



Service quality and customers patronage of courier services in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of convenience, promptness and safety on customer's patronage of courier services. The descriptive research design was adopted for the study. Subjects were selected using the convenience sampling technique. The population comprised all the courier services customers located in Calabar, Nigeria, and a sample size of 340. The data was statistically analyzed with multiple regressions. The results revealed that; Convenience and Promptness significantly influenced customer patronage of courier services. No significant relationship was found between Safety and customer patronage of courier services in the study environment. We recommended among others that, providers of courier services that are yet to introduce home delivery, on-time delivery, quick response service, 24/7 customer care, parcel tracking and tracing among others should endeavor to do so, in order to increase customer loyalty and patronage.

Keywords: Service quality, Courier services, Convenience, Promptness, Safety, Patronage

Introduction

The courier service sector is now a vital component of Nigerian economic activity due to the country's growing e-commerce and the growing demand for effective goods transportation (Inameti et al., 2024; Jarocka et al., 2018). Courier services are essential in connecting people and organizations across the country, whether it is through business-to-business transactions or the delivery of private

packages over long distances (Jarocka et al., 2018). However, in a market that is dynamic and becoming more competitive, courier service providers' capacity to draw in and keep clients depends heavily on the caliber of services they provide (Barti et al., 2015; Balaji, 2015). Urbanization, the growth of online shopping, and the necessity of prompt delivery of necessities have all contributed to Nigeria's significant increase in demand for

dependable and effective courier services. As a result, consumers are growing increasingly picky and demanding more from courier services in terms of speed, dependability, security, and overall experience (Vera et al., 2013). A greater comprehension of the elements influencing consumer choice and loyalty in this industry is required due to its increasing sophistication. In many service industries, customer satisfaction and patronage have been found to be significantly influenced by service quality, a multifaceted construct that includes elements like responsiveness, assurance, empathy, tangibles, and dependability (Inameti, 2022).

Customer perceptions and their propensity to use a specific service provider can be greatly impacted by a courier service's capacity to reliably fulfill commitments, offer prompt assistance, guarantee the security of the goods, and provide a flawless experience. In Nigeria, customer preference for courier services is greatly influenced by service quality. Consumers in the fast-paced world of today expect delivery services that are prompt, dependable, and of excellent quality at affordable costs. They also want services that don't require them to wait a long time. Notwithstanding the widely recognized significance of service quality, the Nigerian courier service sector faces particular difficulties, such as limited infrastructure, security issues, and disparities in operational effectiveness, including convenience, promptness, and trust. It is essential for policymakers and service providers to comprehend how these issues interact with consumer expectations and ultimately affect decisions about patronage. Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine how customer

patronage and service quality factors relate to one another in the Nigerian courier service sector. This study aims to provide insightful information for courier service providers looking to improve their competitive edge and cultivate stronger customer relationships by analyzing the particular facets of service quality that most strongly influence customer choice and loyalty. In the end, the research's conclusions will help develop a more sophisticated understanding of consumer behavior in the Nigerian courier service industry and guide the development of strategies aimed at enhancing customer satisfaction and service delivery.

Objectives of the study

This study's primary goal was to investigate the customer satisfaction and service quality of a few chosen courier services companies. Specifically; the study was carried out to:

- 1) examine the effectiveness of convenience on customer patronage of courier services
- 2) determine how promptness influences customer patronage of courier services
- 3) ascertain the extent to which safety influences customer patronage of courier services

Literature review

Theoretical underpinning

Since SERVQUAL has emerged as the most widely used model for assessing service quality, many academics have criticized it due to the generality of its dimensions. Many academics have altered the model to explain a specific service type in light of this perceived limitation. In their 2016 study on "the dimensions of courier service quality and the

impact of perceived service quality on overall service quality," Rezaei, Shahijan, and Valaei created the CouQual model, which was used in this work. The SERVQUAL model served as the foundation for the study, but the authors created a model called "CouQual" specifically for courier services that included the following dimensions: tangibles, safety, accuracy, promptness, and convenience. The study's findings showed that while tangibility and accuracy did not positively affect perceived service quality, promptness, convenience, and safety were the most crucial elements. However, the authors urged researchers to use the CouQual model in other countries to see if the culture of a different nation could influence the quality of courier service patronage.

Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980): According to this theory, the gap between a customer's expectation and actual experience with a service determines how satisfied they are. Customers are satisfied if the service performance surpasses the expectation of customer (positive disconfirmation). They are not happy if it is insufficient (negative disconfirmation).

Suitability: This theory is essential to comprehending how customer patronage is impacted by service quality. Client satisfaction and the possibility of repeat business will be influenced by the comparison of their initial expectations of courier services (such as delivery speed and package security) with their actual experiences.

Conceptual framework

Convenience

Park et al. (2009) define convenience as an extent to which a service is provided when it is convenient for the customer. In this context, convenience is defined as the ability to use a good or service stress-free. Additionally, placing a purchase order online, tracking and tracing the package, and receiving the package at a convenient location can all be considered forms of convenience. When it comes to customer satisfaction, convenience is thought to be crucial (Dabholkar & Bagozzi, 2002). Prioritizing convenience in service delivery would eventually increase positive response and increase customer satisfaction. Convenience, usefulness, responsiveness, empathy, diversity, and assurance are the dimensions used in Cho and Sung's (2007) study on the measurement of internet service quality. The results of the study demonstrated a strong correlation between customer satisfaction and the aspects of service quality. Akbaba (2006) conducted a similar study that assessed service quality in the Turkish hospitality sector and found that convenience was positively correlated with other factors.

Promptness

Although many academics and researchers have given different definitions of promptness, for the purposes of this work, promptness can be defined as the trait or practice of completing a task at the appointed time. Another definition of promptness is the ability to react quickly to the needs of clients (Park et al., 2009). Consumers are more likely to choose service sectors that provide them with timely assistance (Hossain and Leo, 2009). Therefore, it is impossible to overstate the importance of promptness in the service sector (Knutson et al., 1990) because studies have shown that promptness plays a

significant role in the concept of "service quality" (Bhardwaj & Chawla, 2013). Additionally, in the service industry, promptness plays a significant role in the quality of service delivery (Pandey and Sharma, 2011). According to the results of a Malaysian study, customer satisfaction is influenced by aesthetics, empathy, efficiency, service-scape, and promptness (Johns et al., 2004).

Safety

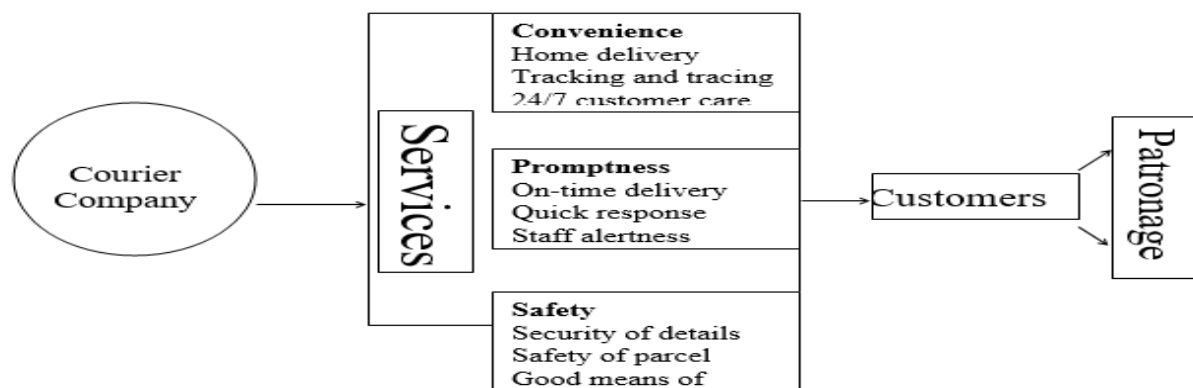
According to Park et al. (2009), safety includes information management, new facilities, cargo handling, protection, compensation plans, and damage-free delivery. It also suggests whether the package has arrived at its destination safely, in the same condition, and exactly as it was packed. Awasthi et al. (2011) conducted a study on the quality of transportation services and came to the conclusion that one of the most important factors in determining service quality is safety. Additionally, Hellings et al. (2010) concluded that, an important component of service quality is safety. According to a study that

assessed airline service quality, concerns about safety in service quality became much more important (Chou et al., 2011). According to Hofmann and Mark (2006), putting a strong emphasis on safety would have a big impact on employees' commitment to the company and job satisfaction.

Owners of businesses are becoming more and more aware of how crucial client loyalty is to maintaining long-term profitability. Loyal customers' actions, such as purchasing more goods and services, spreading good word of mouth, and paying higher prices, improve business performance. A courier company's turnover rate would be significantly impacted by its capacity to efficiently satisfy clients, particularly in light of the current economic climate brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. Businesses must figure out how to position themselves to take advantage of new opportunities and counteract potential threats if they want to compete successfully in the increasingly difficult globalized courier market.

Conceptual framework

Conceptual Service Quality-Customer Patronage Model of the study



Source: Author's conceptual model: Adapted from CouQual Scale

Empirical Review

Ejdys, and Gulc, (2020). "Trust in Courier Services and Its Antecedents as a Determinant of Future Intention to Use Courier Service and Perceived Service Quality. The purpose of this article was to investigate the connections among five constructs: the utility of courier services, their usability, their trustworthiness, their quality, and their intention to use them in the future. The subject of this study is courier services. Confidential interviews were conducted using an electronic questionnaire. In 2019, it was distributed from January to March. A total of 1073 questionnaires were returned by clients of the courier service. To confirm the theories, the authors employed generalized least squares (GLS) of structural equation modeling (GLS-SEM). The results obtained validated statistically significant correlations between the variables of service quality and future intention to use the services, service quality and trust in service, ease of use and trust in service, and usefulness and trust in service. According to the results, technology plays a significant role in the quality of courier services, and this will be the primary factor influencing how this industry develops in the future. The authors put forth a novel definition of trust in service. In addition to interpersonal trust, they provide additional insight into supplier trust, or trust in the technologies being used.

Mohamad, Bernardo, and Rhodora, (2021). "Service Quality and Student Satisfaction Using ServQual Model: An Analysis of a Saudi Arabian Private Medical College. Using the ServQual model, the study evaluated the level of satisfaction and service quality among pharmacy students at one of

Saudi Arabia's private medical schools. The study specifically aimed to ascertain the respondents' profile with respect to gender, year level, and grade point average; service quality using the SERVQUAL Model; overall student satisfaction with the college services received; and which aspects of the profile and service quality best predict the overall student satisfaction. 189 people responded to this study, which used multiple regression analysis and descriptive statistics to analyze the data. According to the findings, women with above-average GPAs from levels 2, 3, and 4 made up the majority of responders. The cited service quality dimensions of responsiveness, empathy, and tangibility showed a negative gap, indicating that the perceived services did not match the expected services. In the meantime, students expressed satisfaction with the college services when overall satisfaction was measured. While GPA was found to be a negative predictor of student satisfaction with faculty, year level was a predictor of all student satisfaction metrics. The best predictors of students' faculty satisfaction were tangibility, assurance, and responsiveness. On the other hand, students' satisfaction with the curriculum was predicted by assurance. Conversely, assurance, responsiveness, and responsibility were predictors of students' satisfaction with the facilities and services provided to them. Lastly, responsiveness, assurance, and tangibility were found to predict overall student satisfaction.

Mahphoth, and Koe (2018). "An empirical study of service quality and customer satisfaction of Malaysian air passenger". The goal of this study was to ascertain how Malaysian airline passengers' customer

satisfaction and service quality (SERVQUAL) relate to one another. Passengers' opinions of airline service quality were measured using an adopted SERVQUAL instrument that included five service quality constructs: empathy, tangibles, responsiveness, reliability, and assurance. A convenience sample of 187 respondents was used to gather data. Multiple regression analysis's findings demonstrated that customer satisfaction is significantly positively impacted by assurance, responsiveness, and dependability. However, there was no discernible correlation between customer satisfaction and tangible variables or empathy.

Methodology

In the study, a descriptive design was employed. "Making descriptions of the phenomena or the characteristics associated with a subject population: who, what, when, where, and how of a topic" is the purpose of descriptive studies. Additionally, it determines the percentage of the population that possesses particular traits and the opinions of those who responded. This is due to the fact that the study's objective was to sample respondents' opinions regarding their use of EMS, UPS, and DHL in Calabar, Cross River State. All of the clients of these particular courier services in Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria, made up the study's population. The sample size of this research was established using the Topman formula. The formula is adopted when the population of the study cannot be ascertained. The sample size (n) is therefore, 340. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that was used for this investigation. Only clients who used EMS Nigeria's Calabar

location when the data were collated for this research. The fundamental tool for gathering data from the respondents was a questionnaire. There were three parts to the instrument. The company name and the customer's gender are included in Section A of the instrument labeled "classification data." The instrument created by the researcher and titled "Service quality questionnaire" is located in Section B. With three items for each of the three independent variable variations, it assesses service quality in terms of convenience, promptness, and safety.

In contrast, section C is a structured tool with three items called the patronage questionnaire. The researcher employed a modified five-point Likert scale, with Strongly Agree being at number five, Agree being at number four, Undecided being at number three, Disagree being at number two, and strongly disagreeing being at number one for all positively worded items. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 was utilized for analysis of data using descriptive and inferential statistics. Multiple regressions were used to answer the hypothesis, and descriptive statistics utilizing mean (x) standard deviation (SD) were applied to the collected data in order to address the questions of this research.

Presentation and analysis of data

A total of 340 questionnaires were given to respondents, but 318 of them were correctly completed and sent back. resulting in a 93.5 percent response rate.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by gender

Gender	Male	Female
	174	144
	(54.7%)	(45.3%)

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 1 above shows respondents' gender. 174 respondents (54.7 percent) were male while 144 respondents (45.3 percent) were Female.

Table 2: Distribution of responses on convenience

	SA	A	U	D	SD
Delivering firms do home delivery of parcel	88	126	17	46	41
	(27.7%)	(39.6%)	(5.3%)	(14.5%)	(12.5%)
Their customer care is open 24/7	90	122	52	42	12
	(28.3%)	(38.4%)	(16.4%)	(13.2%)	(3.8%)
Delivering firms provide tracking and tracing	97	130	19	47	25
Device	(30.5%)	(40.9%)	(6.0%)	(14.8%)	(7.9%)

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 2 above shows responses on convenience. 88 respondents (22.7 percent) strongly agreed that EMS do home delivery of parcel; 126 respondents (31.5 percent) strongly disagreed, 46 respondents (11.5 percent) disagreed, and 17 respondents (4.3 percent) were unsure. 90 respondents (22.5 percent) strongly agreed, 122 respondents (30.5 percent) agreed, 52 respondents (13.0 percent) were unsure, 42 respondents (10.5 percent) disagreed, and 12

respondents (3.0 percent) strongly disagreed with the statement that their customer service is available around-the-clock, according to the table. Additionally, Table 2 reveals that 97 respondents (24.3 percent) strongly agreed that EMS should provide tracking and tracing devices, while 130 respondents (32.5 percent) agreed, 19 respondents (4.8 percent) were unsure, 47 respondents (11.8 percent) disagreed, and 25 respondents (6.3 percent) strongly disagreed.

Table 3: Responses on promptness

	SA	A	U	D	SD
EMS deliver parcel on time	94	152	15	33	24
	(29.6%)	(47.8%)	(4.7%)	(10.4%)	(7.5%)

They respond quickly to complaints	110	157	20	19	12
	(34.6%)	(49.4%)	(6.3%)	(6.0%)	(3.8%)
Their staff are agile and polite	96	142	21	34	25
	(30.2%)	(44.7%)	(6.6%)	(10.7%)	(7.9%)

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 3 above shows responses on promptness. 94 respondents (29.6 percent) strongly agreed that delivering firms deliver parcel on time; 152 respondents (47.8 percent) agreed; 15 respondents (4.7 percent) remained undecided, 33 respondents (10.4percent) disagreed, while 24 (7.5%) of the respondents strongly disagreed. Additionally, the table reveals that 110 respondents (34.6%) strongly agreed, 157 respondents (34.6%) agreed, 20

respondents (6.3%) were unsure, 19 respondents (6.0%) disagreed, and 12 respondents (3.8%) strongly disagreed that they respond promptly to complaints. Table 3 also reveals that 24 respondents (7.9 percent) strongly disagreed, 34 respondents (10.7 percent) disagreed, 21 respondents (6.6 percent) were unsure, and 96 respondents (30.2 percent) strongly agreed that their staff are courteous and agile.

Table 4: Responses to safety

	SA	A	U	D	SD
Delivering firms ensure parcels are delivered in good condition	102	92	38	60	26
	(32.1%)	(28.9%)	(11.9%)	(18.9%)	(8.2%)
They ensure customers details are well Secured	101	151	27	13	17
	(34.6%)	(47.5%)	(8.5%)	(4.1%)	(5.3%)
Their dispatch vehicles can secure parcels from being damaged.	94	159	18	23	24
	(30.2%)	(44.7%)	(6.6%)	(10.7%)	(7.5%)

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 4 above shows responses on safety. 102 respondents (32.1 percent) strongly agreed that delivering firms ensure parcels are delivered in good condition; 92 respondents (28.9 percent) agreed; 38 respondents (11.9

percent) remained undecided, 60 respondents (18.9percent) disagreed; and 26 respondents (8.2 percent) strongly disagreed. The table also shows that 101 respondents (34.6 percent) strongly agreed that they ensure

customer's details are well secured; 151 respondents (47.5 percent) agreed; 27 respondents (8.5 percent) remained undecided, 13 respondents (4.1%) disagreed and 17 respondents (5.3 percent) strongly disagreed. Table 4 further shows that 94 respondents (30.2 percent) strongly agreed

that their dispatch vehicles can secure parcels from being damaged; 159 respondents surveyed, 44.7 percent agreed, 18 (6.6 percent) were still unsure, 23 (10.7 percent) disagreed, and 24 (7.5 percent) strongly disagreed.

Table 5: Responses to patronage

	SA	A	U	D	SD
I do business with delivering firms because it is less stressful	116	128	40	34	0
	(36.5%)	(40.3%)	(12.6%)	(10.7%)	(0%)
I use delivering firms often because of their timely service delivery	100	124	21	47	26
	(31.4%)	(39.0%)	(6.6%)	(14.8%)	(8.2%)
I do business with delivering firms because they are reliable	92	150	17	35	24
	(28.9%)	(47.2%)	(5.3%)	(11.0%)	(7.5%)

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 5 above shows responses on safety. 116 respondents (36.5 percent) strongly agreed that I they do business with EMS because it is less stressful; 128 respondents (40.3 percent) agreed; 40 respondents (12.6 percent) remained undecided, 34 respondents (10.7percent) disagreed; and 0 respondents (0 percent) strongly disagreed. The table also shows that 100 respondents (31.4 percent) strongly agreed that they use delivering firms often because of their timely service delivery; 124 respondents

(39.0 percent) agreed; 21 respondents (6.6 percent) remained undecided, 47 respondents (14.8%) disagreed and 26 respondents (8.2 percent) strongly disagreed. Table 5 further shows that 92 respondents (28.9percent) strongly agreed that they do business with delivering firms because they are reliable; There were 150 respondents (47.2%) who agreed, 17 (5.3%) who were still unsure, 35 (11.0%) who disagreed, and 24 (7.5%) who strongly disagreed.

Test of Hypotheses

Table 6: Model Summary showing the influence of convenience, promptness and safety on customer patronage of courier services

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.545 ^a	.297	.290	1.91561
a. Predictors: (Constant), Convenience, Promptness, Safety,				

Table 7: ANOVA showing the influence of convenience, promptness and safety on customer patronage of courier services

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	487.106	3	162.369	44.248	.000 ^b
1	Residual	1152.240	314	3.670		
	Total	1639.346	317			

- Dependent Variable: Patronage
- Predictors: (Constant), Convenience, Promptness, Safety

Table 8: Coefficients showing the influence of convenience, promptness and safety on customer patronage of courier services

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	2.552	.433	5.891	.000
	Convenience	.309	.048	.346	.000
1					
	Promptness	.353	.056	.334	.000
	Safety	-.079	.058	-.072	.170

a. Dependent Variable: Patronage

Interpretation of results

The purpose of the aforementioned multiple regression analysis was to ascertain how customer preference for courier services was impacted by convenience, promptness, and safety. The statistics and analysis findings from tables 7 and 8 are summarized in table 6 above. The model summary produced an R of .545, and an R-square = .297. This implies that the independent variables (convenience and promptness) have .297 (30%) influence on the dependent variable while the contribution of (safety) to the overall model remains insignificant. This influence is further

explained by convenience (.346, $P: 000 < .05$), promptness (.334, $P: 000 < .05$) while safety (-.072, $P: 000 > .05$). Based on the above result, the overall prediction of the independent variables (convenience and promptness) on the dependent variable (patronage) is statistically significant. While the independent variable (safety) on customer patronage of courier services remains insignificant. Thus, the null hypotheses for hypotheses one and two are rejected while that of hypothesis three is accepted. Hence, convenience and promptness have a significant influence on customer patronage of courier services.

Discussion of findings

Convenience significantly affects customer patronage of the chosen courier services company in Calabar, Cross River State, according to the hypothesis test results. The findings are consistent with their findings from Michael's (2018) study, "An assessment of service quality of logistics services providers in Ghana." The purpose of the study was to evaluate the level of service provided by courier services and logistics service providers in Ghana's Kumasi city. The study made use of a cross-sectional descriptive survey. Customers of the chosen courier service providers were the study's target population. A stratified sampling technique and a sample size of 120 were employed in the study. Customers were generally satisfied with all five aspects of service quality, according to the study. In particular, the following is how respondents assessed their level of satisfaction: Assurance: Reliability, responsiveness, empathy, and tangibleness.

Second, the hypothesis test's outcome shows that customer loyalty to the chosen courier service provider in Calabar, Cross River State, is significantly impacted by promptness. The result of the findings is in line with that of Zhou, et al, (2016) carried out "on express delivery service quality evaluation system based on customer perception in China". The study created the assessment indices and assessed the quality of express delivery from the standpoint of customer perception. Create a system for evaluating services based on the six dimensions of the courier express industry—character, function, safety, economy, aging, and speed—are used to set up indicators that are crucial for enhancing

the quality of services provided by express delivery companies and enhancing customer satisfaction. Lastly, the hypothesis test shows that safety has no discernible impact on the chosen courier services provider's clientele in Calabar, Cross River State. The result of the finding is a surprise because Zhou, et al, (2016) carried out a study on express delivery service quality evaluation system based on customer perception in China. The study created the assessment indices and assessed the quality of express delivery from the standpoint of customer perception. Create a system for evaluating services based on the features of the courier express sector. They establish metrics in six areas: character, function, safety, economy, aging, and speed. These factors are crucial for enhancing the quality of services provided by express delivery services and attracting new customers.

Conclusion

The findings of this research on service quality and customer patronage of courier services in Calabar, Cross River State, make it abundantly clear that most people prefer to do business with EMS because of the updated and high-quality services offered by EMS, UPS, and DHL, which other courier companies have yet to adopt. Therefore, it is imperative that courier service providers view service quality improvement as an ongoing endeavor and never give up on their efforts to be more proactive in providing quality courier services in order to ensure maximum satisfaction of customers' demands. Most consumers prefer convenience and promptness of services because of the current pandemic, which has led to partial lockdowns and restrictions on moving. For this reason,

EMS courier company guarantees home delivery of packages, prompt resolution of complaints, tracking and tracing of packages even while at home, and other services. The study's findings led to the following deductions being made: Customer preference for courier services in Calabar, Cross River State, is influenced by convenience; promptness also has an impact on customer preference for courier services in Calabar, Cross River State; safety has no effect.

Recommendations

The study's conclusions and findings led to the following recommendations being made:

- 1) According to the country's economic situation, people are encouraged to stay at home and avoid crowds because courier services should use technology that allows for parcel tracking and tracing (T&C) and ensures on-time delivery as well as home delivery service.
- 2) To teach clients how to use their mobile devices to place orders and track their packages even while they are in transit, courier services providers ought to set up a workshop and develop a platform. This is due to the clear impact that training and awareness of this kind will have on courier service usage, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 3) Companies that provide courier services should also make an effort to adequately train their employees, particularly in the area of customer relations. The reason for this is that poor contact performance would undoubtedly make the customer's delivery experience worse and possibly

make contradictions for other service flaws worse. On the other hand, a positive interaction helps to resolve customer complaints and is anticipated to raise the levels of services satisfaction and quality.

- 4) To properly handle customers' complaints, courier services companies should establish a round-the-clock customer care platform and implement the required procedures to guarantee prompt customer complaint resolution.

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