

**BABEȘ - BOLYAI UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY OF ECONOMIC SCIENCES AND BUSINESS MANAGEMENT  
MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT**

**PhD THESIS**

**SUMMARY**

**CONTRIBUTIONS TO INCREASING PERFORMANCE IN ROAD FREIGHT  
TRANSPORT**

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## INTRODUCTION

### CHAPTER 1. Road freight transport services

- 1.1. Road freight transport, as a logistical activity
- 1.2. Road freight transport services: concept, defining elements
- 1.3. Quality as a source of performance
  - 1.3.1. Quality standards for freight transport services
- 1.4. Organizational performance
  - 1.4.1. Performance measurement
  - 1.4.2. Performance management
- 1.5. Organizational effectiveness, a measure of performance
- 1.6. Flexibility

### CHAPTER 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- 2.1. Research topic
- 2.2. Research objectives and hypotheses
- 2.3. Research methods and tools
  - 2.3.1. The survey
  - 2.3.2. The interview
- 2.4. Data sources
- 2.5. Data analysis
- 2.6. Research sample
  - 2.6.1. Research sample for road freight transport companies
  - 2.6.2. Sample of customers, respectively of the freight shipping companies
- 2.7. Variables of the analysis model

### CHAPTER 3. QUALITY OF ROAD FREIGHT TRANSPORT SERVICES AND ITS INFLUENCE ON PERFORMANCE

- 3.1. The quality of road freight transport services - source of performance
- 3.2. Analysis of the reliability of variables that express the quality and performance of road freight transport services
  - 3.2.1. Analysis of the quality of road freight transport services
    - 3.3.1. Quality dimension analysis for road freight transport services
  - 3.2.2. Analysis of statistical relationships between variables that express the quality of road freight transport services
- 3.4. Customer satisfaction and loyalty as performance indicators of road freight transport companies

- 3.4.1. Customer satisfaction
- 3.4.2. Customer loyalty
- 3.4.3. The influence of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty
- 3.5. Organizational effectiveness as an expression of the transport company's performance
- 3.5.1. Analysis of organizational effectiveness
- 3.5.2. Analysis of the effectiveness of the transport company leadership
- 3.5.3. Analysis of the effectiveness of management practices
- 3.5.4. Statistical relationships between the variables Eft\_org, Efc\_ldp, Efc\_mgt

## CHAPTER 4. PERFORMANCE OF ROAD FREIGHT TRANSPORT COMPANIES

- 4.1. Evaluation of performance in road freight transport companies
- 4.2. Performance analysis at road freight transport companies
- 4.2.1. Analysis of the level of customer service at companies  
road freight transport companies
- 4.2.2. Performance management analysis
- 4.3. Conclusions and recommendations

## CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS AND PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS

- 5.1. Thesis structure
- 5.2. Theoretical and practical aspects
- 5.3. Personal contributions
- 5.4. Research limits
- 5.5. Future research directions

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

## APPENDAGES

### **Introduction**

In the last two years there have been important changes in the road transport market, marked by the crisis caused by the pandemic, starting with 2021, which has caused serious disorders and dysfunctions in global mobility and logistics chains. Road transport companies in general and freight companies in particular have played a major role in ensuring the flow of material goods. Even if the response to the crisis has been adequate, many road haulage companies are currently facing problems caused by the onset of an energy crisis and a state of economic instability caused by the war in Ukraine. In the current unfavorable economic and

social context, road freight transport companies, high consumers of liquid fuel and with high levels of pollution, face liquidity problems caused by the pandemic especially in 2020, which creates great financial difficulties and can affect competitiveness and even survival in an increasingly competitive market.

Transport management is becoming, in these conditions, increasingly important, given the need to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of logistics, with direct implications on the performance of services provided to customers. Transport companies must ensure that their customers, who ship goods, use the most appropriate means of transport to accepted standards of transport service quality in order to increase performance.

With the rapid development and liberalization of freight transport, cooperation between carriers and intermediaries has developed to ensure the diversification of services provided to customers, to ensure market competitiveness. Freight road carriers must seize opportunities to promote attractive packages of services to customers, according to their needs and expectations, with effects in increasing their satisfaction.

In this context, the paper aims to analyze the performance of road transport companies in order to identify the main factors that determine it and the main problems the companies are faced with, in order to find ways to increase performance, based on a scientific basis, based on management strategies, policies and practices.

## **1. Research methodology**

Given that research into the performance of road freight transport companies is a complex field, the empirical study focused on both aspects of the internal organizational perspective and the external perspective based on customer perceptions. The internal perspective approach allowed the analysis of the efforts of managers and other employees to ensure organizational effectiveness, as a measure of performance, based on appropriate and effective strategies, policies, practices and procedures, in order to provide a level of customer service at high quality standards, according to customer expectations and needs. At the same time, the approach of the external perspective, which highlights the results, allowed an analysis focused on measuring quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty taking into account customer perception, which is based on a cross-sectional survey administered to both customers and employees who agreed to participate in the study and be part of the research sample.

Starting from the research topic, the purpose of the empirical study can be summarized as follows:

- development of a performance analysis model for the identification and implementation of good practices in Romanian road freight transport companies, in order to ensure long-term success;
- ensuring the provision of road freight service, at high performance standards, in order to improve customer satisfaction and loyalty, by better connecting to market requirements, taking into account customer needs and competition, to align with new business directions, including changes in the road haulage market;
- empowering managers of road freight transport companies, and other employees, who are the subject of analysis, to develop appropriate and effective strategies, policies and practices to improve performance as a major factor in competitiveness;
- measuring the performance of road freight transport services, using non-financial indicators, in order to identify good practices to ensure its improvement;
- legitimization of the opinions of some recognized specialists in the field, which can be important landmarks in the activity of the managers of the transport companies that are the object of the research.

Taking into account the purpose of the research, the general objective of the research, in the case of the study undertaken at several road freight transport companies, representative of the studied area, in the North West Region is: to develop a model for measuring and analyzing the performance of road freight transport companies, to identify and analyze the determinants and good management practices that determine it, in order to improve performance, based on a scientific basis.

Focusing on a model that reflects reality is a difficult task given the complexity of organizations. Although we can practically not speak of a managerial model that includes all aspects of the functioning of organizations, in the case of road freight transport companies, the model developed for analysis aimed to guide the activity of managers, respectively to determine appropriate and effective directions of action, for road transport companies under investigation. For this purpose, a construct was used that includes relevant variables that reflect as accurately as possible the good practices on ensuring: customer satisfaction; customer loyalty; the effectiveness of the organization's leadership; the effectiveness of the general management

practices of the organization; organizational effectiveness; the level of customer service; the effectiveness of performance management practices.

In order to achieve the general objective of the research, the main specific objectives are the following:

- determination of variables that express the operationalization of interrelated processes for the provision of road freight transport services, which provide the basis for the model of analysis and interpretation of results;
- focusing on the analysis of the quality of road freight transport services, as an important source of organizational performance, from the external perspective of the client, respectively based on the client's perceptions of meeting his needs and expectations;
- measuring and analyzing the main dimensions of the quality of road freight services;
- determining the influence of the quality of road freight transport services on the performance expressed using non-financial indicators;
- measuring and analyzing the performance of road transport companies, from an internal perspective, based on the indicator "level of customer service";
- analysis of performance management practices and determination of their influence on the performance of transport companies;
- statistical analysis of the main variables that are the object of the empirical study;
- identifying good practices and formulating recommendations and solutions that can be considered and implemented by road haulage companies;
- promoting a sustainable business model.

Knowing customers' perceptions and attitudes regarding the activity and management of road haulage companies, respectively their performance, will greatly increase the opportunity to make better business decisions. These companies will know the requirements or expectations of their customers and will be able to determine if they meet these requirements.

The tools used in the research measure the perceptions and attitudes of customers to assess the quality of services provided by transport companies, customer satisfaction and loyalty, which in the empirical study, are represented by companies in the manufacturing industry, which contract the public road freight transport service goods, for general goods. I must mention here that the road transport of goods, on the manufacturer's own account, with his own means of transport was not subject of the study.

At the same time, questionnaires for measuring the performance of road freight transport companies help the firms to better understand their potential for providing services to customers

at the standards required by the customers, as well as the effectiveness of quality management practices. The research units were the 73 road freight companies that accepted the collaboration in this study, and the respondents were the managers within these companies. For the design of the questionnaire, the researches of some recognized specialists in the field of performance management were taken as benchmarks (Armstrong, 2005, 2009; Kaplan., Norton., 1996; Robbins, 2005; Aguinis, 2014; Kinicki, 2016), and transport and logistics management (Lambert., Stock, 1993, 2001; Cristopher, 1998, 2005; Ballou, 2004, 2014; Ilieș., Crișan., Salanță, 2010; Murphy., Knemeyer, 2018).

Transport companies are interested in gaining a more comprehensive understanding of their customers' perceptions of the quality of road freight services provided to customers, which is why they use customer satisfaction questionnaires to determine their perceptions and attitudes. In this way, companies can better understand the requirements or expectations of their customers and will be able to determine the extent to which they meet them and the problems that may arise as a result of a faulty service or the occurrence of malfunctions in the transport process.

### **3. Theoretical and practical aspects**

The research topic, specific for the management of road freight transport companies, addresses the following theoretical aspects:

- study of literature, on the theoretical aspects of the main concepts related to the management of road transport companies, and performance, based on a bibliography relevant to the field of research;
- addressing the theoretical aspects regarding the performance of the transport companies with the particularities of the field of road transport of goods in order to increase their performances, an essential condition of competitiveness;

The empirical study on ensuring the increase of the performance of road transport services, by identifying the factors that determine the performance and the good practices to improve the performance determined:

- the influence of factors and good practices on the quality of services provided by road freight transport companies, as a source of performance, from the external perspective, of the customer;

- the influence of factors and good practices that determine organizational effectiveness, as an indicator that expresses performance, from the internal perspective of the transport organization;
- the influence of factors and good practices on the level of customer service, as a measure of the performance from the internal perspective of road freight transport companies;
- the influence of factors and good practices on the effectiveness of performance management practices in road haulage companies.

The empirical study took into account the results of studies by recognized authors, on the identification of factors that determine the quality and performance of services in general ( Parasuraman and coll. 1985, 1988, 1996; Neely and coll., 2005; Robbins, (2016). For transport services, approached as a logistical activity we mention Lambert., Stock, 1993, 2001; Cristopher, 1992, 1993, 2005; Rushton, 2014; Ilies., Crisan., Salanță, 2010)

#### **4. Personal contributions**

The entire approach of the research, the study of the literature and the research results, highlight a series of personal contributions, among which the most important refer to: the development of a model for measuring and analyzing the performance of road freight services, from the external perspective, of the customer, based on: analysis of the quality characteristics provided; quality dimensions (reliability, responsiveness, competence, tangibility), customer satisfaction; customer loyalty; development of a model for measuring and analyzing the performance of road freight transport services, from the internal perspective of the organization, based on: the level of customer service, organizational effectiveness and the effectiveness of performance management practices.

The personal contributions are based on the research results, which express the existing situation within the road transport companies in Romania, which were the object of the research, respectively the strategies, policies and practices on the basis of which the performance standards on which they operate are based.



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