

## **Doctoral dissertation abstract – Jakub Cieřla**

Automotive companies rely heavily on outsourcing support and specialist processes, which makes the quality of outsourcing services a practical determinant of operational stability and the effectiveness of supplier-customer relationships. The dissertation identifies a clear research and practical gap. Despite the widespread use of supplier evaluation in the automotive industry, there is a lack of consistent, bilateral (supplier + customer) instruments dedicated to the holistic assessment of the quality of outsourcing services in B2B relationships.

Empirical observations presented in the thesis indicate that current approaches are often fragmented. Organisations use many parallel tools (audits, scorecards, KPI sets, satisfaction surveys) that are not systematically integrated, which weakens comparability over time and between partners and reduces the decision-making usefulness of the results. The overarching goal of the dissertation is to design and empirically verify a model for assessing the quality of outsourcing services and the level of satisfaction in B2B relationships in the automotive industry - a model that will be operationally useful and comparable across different organisations, while reflecting the specific nature of services (intangibility, processoriented).

The logic of the research is expressed in hypotheses H1-H6, which address issues such as standardisation, comparability, integration of quality assessment, feedback on satisfaction, translation of assessment into improvement measures, consistency of criteria and trust and satisfaction, and the distinction between service providers who perform assessments and material suppliers.

The study combines literature analysis with empirical research and model building. Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire, preceded by a pilot study. The sampling frame was based on a population of approximately 3,000 enterprises; 247 were eligible, 154 responses were obtained, and  $n = 128$  were included in the main statistical analysis.  $N = 48$  respondents participated in the pilot study. In addition, six interviews were conducted with process experts (6) to validate the tool and the logic of its implementation.

The statistical approach matched the data types and allowed the hypothesis structure to be completed using Spearman's rho for ordinal/rank variables, one-way ANOVA (ANOVA) for categorical variables with more than two levels, and Mann-Whitney U for comparisons of two groups, with conclusions drawn at  $\alpha = 0.05$ , and the results presented mainly at the construct level. The statistical analyses allowed for data triangulation and the creation of an assessment model based on key determinants of services for the automotive industry.

The proposed assessment framework is rooted in the logic of the VDA 6.3 process audit, adapted to outsourcing services and integrated with the normative expectations of the automotive industry (ISO/IATF/VDA context) and B2B service quality concepts. The basic operational idea is a two-stage assessment comprising a self-assessment by the supplier and verification/supplementation by the customer. This enables clear identification of gaps in perception and increases accountability for corrective actions. The assessment is divided into six categories with predefined weights and empirically observed average importance ratings (customer perspective), creating a structured tool for working with suppliers and managing relationships. Key characteristics include: overall assessment of service providers, operational activities and flexibility, communication, equipment and tools, innovation and ESG, and financial and compliance aspects.

The dissertation found that outsourcing services are common in the study group: 93.4% of the surveyed companies declare that they use outsourcing services. The work also points to frequent weaknesses in management. Formal measurements do not automatically translate into corrective action. Evidence suggests that the link between assessment results (including satisfaction surveys) and corrective/optimisation decisions is often weak or sporadic. Moreover, service quality assessments formulated by customers usually stimulate corrective actions more strongly than satisfaction measurements on the supplier side, which highlights the need for a model that clearly links assessment to a closed improvement cycle.

The verification of hypotheses is as follows H1 - It is possible to develop a methodology for assessing the quality of outsourcing services in the automotive industry that takes into account the interests of both parties: service providers and recipients - confirmed.

H2 - Insufficient linkage between practical solutions for assessing the quality of outsourcing services and the findings of scientific literature limits the comparability of research results between entities in the automotive industry - confirmed.

H3 - The lack of integration between the service quality assessment carried out by the recipient and the customer satisfaction survey carried out by the service provider has a negative impact on the involvement of both parties in the research process, which in turn has a negative impact on the quantity and quality of the data obtained - partially confirmed.

H4 - Separating formal service quality assessment from the feedback collection process (e.g. satisfaction surveys) limits the number of corrective actions implemented and reduces the perceived effectiveness of the service improvement process by managers - partially confirmed.

H5 - The greater the discrepancies in the service quality assessment criteria used by B2B partners, the lower the level of mutual trust and the lower the overall satisfaction rating for cooperation - confirmed.

H6 - The use of a uniform assessment scheme for service providers and material suppliers leads to an underestimation of the quality of the data obtained and distorts the accuracy of the assessment of outsourcing services - partially refuted.

The dissertation presents a structured, standards-inspired and empirically verified approach to the evaluation of outsourcing services in the context of B2B in the automotive industry. Its key theoretical contribution is to strengthen the measurement of service quality in the industrial B2B sector by clearly combining normative automotive requirements, satisfaction/trust relationships and bilateral operational assessment logic. In practice, it is a decision-oriented tool that improves comparability, reveals perception gaps and shortens the path from data to corrective action - precisely where many existing company practices "collect data" but fail to close the loop.