CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

To succeed in the business, quality is one of the most important strategic factors in this globalisation era. Customers have significantly increased their quality requirements so the companies which can respond to the customer requirements often have strong competitive advantages.

Besides, how to find ways to better meet their customers needs is very important. Benchmarking is one approach to achieve this. It is a method allowing the performance of comparisons and learning from others who are leading the benchmarked area. If comparisons are made at company level, companies can recognise their strengths and weaknesses relative to the world-class ones.

Benchmarking needs self assessment. Clearly, this is because if no measures are available, benchmarking is impossible. All measures required may be concerned with not only the quality of product, but also quality management. Quality management assessment will be the focus of this study.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Telecommunication industry is one of the most competitive and changing industry under this globalisation era. This is partly because most companies in this industry have to deal with high technology products (such as mobile telephones and so on) which need to be changed all the time. They have to know which position they gain in the market compared to their competitors. Moreover, if implementing the so called TQM (total quality management), the companies really requires continuous improvement. Hence, it is evident that self assessment of quality management practices becomes more and more important to provide solutions to those problematic issues.

In recent years, there have been a large number of researches which have mainly studied about the conceptual framework of modern quality management and have often tried to assess it. Nevertheless, most of these studies have been done in the developed countries such as USA, European countries, Japan and so on. On the other hand, a number of researches of this field, which have been conducted in developing countries . are relatively few. To respond the need, this specific study which are concerned with self assessment in quality management of telecommunication systems can be very useful as well. It attempts to evaluate quality management in a Thai telecommunication company. Therefore, two crucial problems which have to be solved for this study are as follows:

-       how to develop an integrated approach for looking at modern quality management in the circumstance.

-       how to apply a methodology for assessing the level of quality management.

1.2 Objective of study

-       To develop models for measuring quality management practices for a Thai telecommunication company based on international standards.

1.3 Scope of study

The scope of this study is confined to telecommunication industry. Thus, the models for self-assessing quality management levels are modified to be applied in solely Thai telecommunication business. Criterion and subcriterion available in these models are adapted from international quality standards such as Baldrige Award, Deming Prize, European Quality Award, ISO 9000 and TQM (Total Quality Management).

Only one Thai telecommunication company is to be studied owing to limitation of time for data collection. Nevertheless, if further studies are required, the models of this study represent the flexibility of being applied in most of other telecommunication companies as well as that selected firm. Furthermore, most data obtained from questionnaire responses and even quality management department is subjective. Thus, it should not be used as a direct measure of product quality. However, this data measurement acquired can be recognised as one of a company's most critical indicators.

1.4 Step of study

All main procedures of this study are listed as follows:

1.   Survey the literature relevant to this study.

2.   Adopt various quality parameters which have to be considered in international quality standards such as Baldrige Award, Deming Prize, European Quality Award, ISO 9000 and TQM. In addition, modify them to be a set of criterion and subcriterion classified in the models which suit Thai telecommunication environment.

3.   Develop two types of questionnaires based on the new models above. The purpose of the first one is to give the weights of all criteria and subcriteria in the models. All respondents required for this type of questionnaire are quality experts and engineers. On the other hand, the second one's goal is to score the quality management levels of industrial sectors. Its respondents come from senior managers and supervisors of the selected firm.

4.   Collect all required data from those questionnaires.

5.   Analyse the company's performance depending on questionnaire responses and some data from quality management department.

6.   Conduct a sensitivity analysis.

7.   Create a selection system of some widely used outranking methods as a guideline of comparisons between more than two companies.

8.   Conclude the study and conduct a complete thesis.

1.5 Benefit of study

The expected benefits of this study can be highlighted as follows:

- The strengths and weaknesses of the selected company are identified in this study.

- The study provides useful information for managers of the company to take corrective actions as necessary.

- Useful insights in multicriteria decision making are provided.

- The study can be used as a preliminary guideline to develop the conceptual framework of assessing modern quality management at higher levels such as between different companies, between different industries and so on.

- The finding may give some valuable information for developing National Quality Awards in developing countries.