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ATTITUDE OF INDIVIDUAL CUSTOMERS' TOWARDS COURIER SERVICES IN TAMILNADU**Dr. S. SELVAKUMAR****HEAD****PG & RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE****THEIVANAI AMMAL COLLEGE FOR WOMEN (AUTONOMOUS)****VILLUPURAM****ABSTRACT**

Attitude of individual customers plays a vital role in courier services. Courier units can design suitable marketing strategies based on the attitude of individual customers. By understanding Behaviour, Organization can design the suitable strategies. The results of this study can provide important insights to courier service providers.

KEYWORDS

Tamilnadu, courier services, individual attitude.

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INTRODUCTION

In India till 1985, couriers were used only in emergencies. In 1986, they began to be used for shipment of samples for non-commercial purposes. The export boom from 1994, along with the marketing efforts of some of the companies has contributed to the growth of the industry.¹ "The first courier service was started in 1685 by the East India Company between Mumbai and Chennai. The courier industry came into the Indian sub-continent in the late seventies. The industry which organised as a "messenger service" got transformed into a "document" courier by the late eighties.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Opening up of Indian economy coupled with integration of international trade and business requirements for focusing on core competence have opened up new vistas of opportunity for courier companies in providing services to finance and service segments and third party logistics service providers. In the present study an attempt is made to examine the attitude of individual customers towards courier services in Tamilnadu

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Shahare and Suri in their article, 'Industry Report', published in the journal "The Business India" analysed the problems of courier industry in India. The article stated that the relatively low entry barriers in the courier industry contributed to the growth of the industry, valued at Rs.1200 crore in 1998, of which international business accounted for 50 per cent.² The article stated that every truck operator called himself an express courier. Today, there are 60 courier companies competing for SBI's courier business, which is worth close to Rs. 2 crores annually. With all the players claiming a share of the cake, it is difficult to come by concrete market share figures. The express courier industry was witnessing a lot of action especially in the domestic sector. The article also stated that the important factors that determined a customer's choice of one company in preference to another were transit time (speed), reliability, reputation of the company, network, the level and quality of customer service provided and the assurance of track and trace facility.

R.Krishnamoorthy in his article, "What ails the courier service?"³ analysed the various problems faced by the courier industry. In the light of rampant growth of courier firms, there is a need for regulation, either by curtailing registration or through bringing it within the ambit of the postal Department's scrutiny. He stated that barring a few, there was no specific infrastructure or reliability in the delivery system. Most of the local couriers availed themselves of the public transport system for delivery of articles. While front ranking companies insured the articles while at transit, the very insurance remained a taboo with many others. He also stated that in the case of local couriers, the charge was equivalent to or lower than the postal charges.

The premier Rating Agency, Credit Analysis and Research Ltd. in its Report on Indian Express Service Industry⁴ elucidated facts about Indian Express Service Industry – from its evolution in India to its current state, its significant features, current size, growth rate and other areas such as pattern of industry's revenues in terms of document and non-document mix, international and domestic mix, volumes handled, share of different modes of transport used to handle the business, comparison of strengths and weaknesses of the different segment players and also the perceptions of the industry players on various issues concerning the industry. It concludes by identifying the numerous opportunities for the industry and its outlook for the future.

Suparna Dasgupta and Vibha Sethi in their article, "Department of Post needs to get its act together"⁵, compared the courier companies with India Post. The article stated that according to a World Bank Survey, in 2002-03, the express industry had grown to Rs. 2,493 crores, of which organised players possessed 65% share, semi-organised players 25% and India Post 10%. It also stated that studies by AC Nielsen ORG-MARG and World Bank depicted that customers had negative perceptions on India Post which must be altered and people must associate the name India Post Service with efficiency, speed and reliability. The article also stated that several e-commerce companies such rediff.com, bazee.com, amazon.com are dependent on courier companies for delivering goods ordered online. The article stated that India Post should not allow itself to get isolated. If there was any opportunity to pool resources for research and development, and the like, then it should join hands with a private agent. For instance, the agreement between USPS and Federal Express Couriers for space sharing in cargo aircraft for shipments was the best example. The article pointed out that the rural postal network consisted of 1,39,081 post offices, which was 90% of the total strength. The average area served per rural post office was 21.26 sq. km and population coverage was around 5,500.

V.S.Datey in his book, "Indirect Taxes, Law and Practice"⁶ stated that service tax was introduced on the services rendered by a courier agency on November 1, 1996. The author also stated that speed post services were not commercial concerns and they did not have to pay service tax; co-loaders provide service to the courier agencies and do not provide any direct service to the customer.

¹ Shahare and Suri, "Courier Industry Report", Business India, November 30 – December 13, 1998, p.92.

² Shahare and Suri, "Courier Industry Report", Business India, November 30 - December 13, 1998, p.92.

³ Krishnamoorthy. R., "What ails the courier service?", The Hindu, March 24, 1999, p.8.

⁴ "Report on Indian Express Service Industry in India", Credit Analysis and Research Ltd., Mumbai, www.eiciindia.org, Express Vision, October, 2006.

⁵ Suparna Dasgupta and Vibha Sethi., "Department of Post needs to get its act together", The Financial Express, July 1, 2005, p.6.

⁶ Datey V.S., Indirect Taxes Law and Practice, Taxmann Publications, 2005, p.726.

J.V.N.Jaiswal in his book, 'Postal and Courier Services and the Consumer'⁷ stated that courier services were operating in India since about last two decades and performing practically the same job as that of the post office. The author also stated the nature of complaints filed by the consumers and various judicial decisions of State and National Commission against deficiencies in services of courier units. The author also stated the rights and liabilities of consumers and courier agencies and the consumer protection law regarding the same as it existed then. The author stated that in the event of loss, miscarriage or delay in delivery of the consignments, the courier companies limited their liability by putting a clause on the face of the consignment note. This limit was generally Rs.100 for inland consignments and US \$ 100 for consignments meant for abroad.

Tushar Jani, Chairman of the Express/Courier Industry Council of India located at Mumbai prepared a report on "Emergence of Private Courier Services"⁸. In that report, he presented the profile of the courier industry in India and compared the courier service with postal service.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the main objectives of the study:

1. To examine the attitude of individual customers' towards courier services in Tamilnadu.
2. To offer suitable suggestions on the basis of the findings of the study.

HYPOTHESIS

Ho: Number of years of using courier services does not influence the individual customers' level of satisfaction on factors such as overall satisfaction, reliability, competence, courtesy, credibility, communication, safety, responsiveness, tangibility and accessibility of courier services.

H₁: Number of years of using courier services influences the individual customers' level of satisfaction on factors such as overall satisfaction, reliability, competence, courtesy, credibility, communication, safety, responsiveness, tangibility and accessibility of courier services.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data have been collected by conducting a survey among the individual customers of courier services. The survey covered 300 individual customers of courier services. Secondary data have been collected from books, journals, newspapers, periodicals, reports, internet and unpublished Ph.D. theses.

CONSTRUCTION OF TOOLS AND PRETEST

For the purpose of survey of sample customers, pretests were conducted among 50 individual customers. The pretests were done to analyse the effectiveness of the questionnaires. The questionnaires were modified on the basis of pretest and data collected from 300 individual customers of courier units.

PROFILE OF INDIVIDUAL CUSTOMERS

In order to analyse the opinion of the individual customers on courier services, fifteen statements were identified and the responses gathered for each of the statement in the questionnaire by using Likert Type Scaling Technique. The fifteen statements are as follows:

1. Courier Companies' services are reliable.
2. Courier charges are reasonable.
3. Customers are treated politely.
4. Courier companies provide value-added services.
5. Courier services are located nearer to the customers.
6. Courier service ensures timely delivery of articles.
7. Couriers provide the services needed by the customers.
8. Courier services provide credit facilities to customers.
9. I use only a particular courier service.
10. Courier services deliver anything anywhere.
11. Courier service is better than postal service.
12. There is no safety for the documents/non-documents sent through courier.
13. Bulk articles cannot be sent through courier's companies.
14. Valuables cannot be sent through courier companies.
15. There is theft of articles sent through courier companies.

DISCUSSION

LEVEL OF SATISFACTION

An analysis of satisfaction levels regarding the various variables contributing to the best service of customers by different courier operators would help one to know how far the courier operators were effective in meeting the customers' requirements. Respondents who score their satisfaction level less than the I quartile value are classified as less satisfied respondents. Those whose values fall above the III quartile value are classified as highly satisfied respondents. Those score between high and low values are classified as moderately satisfied respondents.

FACTORS INFLUENCING LEVEL OF SATISFACTION

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to understand whether factors like age, sex, occupation, monthly income, educational qualification and number of years of using courier services, influenced level of satisfaction with factors such as overall satisfaction, reliability, competence, courtesy, credibility, communication, safety, responsiveness, tangibility and accessibility. In order to test the relationship between the factors and the levels of satisfaction, the chi-square test has been employed.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NUMBER OF YEARS OF USING COURIER SERVICES AND LEVEL OF SATISFACTION ON FACTORS

Individual customers surveyed have been using courier services for more than 20 years. In order to test the relationship between the number of years of using courier services by the respondents and their level of satisfaction on factors, a complex table has been prepared. Table 1 shows the number of years of using courier services by the respondents and their level of satisfaction on factors.

⁷ Jaiswal J.V.N., Postal and Courier Services and the Consumer, Eastern Book Company, ed., Lucknow, 2004, pp.148-171.

⁸ Tushar Jani, "Report on Emergence of Private Courier Services", Express Industry Council of India, Mumbai, 1995, pp.42-47.

TABLE 1: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NUMBER OF YEARS OF USING COURIER SERVICES AND LEVEL OF SATISFACTION ON FACTORS

Level of Satisfaction on Factors		Number of Years of Using Courier Services			Total
		Upto 10 Years	10 to 20 years	Above 20 years	
Overall Satisfaction	Low	1 (33.3%)	61 (24.2%)	8 (17.8%)	70 (23.3%)
	Medium	2 (66.7%)	132 (52.4%)	25 (55.6%)	159 (53.0%)
	High	0 (00.0%)	59 (23.4%)	12 (26.7%)	71 (23.7%)
Column Total		3 (100%)	252 (100%)	45 (100%)	300 (100%)
Reliability	Low	0 (00.0%)	81 (32.1%)	15 (33.3%)	96 (32.0%)
	Medium	3 (100%)	85 (33.7%)	14 (31.1%)	102 (34.0%)
	High	0 (00.0%)	86 (34.1%)	16 (35.6%)	102 (34.0%)
Column Total		3 (100%)	252 (100%)	45 (100%)	300 (100%)
Competence	Low	1 (33.3%)	112 (44.4%)	19 (42.2%)	132 (44.0%)
	Medium	1 (33.3%)	46 (18.3%)	9 (20.0%)	56 (18.7%)
	High	1 (33.3%)	94 (37.3%)	17 (37.8%)	112 (37.3%)
Column Total		3 (100%)	252 (100%)	45 (100%)	300 (100%)
Courtesy	Low	1 (33.3%)	95 (37.7%)	14 (31.1%)	110 (36.7%)
	Medium	1 (33.3%)	74 (29.4%)	14 (31.1%)	89 (29.7%)
	High	1 (33.3%)	83 (32.9%)	17 (37.8%)	101 (33.7%)
Column Total		3 (100%)	252 (100%)	45 (100%)	300 (100%)
Credibility	Low	1 (33.3%)	99 (39.3%)	15 (33.3%)	115 (38.3%)
	Medium	2 (66.7%)	85 (33.7%)	14 (31.1%)	101 (33.7%)
	High	0 (00.0%)	68 (27.0%)	16 (35.6%)	84 (28.0%)
Column Total		3 (100%)	252 (100%)	45 (100%)	300 (100%)
Communication	Low	2 (66.7%)	89 (35.3%)	14 (31.1%)	105 (35.0%)
	Medium	1 (33.3%)	70 (27.8%)	13 (28.9%)	84 (28.0%)
	High	0 (0.0%)	93 (36.9%)	18 (40.0%)	111 (37.0%)
Column Total		3 (100%)	252 (100%)	45 (100%)	300 (100%)
Safety	Low	3 (100%)	83 (32.9%)	15 (33.3%)	101 (33.7%)
	Medium	0 (00.0%)	103 (40.9%)	13 (28.9%)	116 (38.7%)
	High	0 (00.0%)	66 (26.2%)	17 (37.8%)	83 (27.7%)
Column Total		3 (100%)	252 (100%)	45 (100%)	300 (100%)
Responsiveness	Low	1 (33.3%)	121 (48.0%)	20 (44.4%)	142 (47.3%)
	Medium	0 (00.0%)	57 (22.6%)	12 (26.7%)	69 (23.0%)
	High	2 (66.7%)	74 (29.4%)	13 (28.9%)	89 (29.7%)
Column Total		3 (100%)	252 (100%)	45 (100%)	300 (100%)
Tangibility	Low	1 (33.3%)	139 (55.2%)	25 (55.6%)	165 (55.0%)
	High	2 (66.7%)	113 (44.8%)	20 (44.4%)	135 (45.0%)
Column Total		3 (100%)	252 (100%)	45 (100%)	300 (100%)
Accessibility	Low	1 (33.3%)	74 (29.4%)	12 (26.7%)	87 (29.0%)
	Medium	1 (33.3%)	97 (38.5%)	16 (35.6%)	114 (38.0%)
	High	1 (33.3%)	81 (32.1%)	17 (37.8%)	99 (33.0%)
Column Total		3 (100%)	252 (100%)	45 (100%)	300 (100%)

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 shows that out of 300 individual customers, 3 respondents were using courier services upto 10 years. Among them, 33.3 per cent (1 respondent) was lowly satisfied and 66.7 per cent (2 respondents) were satisfied to the medium level. Out of another 252 respondents using courier services from 10 to 20 years, 24.2 per cent (61 respondents) were lowly satisfied, 52.4 per cent (132 respondents) were satisfied to the medium level and 23.4 per cent (59 respondents) were highly satisfied. Out of the remaining 45 respondents using courier services for more than 20 years, 17.8 per cent (8 respondents) were lowly satisfied, 55.6 per cent (25 respondents) were satisfied to the medium level and 26.7 per cent (12 respondents) were highly satisfied. More than four-fifths (84%) of the individual customers (252 respondents) have been using courier services between 10 and 20 years.

Out of 300 individual customers, 3 respondents using courier services upto 10 years were satisfied to the medium level with reliability of courier services. Out of another 252 respondents using courier services from 10 to 20 years, 32.1 per cent (81 respondents) were lowly satisfied, 33.7 per cent (85 respondents) were satisfied to the medium level and 34.1 per cent (86 respondents) were highly satisfied. Out of the remaining 45 respondents using courier services for more than 20 years, 33.3 per cent (15 respondents) were lowly satisfied, 31.1 per cent (14 respondents) were satisfied to the medium level and 35.6 per cent (16 respondents) were highly satisfied.

Out of 300 individual customers, 3 respondents have been using courier services upto 10 years. Among them, 33.3 per cent (1 respondent) was lowly satisfied, 33.3 per cent (1 respondent) was satisfied to the medium level and 33.3 per cent (1 respondent) was highly satisfied with competence of courier services. Out of another 252 respondents using courier services from 10 to 20 years, 44.4 per cent (112 respondents) were lowly satisfied, 18.3 per cent (46 respondents) were satisfied to the medium level and 37.3 per cent (94 respondents) were highly satisfied. Out of the remaining 45 respondents using courier services for more than 20 years, 42.2 per cent (19 respondents) were lowly satisfied, 20 per cent (9 respondents) were satisfied to the medium level and 37.8 per cent (17 respondents) were highly satisfied.

Out of 300 individual customers, 3 respondents were using courier services upto 10 years. Among them, 33.3 per cent (1 respondent) was lowly satisfied, 33.3 per cent (1 respondent) was satisfied to the medium level and 33.3 per cent (1 respondent) was highly satisfied with courtesy of courier services. Out of another 252 respondents using courier services from 10 to 20 years, 37.7 per cent (95 respondents) were lowly satisfied, 29.4 per cent (74 respondents) were satisfied to the medium level and 32.9 per cent (83 respondents) were highly satisfied. Out of the remaining 45 respondents using courier services for more than 20 years, 31.1 per cent (14 respondents) were lowly satisfied, 31.1 per cent (14 respondents) were satisfied to the medium level and 37.8 per cent (17 respondents) were highly satisfied.

Out of 300 individual customers, 3 respondents were using courier services upto 10 years. Among them, 33.3 per cent (1 respondent) was lowly satisfied and 66.7 per cent (2 respondents) were satisfied to the medium level with credibility of courier services. Out of another 252 respondents using courier services from 10 to 20 years, 39.3 per cent (99 respondents) were lowly satisfied, 33.7 per cent (85 respondents) were satisfied to the medium level and 27 per cent (68 respondents) were highly satisfied. Out of the remaining 45 respondents using courier services for more than 20 years, 33.3 per cent (15 respondents) were lowly satisfied, 31.1 per cent (14 respondents) were satisfied to the medium level and 35.6 per cent (16 respondents) were highly satisfied.

Out of 300 individual customers, 3 respondents were using courier services upto 10 years. Among them, 66.7 per cent (2 respondents) were lowly satisfied and 33.3 per cent (1 respondent) was satisfied to the medium level with communication of courier services. Out of another 252 respondents using courier services

from 10 to 20 years, 35.3 per cent (89 respondents) were lowly satisfied, 27.8 per cent (70 respondents) were satisfied to the medium level and 36.9 per cent (93 respondents) were highly satisfied. Out of the remaining 45 respondents using courier services for more than 20 years, 31.1 per cent (14 respondents) were lowly satisfied, 28.9 per cent (13 respondents) were satisfied to the medium level and 40 per cent (18 respondents) were highly satisfied.

Out of 300 individual customers, 3 respondents were using courier services upto 10 years and they were lowly satisfied with safety of articles sent through courier services. Out of another 252 respondents using courier services from 10 to 20 years, 32.9 per cent (83 respondents) were lowly satisfied, 40.9 per cent (103 respondents) were satisfied to the medium level and 26.2 per cent (66 respondents) were highly satisfied. Out of the remaining 45 respondents using courier services for more than 20 years, 33.3 per cent (15 respondents) were lowly satisfied, 28.9 per cent (13 respondents) were satisfied to the medium level and 37.8 per cent (17 respondents) were highly satisfied.

Out of 300 individual customers, 3 respondents were using courier services upto 10 years. Among them, 33.3 per cent (1 respondent) was lowly satisfied and 66.7 per cent (2 respondents) were highly satisfied with the responsiveness of courier services. Out of another 252 respondents using courier services from 10 to 20 years, 48 per cent (121 respondents) were lowly satisfied, 22.6 per cent (57 respondents) were satisfied to the medium level and 29.4 per cent (74 respondents) were highly satisfied. Out of the remaining 45 respondents using courier services for more than 20 years, 44.4 per cent (20 respondents) were lowly satisfied, 26.7 per cent (12 respondents) were satisfied to the medium level and 28.9 per cent (13 respondents) were highly satisfied.

Out of 300 individual customers, 3 respondents were using courier services upto 10 years. Among them, 33.3 per cent (1 respondent) was lowly satisfied and 66.7 per cent (2 respondents) were highly satisfied with tangibility of courier services. Out of another 252 respondents using courier services from 10 to 20 years, 55.2 per cent (139 respondents) were lowly satisfied and 44.8 per cent (113 respondents) were highly satisfied. Out of the remaining 45 respondents using courier services for more than 20 years, 55.6 per cent (25 respondents) were lowly satisfied and 44.4 per cent (20 respondents) were highly satisfied.

Out of 300 individual customers, 3 respondents were using courier services upto 10 years. Among them, 33.3 per cent (1 respondent) was lowly satisfied, 33.3 per cent (1 respondent) was satisfied to the medium level and 33.3 per cent (1 respondent) was highly satisfied with accessibility of courier services. Out of another 252 respondents using courier services from 10 to 20 years, 29.4 per cent (74 respondents) were lowly satisfied, 38.5 per cent (97 respondents) were satisfied to the medium level and 32.1 per cent (81 respondents) were highly satisfied. Out of the remaining 45 respondents using courier services for more than 20 years, 26.7 per cent (12 respondents) were lowly satisfied, 35.6 per cent (16 respondents) were satisfied to the medium level and 37.8 per cent (17 respondents) were highly satisfied.

This shows that the satisfaction level varied between different periods of using courier services by the respondents. So in order to test whether the number of years of using courier services affected the satisfaction level, Chi-square test was used.

TABLE 2: ANALYSIS OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NUMBER OF YEARS OF USING COURIER SERVICES AND FACTORS SATISFYING INDIVIDUAL CUSTOMERS

S.No.	Factor Affecting Level of Satisfaction	Chi Square Value	Degrees of Freedom	Probability
1	Overall Satisfaction	1.874	4	75
2	Reliability	5.999	4	19
3	Competence	.548	4	96
4	Courtesy	.780	4	94
5	Credibility	3.281	4	51
6	Communication	2.329	4	67
7	Safety	9.244	4	56
8	Responsiveness	2.599	4	62
9	Tangibility	.577	2	74
10	Accessibility	.587	4	96

Source: Primary Data

From Table 2, it is inferred that the significance probability is greater than 10 per cent for all factors such as overall satisfaction, reliability, competence, courtesy, credibility, communication, safety, responsiveness, tangibility and accessibility. It means that there is no significant relationship between numbers of years of using courier services by the individual customers and their level of satisfaction on factors such as overall satisfaction, reliability, competence, courtesy, credibility, communication, safety, responsiveness, tangibility and accessibility.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Among the different demographic variables age, sex, occupation, income and educational qualifications of the individual customers were not found to influence their level of satisfaction on factors such as overall satisfaction, reliability, competence, courtesy, credibility, communication, safety, responsiveness and tangibility, except accessibility.

A majority (55 per cent) of the individual customers (165 respondents) sent documents as well as non-documents through courier companies.

Nearly two-thirds (59 per cent) of the individual customers (177 respondents), used courier services once a month.

Three-fourths of the individual customers (75%) spent from Rs.100 to Rs.200 per month on courier services.

According to more than four-fifths (85 per cent) of the individual customers (255 respondents), the courier charges were high.

SUGGESTIONS BASED ON THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The following are suggestions, based on the findings of the study, for the improvement of the courier industry:

The Government should pass a legislation regulating the operations of courier services in order to protect the industry and its customers.

In case of non-delivery of articles to the addressee, the courier companies should take steps for prompt return of articles to the sender.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that there is no significant relationship between numbers of years of using courier services by the individual customers and their level of satisfaction on factors such as overall satisfaction, reliability, competence, courtesy, credibility, communication, safety, responsiveness, tangibility and accessibility.

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