firms in the analysis, or including complaints that are shared in different time intervals. In addition, the study can be broadened by including other service industries in the analysis.