

requirements, where requirement means need or expectation which may be explicit, generally implicit or binding. (ISO, 2000)

There is, moreover, a series of definitions provided by specialists on the subject. Among the best known are:

Conformance to requirements (Crosby, 1979)

Fitness for use (Juran, 1951)

The efficient production of the quality that the market expects (Deming, 1982)

The total composite product and service characteristics of marketing, engineering, manufacturing, and maintenance through which the product and service in use will meet the expectations of the customer (Feigenbaum, 1964)

Meeting or exceeding customer expectations at a cost that represents value to them (Harrington, 1990)

Anything that can be improved (Imai, 1986)

Does not impart loss to society (Taguchi, 1987)

Degree of excellence (Webster's, 1984)

Although the official definition provides a desirable fusion of the most important meanings of the original definitions, it must be noted how the interpretations of these authors make a more or less marked reference to the various families of qualities described above. Focusing on a few of these definitions reveals the degree of subjectivity or objectivity of the qualitative characteristics they take into consideration.

## **1.3** COMMERCIAL QUALITY

Quality has always been of substantial importance in trade relations and this is understandable as the value of an exchanged good is the relationship between its quality and its price. Until a few years ago, commercial quality was product quality. Nowadays the term total quality is used to broaden the concept of quality to the service involved in the exchange.

### **1.3.1** Historic evolution

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when production was limited exclusively to cottage industries, quality, as we know it today, did not exist. The formal quality audits became necessary only with the