

ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between the service quality of large and small maritime freight forwarders and customer behavioral intention to select this service from these firms. Differences in service quality may be expected as large freight forwarders have more resources and capability to provide a variety of services in response to customer demand, while small freight forwarders, because they have less resources and lack managerial skill, may have limited services to offer but more understanding of customers' needs. Service quality in maritime transport includes six dimensions; resources, service outcome, service process, service management, firm's image, and social responsibility. Customer intention to select freight forwarders was the main construct of the study.

A questionnaire survey was conducted with Thai exporters who have experience of using both large and small freight forwarders. 335 sets of survey data were collected. Regression analyses were used to test the relationship between maritime service quality and customer satisfaction, while t-test analyses were performed to determine the differences in the services provided by large and small freight forwarders.

The results indicated that service process and service management significantly influenced customer intention to select large freight forwarders. In contrast, service outcome was the only factor that significantly affected customer intention to select small freight forwarders. Furthermore, customers perceived the large freight forwarders to have more resources and higher service outcome, service process, firm's image, and good manner of social responsibility than small freight forwarders, while the efficiency of the service management of small freight forwarders was perceived as higher than that of large freight forwarders.