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Significance of Criteria and Resulting Significance of Factors Affecting Quality of Services Provided by Lithuanian Road Freight Carriers

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Abstract

This article is a follow-up to the article published in the TRANSBALTICA 2015: proceedings of the 9th international scientific conference, which was dedicated to the identification of factors that affect quality of services provided by Lithuanian road freight carriers. Authors felt a need to investigate results obtained during the previous research more closely, since demand for transportation services as well as the number of enterprises offering road freight transportation services increases all over the EU. Therefore competition between these enterprises also becomes fiercer. To survive in this highly competitive environment, Lithuanian road freight carriers should ensure their competitive advantage over carriers from other countries. Therefore it is important not only to distinguish factors that predetermine quality of services, but also determine significance of these factors. The purpose of this article is to distinguish criteria that describe quality of services provided by Lithuanian road freight carriers and determine significance of factors affecting those criteria.

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1. Introduction

As it was denoted by Matijošius et al. [1], in course of the growth of the demand for transportation services, the number of enterprises offering these services grows as well. To survive in this highly competitive environment, Lithuanian road freight carriers should take any possible steps to ensure their competitive advantage over carriers from other countries. Upon a surplus of similar or identical services that can be found on the market, the enterprises involved in provision of road freight transportation services should improve quality of their services. In order to increase quality of freight transport services, it is necessary to determine main factors affecting quality of these services, as well as to distinguish which of these factors and to what extent may impact quality of provided services. In this case individual significance of every particular factor and resulting significance of particular set of determined factors is of great interest.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight criteria describing quality of road freight transport services and determine significance of factors affecting those criteria. Article begins with the short overview of results presented in paper, published back in 2015, and covers such issues as necessity for Lithuanian road freight carriers ensuring competitive transportation services on the international markets and identification of main criteria of the quality of transportation services. Following chapter is dedicated to determination of the significance of highlighted criteria and resulting significance of factors affecting appointed criteria. In the end of the paper summarizing conclusions are provided.

2. Competitiveness of road freight carriers and quality of road freight transport services

Competition, as the main force for the evolution of different organizations, is the main backbone of current economy. Competition appears when there are lot of similar products/services on a given market. The essence of competition lays in the securing or improving of the position of certain enterprise on the market, which can be reached by provision of better products and services than its main competitors. Competition forces every enterprise applying most recent technical developments, engineering and management solutions, as well as implement latest scientific achievements [2]. This leads to suggestion that most successful are those enterprises that are in constant search of innovations, are oriented toward fulfillment of requirements expressed by the customers and are able to defeat conservatism and momentum [3]. This, for sure, can be the case with European road freight transport market.

Statistics of European countries reveals that for the majority of EU member states, road transport plays a dominating role on the freight transport market [4, 5]. Ensuring the efficiency of transport sector in general (especially road freight transport sector) is one of the key prerequisites of development of national economies, since this sector is the activity important for tackling the problem of mobility.

According to Godlevskaja et al. [6], the concept of benefit of transportation services is oriented towards the circumstance that users have no means for cargo transportation to the point of destination. The key property of provision of a transportation service is that its necessity is ensured by absence or lack of knowledge or available means of the client for accomplishment of transportation process. However, the international road transport market in the EU is large. Laws of majority of Member States provide favorable conditions for development of free transport service market. And since the number of enterprises that offer their transportation services to foreign states is increasing, the competitiveness across the sector grows as well. The appeared access to markets of West Europe countries gingered up the competition between road freight carriers. Additionally, growing costs of provision of transportation services and decrease of the freight on the international markets forces road freight carriers searching for the new ways to ensure their competitiveness. Of course, because of the intense competition on the road freight market, consumers have an opportunity to acquire services of higher quality [7].

Enterprises involved in provision of road freight transport services on the international markets confront abundant competitive challenges. The growing competition is affected by the enterprises already having their segments in the market and by the increasingly growing number of new participants. Therefore, all enterprises involved in provision of similar services on the same market are greatly concerned about their competitiveness.

There are a lot of different definitions of competitiveness, but the most useful definition (applied in this paper) sound like this: competitiveness is defined as a totality of various variables, such as technological changes, quality

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