



# **LOGISTICS CUSTOMER SERVICE IN TERMS OF CREATING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE OF THE SELECTED PASSENGER TRANSPORT COMPANY – PRZEDSIĘBIORSTWO KOMUNIKACJI SAMOCHODOWEJ(PKS)**

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**Abstract:** The paper presents solutions based on prosumer energy, which in a broad aspect of its application facilitates reduction of harmful low emission impact on the environment. Additionally, the authors characterize in it issues concerning prosumer energy and limiting negative influence of low emission, which have a direct influence on widely understood ecosystem. A very important feature of the paper is the presentation of the research results on the surveyed group awareness in the scope of low emission harmfulness and counteracting it through implementation of prosumer actions.

**Keywords:** prosumer energy, management, low emission

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## **Introduction**

Industrial Revolution originated in England in the 18th century became the basis for the industrial era that lasted till the end of the 20th century (Chwalba 2008, p. 68; Nieć 2013, p. 27). At that time, the success of enterprises was largely dependent on the efficient and effective use of technical inventions in mass production. However, the world of the 21st century is characterized by dynamic changes in the conditions in which enterprises operate. This forces them to constantly search for new strategic solutions to help them survive the crisis. Therefore, it is necessary to ask what elements determine competitive advantage and survival and development of enterprises in the present turbulent environment?

## **The essence of logistics customer service in terms of creating competitive advantage**

The acceleration of the accumulation and availability of knowledge, observed for twenty years, is the reason for basic economic changes with which an increased interest in the issues concerning the management of intangible assets is associated. The knowledge-based economy brings about the occurrence of new sources of competitive advantage among which there can be listed well-organized customer service (Urbanek 2011, p. 7).

As early as 1980 it was highlighted that in the era of universal access to high-quality services and goods offered at similar prices only effective customer service is able to draw their attention. The key factor is to make this in a clear and durable manner. Customer service is the manifestation of the functioning of the whole logistics system of the company and the result of actions taken in the areas such as marketing, finance, transport, storage or forecasting the demand (Walasek 2014, p. 281).

In creating the due customer service an important role is undoubtedly played by logistics, which is accurately illustrated by the principle of 7Rs (Jodejko, Nowakowski 2008, p. 1068; Beier, Rutkowski 2001, p. 40). The issue of logistics customer service is very often discussed in literature (Budzik, Petryczka 2016, p. 97-108; Frazelle 2015, p. 115-120; Florez-Lopez, Ramon-Jeronimo 2012, p. 41-57; Halicka, Święcka 2012, p. 211-225; Deska, Szczepańska, Wypych 2012a, p. 360-365; Deska, Szczepańska, Wypych 2012b, p. 48-52; Lis 2011, p. 2251-2261). When reviewing literature it can be observed that this concept can be seen as the ability to satisfy the expectations and requirements of customers at the right time and place.

The due customer service should always be at the highest possible level. One ought to properly take care of the customer and not offer them a single service. All the activities in the form of the way of communicating with the customer, listening to them, observing their reactions to the questions asked or paying attention to polite forms, i.e. all forms of cooperation between them and the enterprise, influence the quality of customer service (Dolat 2013, p. 32-34).

Due to customers, all enterprises are able to operate in the market since they are the source of income. The customer is one of the most important values in the company and they need to be taken care of and treated as a partner for cooperation (Smolnik 2016, p. 1547).

Proper customer service is the source of a positive and long-term experience which will be well remembered by the customer and which will affect their willingness to cooperate with the company again (Dolat 2014, p. 93). Customer service is undoubtedly one of the elements of gaining competitive advantage of the company in the market (Strojny 2008, p. 1).

The issue of competitive advantage has been willingly discussed in the subject literature for many years (Wójcik 2016, p. 96; Ingram 2012, p. 139; Bednarz 2011, p. 113; Nowicka-Skowron 2010, p. 109-122). The changes observed in the business environment had major impact on it since the second half of the 20th century. It was a period of significant changes in the conditions of conducting a business activity and for this reason it was necessary to develop new ways of problem solving, the objective of which was to ensure the development of the enterprise and gaining competitive advantage (Dominiak 2013, p. 13).

When treating competitive advantage as exceeding the level of achievements compared to competitors, it must be based on three key criteria. The achievement must be significant for the customer, it must be noticeable by them and it must be characterized by durability (Simon 1999, p. 137). For this reason, it is created by

everything which positively distinguishes the enterprise in the eyes of the customer from among competitors (Fahey 1989, p. 18).

Another point of view on competitive advantage treats it as a situation in which the enterprise has opportunities to create more economic value. In this context, this value is understood as the difference between the value perceived by the customer and the total economic cost in relation to competitors (Barney 2011, p. 15-17).

Competitive advantage can also be seen as diversity or asymmetry of all the elements which, when allowing the company to satisfy customer needs, allow it to achieve mastery of operation and high value added to a greater extent than competitors (Ma 1999, p. 259).

One of the ways of achieving or maintaining competitive advantage is appropriate differentiation consisting in something which customers find unique. In this case, apart from the generally known characteristics of the product or service such as a brand or the technology applied it is also customer service (Elkin 2010, p. 68; Porter 1992, p. 51, 53).

Summing up, it can be indicated that competitive advantage is the achievement of the position by the enterprise that is superior in relation to competitors by offering customers services or products that simultaneously satisfy their needs and are better than those of competitors' (Krupski 2015, p. 7; Teneta-Skwiercz 2009, p. 194). While simplifying this definition even more, K. Oblój assumes that "competitive advantage consists in the fact of being a more attractive partner for customers than other companies in the specific field" (Oblój 2014, p. 101-115).

At the same time, it should be pinpointed that the achievement of sustainable competitive advantage is an uneasy task and sometimes even impossible to achieve (Michalak 2012, p. 73). Therefore, each enterprise wishing to succeed, must exploit the emerging opportunities and avoid any threats (Budzik, Zachorowska 2016, p. 96). Moreover, if it wants to achieve good results, it cannot operate in an ordinary way. It should adopt the way of operation other than competitors and the one building its uniqueness thus ensuring competitive advantage (Oblój 2016, p. 125; Griffin 2004, p. 251).

### **The characteristics of the investigated company**

An important date in the history of the investigated company was 26 July 2006. Like many other PKSs belonging to the State Treasury or local government units it was subjected to the process of privatization and since then it has been operating as a private company.

The investigated Przedsiębiorstwo Komunikacji Samochodowej with the head office in the area of the Łódź Voivodeship mostly deals with the local passenger transport. Its network of communication links includes a few cities and several larger towns.

With appropriate licenses and permits, the company performs:

- regular passenger transport within the timetable,
- national and international tourist transport,
- school transport,
- employee bus transport.

In terms of passenger transport services the company offers normal fare and reduced rate tickets using statutory and trade discounts as well as single-fare tickets and season tickets in regular, accelerated and fast transport.

Moreover, the scope of its activity includes:

- car wash services for passenger cars, trucks and buses,
- repair services for all vehicles, including specialized ones,
- gas station and automotive store services.

The fleet possessed by the company consists of 100 buses almost 20% of which are city buses. In order to maintain its level of competitiveness, each year the company attempts to replace a few of its oldest vehicles with newer ones and possess vehicles of different size. At present the smallest vehicle is designed to transport 30 passengers and the largest one – 74 passengers.

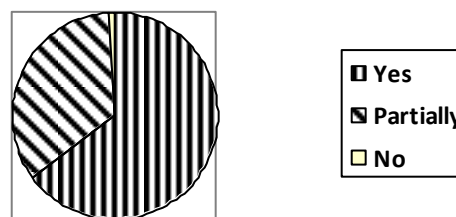
The employment of the company amounts to almost 170 people. These are both white- and blue-collar workers, 120 of whom are employed in the position of a driver.

### The analysis of logistics customer service in the investigated company

The analysis of logistics customer service in terms of creating competitive advantage was conducted on the basis of the survey which was addressed to the passengers using passenger transport services provided by the company. The research was conducted on a group of 100 respondents. The questionnaire consisted of 15 closed-ended questions divided into two parts.

The first part consisted of 11 closed-ended questions mostly of single-choice. Only one question allowed to indicate more than one answer and additionally, in another one, it was necessary to give an argument in favor of one of the answers. That part of the survey included the questions directly concerning the quality of the provided transport services of the investigated company which affect the level of its competitiveness.

In the first place, the respondents were asked about their general satisfaction with the passenger transport services offered by the surveyed company. For this purpose the following question was asked: “Are you satisfied with the provided transport services?” (Figure 1).

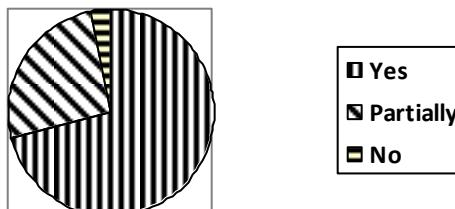


**Figure 1. Satisfaction of the respondents with the provided passenger transport services**

Source: Own study based on the conducted research

The vast majority of the respondents, i.e. 65%, answered in the affirmative. The group smaller nearly by half, whose share in that question amounted to 34%, was the respondents indicating partial satisfaction. Only one person indicated dissatisfaction with the investigated services.

The second question referred to satisfaction with the communication links offered by the surveyed company and was formulated as follows: “Are you satisfied with the offered communication links?” (*Figure 2*).

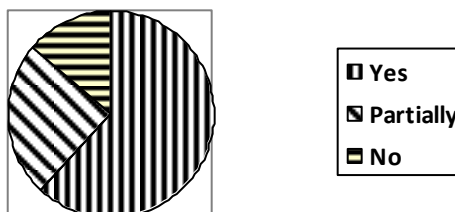


**Figure 2. Satisfaction of the respondents with the offered communication links**

Source: Own study based on the conducted research

The vast majority of the responses, since as much as 71%, indicated the affirmative answer. A much smaller share, amounting to 26%, belonged to the respondents indicating partial satisfaction, whereas only 3% of those questioned indicated that they are not satisfied with the offered communication links.

Subsequently, the respondents were asked about their satisfaction with the frequency of buses of the surveyed company and the formulated question was: “Are you satisfied with the frequency of buses?” (*Figure 3*).

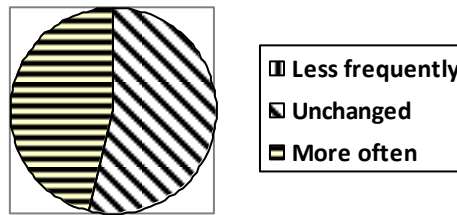


**Figure 3. Satisfaction of the respondents with the frequency of buses**

Source: Own study based on the conducted research

The answers indicating that the respondents were satisfied in terms of the frequency of buses amounted to 62%, whereas the ones only partially satisfied amounted to 24%. In turn, 14% of the responses indicated those who were not satisfied with the frequency of buses.

In order to complement the previous question, the respondents were asked to indicate the proposed changes in the frequency of buses and the following question was asked: “In your opinion, should the offered timetable be changed?” (*Figure 4*). In that question, the respondents were asked to indicate if it is preferable for buses to run less frequently, more often or whether to leave the timetable unchanged.

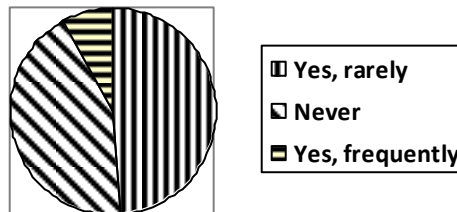


**Figure 4. Preferences of the respondents concerning the frequency of buses**

Source: Own study based on the conducted research

More than half of the respondents claimed that they were satisfied with the present timetable and there was no need to change it. Such an answer was given by 54% of those questioned. The other people were dissatisfied with it and indicated that buses should run more often. In turn, none of the respondents declared that they would like the buses of the surveyed company to run less frequently than it was taken into account in the timetable.

Subsequently, the respondents were asked to answer the question: “Have you often experienced the delay of a bus?” (Figure 5).

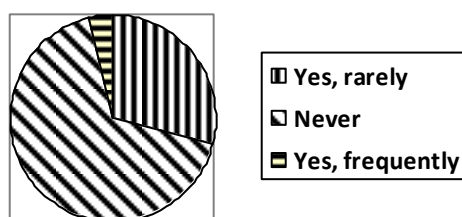


**Figure 5. Situations with the delay of a bus in relation to the timetable according to the respondents**

Source: Own study based on the conducted research

More than half of the respondents stated that they had experienced the delay of a bus in relation to the timetable. However, 49% declared that it happened rarely and 8% that the situation was frequent. In turn, 43% of the respondents stated that the bus had always been on time and they had never experienced its delay.

In the sixth question, the respondents were asked to provide information concerning the premature departure of a bus from a bus stop and the following question was asked: “Have you often experienced the situation of the premature departure of a bus from a bus stop?” (Figure 6).

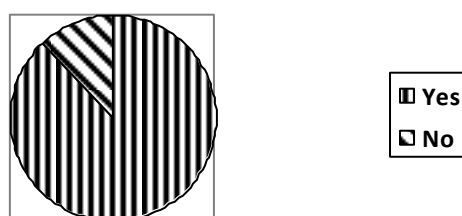


**Figure 6. Situations of the premature departure of a bus in relation to the timetable according to the respondents**

Source: Own study based on the conducted research

The answer indicating that the respondents had not experienced the situation of the premature departure of a bus from a bus stop amounted to 67%. In turn, 33% of the responses indicated that the respondents came across such situations. 29% of those questioned acknowledged that such situations happened rarely and 4% claimed that they were frequent.

The seventh question concerned satisfaction with the driver's job. The respondents were asked the following question: "Are you satisfied with the drivers' job?" (*Figure 7*). For that question, the respondents were also asked to give arguments in favor of their answer.



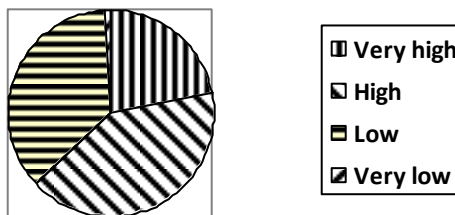
**Figure 7. Assessment of satisfaction with the drivers' job**

Source: Own study based on the conducted research

The vast majority of the respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the drivers' job in the surveyed company. Only 12% of the responses indicated the lack of satisfaction with their work.

The people satisfied with the drivers' job indicated different arguments for their opinions. In turn, those dissatisfied, as an argument, indicated not paying attention to noisy youngsters and listening to the radio too loud by the drivers.

The next question was to determine the level of the offered comfort of a bus ride. The respondents were to answer the question: "In your opinion, what is the offered comfort of a bus ride?" (*Figure 8*).

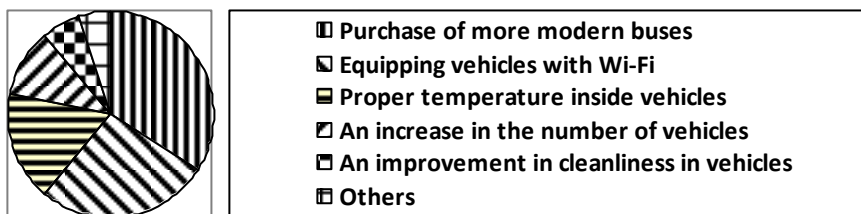


**Figure 8. Assessment of the bus ride comfort according to the respondents**

Source: Own study based on the conducted research

According to 41% of the respondents, the offered bus ride comfort is at a high level and according to 22%, it is very high. The bus ride comfort is low in the opinion of 36% of those questioned and one person rated it as very low.

The ninth question was associated with the previous one since it also referred to the comfort of a bus ride but, in that case, the respondents were to indicate the factors increasing its level. In the question: “Please indicate the proposal to increase the comfort of a bus ride” it was possible to tick more than one answer (Figure 9).



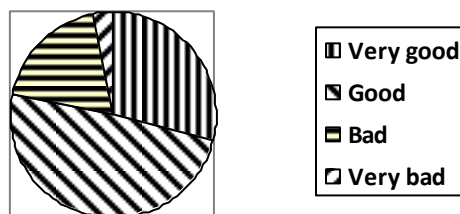
**Figure 9. Proposals to increase the bus ride comfort according to the respondents**

Source: Own study based on the conducted research

The response concerning the purchase of modern buses was indicated the most frequently and amounted to 34% of the answers. A slightly smaller share (27%) belonged to the equipping of vehicles with Wi-Fi. 17% of the responses referred to ensuring appropriate temperature inside vehicles. 11% indicated an increase in the number of vehicles and 6% – an improvement in cleanliness in buses, whereas 5% concerned the response of “others”.

The next-to-last question in that part of the survey concerned the ticket price in relation to the quality of the passenger transport services provided by the investigated company. The respondents were asked the following question: “How do you rate the ticket price in relation to the quality of the service?” (Figure 10).



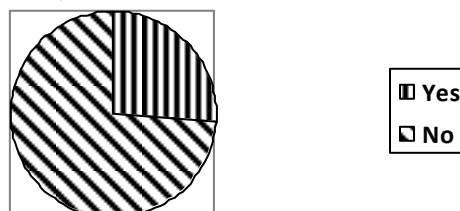


**Figure 10. The ticket price in relation to the quality of the service according to the respondents**

Source: Own study based on the conducted research

The most numerous group of the respondents, with the share of 49%, was the people who thought that the ticket price in relation to the quality of the provided services was at a good level. Another, a slightly smaller group, whose share amounted to 29%, was the respondents who claimed that the relation was very good. 19% of those questioned found the relation sufficient and 3% claimed that the ticket price in relation to the offered quality was definitely too high.

The last question in that part referred to the competitive means of transport. The respondents were asked the question: "If there were such a possibility would you use a different means of transport?" (*Figure 11*).



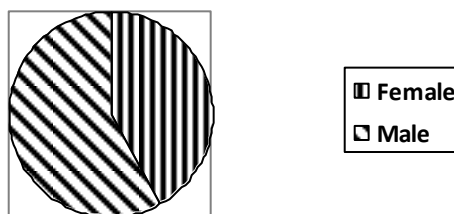
**Figure 11. The possibility to use a different means of transport by the respondents**

Source: Own study based on the conducted research

In the case of the use of a different means of transport the majority of the respondents answered that they would give it up. Such a response was given by 74% of the respondents. The others, i.e. 26% of those questioned, would use such an opportunity.

The second part of the questions referred to demographics and all the responses were closed-ended with a single possibility of selection.

The first question in that part of the survey referred to the respondents themselves where they were asked to indicate their gender (*Figure 12*).

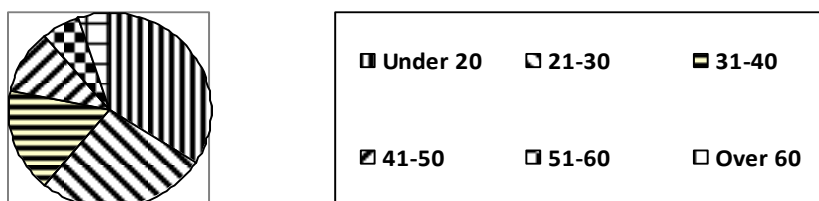


**Figure 12. Gender of the respondents**

Source: Own study based on the conducted research

The questionnaire was filled in mostly by women. Their share amounted to 58% of all the respondents whereas the share of men amounted to 42%.

The second question also concerned the respondents. In this case they were requested to indicate the proper age bracket (*Figure 13*).

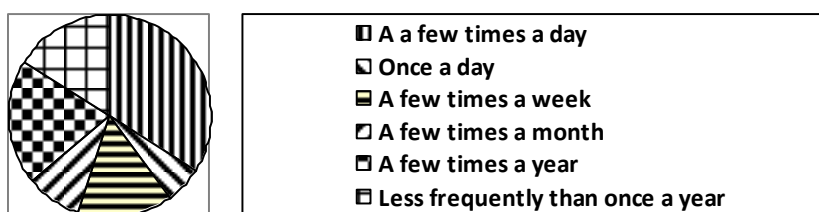


**Figure 13. Age brackets of the respondents**

Source: Own study based on the conducted research

The largest group of the respondents was people aged 21-30, for whom the share amounted to 36%. A slightly smaller share (31%) belonged to people under 20. The 31-40 age bracket was indicated by 16% of those filling in the questionnaire and the 41-50 age bracket – by only 11%. The smallest group of respondents was elderly people. The share amounting to 5% belonged to the respondents aged 51-60 and only 1% to people over 60.

Except for the questions concerning the respondents, in that part of the survey, there were also the ones associated with the frequency of using the passenger transport services provided by the surveyed company (*Figure 14*) and their destinations (*Figure 15*).

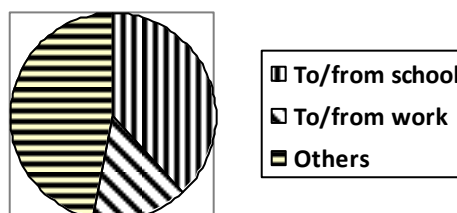


**Figure 14. Frequency of using the services of the surveyed company by the respondents**

Source: Own study based on the conducted research

In the case of frequency, the most numerous group, with the share of 34%, belonged to those using the services of the surveyed company a few times a day. In turn, the respondents using them a few times a year amounted to 20% of those questioned, whereas the ones using them a few times a week – to 16%. The people travelling by buses of the investigated company less frequently than once a year amounted to 15% of the respondents. Another group was the respondents using the transport of the company in question a few times a month. Their share in the survey amounted to 9%. The people travelling once a day were the smallest group of the respondents with the share of only 6%.

In the last question of the survey, the respondents were asked to indicate their destination (*Figure 15*).



**Figure 15. Destination of the respondents**

Source: Own study based on the conducted research

The largest number of the responses, since as much as 47%, referred to the destination other than ‘to/from school or work’. On the other hand, the respondents indicating ‘to/from school’ amounted to 38% of those questioned. The respondents indicating ‘to/from work’ as their destination constituted a much smaller group. Their share in the research amounted only to 15%.

### **Assessment of the components of logistics customer service in terms of creating competitive advantage of the surveyed company**

The conducted research allowed for determining the level of passenger satisfaction and identifying the elements of the transport process which affect the quality of customer service in the surveyed Przedsiębiorstwo Komunikacji Samochodowej.

The research was conducted on a group of 100 people using the passenger transport services of the investigated company. In that group, the majority was women, people aged 21-30 and the people using the passenger transport services of the surveyed company a few times a day.

An important factor affecting the competitiveness of the company is the satisfaction of its customers. The majority of the respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the offered passenger transport services.

The basic factor taken into account by people wishing to use passenger transport services of the specific carrier is the timetable of its buses. Each company dealing with such an activity faces the challenge to create such a network of communication links that, by means of appropriate frequency of buses, allows for

including the largest possible number of potential passengers and thus encourage them to use their offer.

The timetable of the surveyed company was assessed positively and the respondents were satisfied with the offered communication links and the frequency of buses. The situations of delays or premature departure of buses occur relatively rarely. Also the drivers' job is rated positively.

The respondents also indicated the elements negatively influencing the quality of the provided services.

The level of the bus ride comfort is an important factor affecting the decision whether the passenger will reuse the services of the investigated company. It was identified as average since most respondents rated it as 'high' and 'low'.

Enterprises wishing to effectively compete in the market must constantly monitor the quality of their services. The respondents indicated what actions must be undertaken in the investigated company to increase their quality. Most of all, more modern buses need to be purchased, passengers should be provided with Internet and Wi-Fi access and also appropriate temperature inside vehicles ought to be provided.

Another important factor affecting customer satisfaction is the relation of the ticket price to the quality of service. In the case of the surveyed company this relation is at a good level however, it should be considered that more than 20% of the respondents indicated its negative nature.

Another significant factor influencing the quality of the provided services is the qualifications and experience of workers. In terms of destination the respondents can be divided into two groups. The first one refers to the people whose destination is neither school nor work and the other one relates to school children. The investigated company should take into account the requirements of each of these groups. The respondents paid attention to the fact that the drivers did not react to loud behavior of young people as well as the drivers themselves listened to the radio too loud. Both factors can be really burdensome while travelling.

## **Conclusions**

Creating competitive advantage in the realities of the 21st century requires enterprises to include increasingly sophisticated needs of their customers in their future goals. Satisfying them must be performed quickly and in a manner tailored properly to the specific requirements.

On the basis of the conducted research, it can be concluded that logistics customer service in the surveyed company is at a good level and its level of competitiveness is high. The majority of the responses obtained in the survey indicate that the customers of the investigated company are satisfied with the provided passenger transport services.

The surveyed company efficiently creates competitive advantage in the market it provides its services to. One of more important arguments can be the indication by nearly 75% of the respondent that they would make a decision on the use of the passenger transport services offered by the investigated company even if provided with an opportunity to use a different competitive means of transport.

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## LOGISTYCZNA OBSŁUGA KLIENTA W ASPEKCIE KSZTAŁTOWANIA PRZEWAGI KONKURENCYJNEJ WYBRANEGO PRZEDSIĘBIORSTWA KOMUNIKACJI SAMOCHODOWEJ (PKS)

**Streszczenie:** Odniesienie sukcesu na rynku jest niewątpliwie związane z osiągnięciem przez przedsiębiorstwo przewagi konkurencyjnej. Jest to możliwe jedynie w przypadku poprawnie zidentyfikowanych elementów stanowiących źródła przewagi konkurencyjnej. Proces ten istotnie wiąże się z koniecznością ciągłej rywalizacji przedsiębiorstwa o klienta. Dzisiejsze czasy wymuszają od firm, aby coraz szybciej i w coraz bardziej wyszukany sposób zaspokajały potrzeby konsumentów. W artykule przedstawiono związek oraz istotę logistycznej obsługi klienta i przewagi konkurencyjnej. Celem artykułu jest analiza i ocena logistycznej obsługi klienta w aspekcie tworzenia przewagi konkurencyjnej na przykładzie wybranego Przedsiębiorstwa Komunikacji Samochodowej (PKS) w zakresie transportu pasażerskiego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** logistyczna obsługa klienta, PKS, Przedsiębiorstwo Komunikacji Samochodowej, przewaga konkurencyjna