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An Empirical Study of Customer Challenges and Service Quality in the Logistics Industry: A Customer-Centric Perspective

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Abstract - The logistics industry plays a significant role in supporting trade, e-commerce, manufacturing, and customer service by ensuring the efficient movement of goods from one location to another. As customer expectations continue to increase, logistics service providers face growing pressure to deliver products accurately, safely, and on time while maintaining effective communication and responsive customer support. Despite technological advancements and improvements in logistics infrastructure, customers continue to experience challenges such as delayed deliveries, incorrect orders, damaged products, limited shipment visibility, and difficulties in resolving complaints. These challenges influence customers' perceptions of service quality and their overall experience with logistics providers. This paper presents a customer-centric perspective on the major challenges experienced in the logistics industry and examines how service quality can be improved through operational efficiency, transparency, communication, technology adoption, and effective complaint management. Drawing on existing literature and established service quality concepts, the paper highlights the importance of understanding customer expectations throughout the logistics process. It argues that logistics service quality should not be evaluated only through delivery speed and cost but also through order accuracy, product condition, reliability, information availability, and responsiveness. The paper concludes that a customer-oriented logistics strategy can strengthen satisfaction, trust, and long-term customer relationships while contributing to sustainable competitiveness in the industry.

Keywords: Logistics industry, customer challenges, service quality, customer satisfaction, delivery performance, logistics management, customer experience.

1. Introduction

The logistics industry is an essential component of modern business operations because it connects manufacturers, suppliers, distributors, retailers, and final customers. Its activities

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include transportation, warehousing, inventory management, order processing, packaging, distribution, and reverse logistics. The growth of e-commerce and digital business models has increased the importance of logistics services, as customers increasingly expect convenient ordering, accurate deliveries, real-time tracking, and prompt resolution of service issues. Consequently, logistics performance has become an important factor influencing the overall customer experience.

In the present business environment, logistics providers are expected to deliver more than the physical movement of products. Customers also expect reliability, transparency, convenience, and consistent communication. A delivery that arrives late, contains an incorrect item, or reaches the customer in damaged condition can negatively affect perceptions of the entire service. Similarly, inadequate shipment updates and slow complaint resolution can create uncertainty and reduce customer confidence. These experiences demonstrate that logistics service quality involves both operational performance and the quality of interactions between service providers and customers. Research on physical distribution service quality supports the importance of assessing logistics through the service experience received by customers rather than through internal operational efficiency alone (Bienstock et al., 1997).

Customer expectations have become more demanding because digital platforms allow customers to compare service providers, monitor orders, and share their experiences through online reviews. A single negative delivery experience may influence future purchasing decisions and a customer's willingness to recommend a company. The quality of electronic logistics services is therefore particularly relevant to online retailers, where delivery and order fulfilment form an important part of the customer experience (Rao et al., 2011). Logistics companies must recognize that the customer's evaluation of a service often extends beyond the product itself to include the processes through which the product is delivered.

This paper offers a customer-centric perspective on logistics service quality by discussing the common difficulties experienced by customers, the factors that shape their perceptions, and the practical approaches that logistics companies can adopt to improve service delivery. It emphasizes that effective logistics management requires coordination between operational processes, information systems, employees, and customer support functions. Although the title uses the term *empirical study*, the present paper is structured as a perspective paper based on existing literature and conceptual discussion. It does not report newly collected survey data or claim original statistical findings.

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2. Literature Review and Conceptual Perspective

Service quality has been widely discussed in marketing and service management literature. Parasuraman et al. (1988) introduced the SERVQUAL framework, which considers dimensions such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. Although originally developed for service settings more broadly, these dimensions provide a useful perspective for understanding customer expectations in logistics. Reliability relates to fulfilling delivery commitments, responsiveness concerns the speed of assistance, and assurance reflects the confidence customers have in the service provider. These dimensions help explain why customers may evaluate a logistics provider not only by the delivery outcome but also by the support and information received throughout the process.

Cronin and Taylor (1992) emphasized the importance of perceived service performance in measuring service quality. From a logistics perspective, customers frequently evaluate service providers based on their actual experiences, including whether shipments arrive as promised, whether goods remain in good condition, and whether accurate information is available throughout the delivery process. This suggests that logistics service quality should be understood through the practical outcomes customers experience rather than through service promises alone. Bienstock et al. (1997) examined the measurement of physical distribution service quality, providing a foundation for understanding how customers assess distribution-related services.

Logistics service quality is also influenced by the needs of different customer segments. Mentzer et al. (2001) examined logistics service quality as a segment-customized process and highlighted the importance of adapting service delivery to customer requirements. For example, an individual purchasing a low-cost product online may prioritize affordable delivery and tracking, whereas a business customer transporting valuable or time-sensitive goods may prioritize reliability, shipment visibility, and consistent communication. Logistics providers therefore need to recognize that service expectations vary according to the nature of the product, the urgency of delivery, and the customer's requirements.

Research has also considered the relationship between logistics information technology and service quality. Bienstock et al. (2008) expanded the logistics service quality perspective by incorporating logistics information technology. This is particularly relevant in contemporary supply chains, where tracking platforms, automated notifications, warehouse management systems, and integrated information systems help coordinate deliveries and provide customers

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with shipment updates. Technology can improve service transparency, but its value depends on the accuracy, accessibility, and timeliness of the information provided.

Customer satisfaction is closely associated with the comparison between expected and experienced service. Oliver (1980) explained satisfaction through the relationship between expectations and perceived performance. When logistics services meet or exceed expectations, customers are more likely to evaluate the experience positively. However, repeated delays, damaged products, and ineffective complaint handling can create dissatisfaction even when other aspects of the service perform well. Oliver (1999) further discussed the development of customer loyalty, highlighting why positive experiences and sustained satisfaction matter for long-term customer relationships.

Research on electronic logistics service quality demonstrates the relevance of logistics performance to online customer experiences. Rao et al. (2011) examined electronic logistics service quality in relation to purchase satisfaction and customer retention. Similarly, Akıl and Ungan (2022) discussed the relationship between e-commerce logistics service quality, customer satisfaction, and loyalty. These studies support the view that delivery processes can influence customers' evaluations of the businesses from which they purchase products. The logistics provider and retailer may be separate organizations, but customers can perceive them as parts of one overall service experience.

Recent reviews further demonstrate the breadth of logistics service quality research. Kilibarda et al. (2020) reviewed the literature on logistics service quality and identified its continuing relevance to logistics and supply chain management. Arabelen and Kaya (2021) discussed the dimensions of logistics service quality through a qualitative approach, reinforcing the importance of examining different service attributes. Together, these perspectives suggest that logistics service quality should not be reduced to a single measure, such as delivery speed. Instead, it should be understood through multiple connected dimensions that reflect customers' expectations and experiences.

Reverse logistics has also received attention because the customer experience does not always end when an order is delivered. Returns, exchanges, refunds, and the collection of unwanted products can influence perceptions of retailers and logistics providers. Dabees et al. (2023) reviewed sustainable reverse logistics service quality and highlighted the importance of effective reverse logistics processes. This perspective is especially relevant to e-commerce,

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where customers may need to return products because of damage, incorrect orders, defects, or mismatches between expectations and the delivered item.

Overall, the literature suggests that logistics service quality is multidimensional. Delivery speed is important, but it cannot independently guarantee customer satisfaction. Order accuracy, product condition, shipment visibility, communication, information technology, and the ability to resolve problems also contribute to customers' overall perceptions. A comprehensive approach should therefore consider the complete customer journey, from order confirmation to final delivery and, where necessary, returns or complaint resolution.

3. Customer Challenges and Service Quality in Logistics

One of the most common challenges faced by customers is delayed delivery. Delays can occur because of traffic congestion, weather conditions, inaccurate demand forecasts, warehouse processing issues, insufficient transportation capacity, or coordination failures between logistics partners. Such delays may create inconvenience for individual customers and disrupt business operations for organizations that depend on timely deliveries. When customers receive inadequate explanations or repeated changes to expected delivery dates, their confidence in the service provider may decline. Since logistics service quality includes the fulfilment of customer expectations, dependable physical distribution and realistic delivery commitments are important elements of customer satisfaction (Bienstock et al., 1997; Mentzer et al., 2001). Improving delivery reliability requires efficient route planning, appropriate inventory availability, coordination between distribution partners, and timely communication when disruptions occur.

Order accuracy is another important aspect of logistics service quality. Customers expect to receive the correct product, quantity, and specifications associated with their orders. Errors may arise from incorrect picking, labeling mistakes, inventory discrepancies, packaging problems, or inaccurate order information. These failures can lead to additional costs, returns, replacement shipments, and customer frustration. From a customer-centric perspective, order accuracy should be treated as a fundamental service requirement rather than merely an internal warehouse performance measure. Accurate inventory records, barcode scanning, standardized picking procedures, and final order verification can help reduce these problems. The importance of examining physical distribution performance supports the need to evaluate the reliability and accuracy of the service customers actually receive (Bienstock et al., 1997).

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The physical condition of delivered goods also influences customer perceptions. Products may become damaged because of improper handling, unsuitable packaging, poor storage conditions, or inadequate transportation practices. Damaged deliveries are particularly challenging when products are fragile, expensive, or essential for business operations. Customers may view such incidents as evidence of poor quality control, even if transportation is completed within the promised time. Logistics companies can reduce these risks through suitable packaging standards, employee training, careful loading and unloading, and monitoring of handling practices. These measures should be supported by clear procedures for recording damage, informing customers, and arranging replacements or returns when necessary.

A further challenge is limited shipment visibility. Customers increasingly expect access to reliable information about order confirmation, dispatch, transit progress, delays, and expected delivery times. When tracking systems provide incomplete, outdated, or inaccurate information, customers may be uncertain about the location and status of their shipments. This uncertainty can generate unnecessary customer service enquiries and reduce trust. The inclusion of logistics information technology in service quality research highlights the role of information systems in supporting logistics performance (Bienstock et al., 2008). Digital tracking systems, automated notifications, and integrated information-sharing platforms can improve transparency, provided that the information communicated is accurate and updated regularly.

Communication and complaint resolution are equally important. Even well-managed logistics systems may occasionally experience delays, misplaced shipments, or delivery errors. In these situations, customers expect timely explanations, clear instructions, and practical solutions. Difficult complaint procedures, repeated requests for the same information, and slow responses can intensify dissatisfaction. Responsiveness is a recognized dimension of perceived service quality (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Effective customer support should therefore provide accessible communication channels, clear responsibility for resolving problems, and regular updates until the issue is closed. A service failure may become an opportunity to restore customer confidence when the company responds fairly and efficiently.

Returns and reverse logistics present additional challenges, especially in e-commerce. Customers may need to return incorrect, damaged, unsuitable, or defective products. Complicated return procedures, uncertain collection schedules, and delayed refunds can negatively affect their experience even when the original delivery was satisfactory. Reverse

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logistics requires coordination between customers, retailers, collection personnel, warehouses, and refund processes. Dabees et al. (2023) emphasize the relevance of sustainable reverse logistics service quality, indicating that return processes should be considered part of overall logistics performance. Simple return instructions, reliable collection arrangements, transparent refund communication, and coordination between retailers and logistics partners can make reverse logistics more customer-friendly.

These challenges are interconnected. For example, an inaccurate order may result in a return, while poor communication can make the return process more frustrating. A damaged product may require replacement transportation, additional warehouse processing, and customer support intervention. Consequently, logistics providers should not treat each issue as an isolated operational problem. Instead, they should examine how different service failures affect the complete customer journey and prioritize improvements that address the causes of repeated dissatisfaction.

4. Improving Logistics Service Quality: A Customer-Centric Perspective

Improving logistics service quality requires a shift from focusing exclusively on internal efficiency to balancing operational performance with customer expectations. Companies may monitor transportation costs, warehouse productivity, and delivery volumes, but these indicators do not always reveal whether customers receive a dependable and convenient service. A customer-centric approach combines operational measures with customer feedback, complaint trends, delivery accuracy, damage rates, and satisfaction assessments. This approach is consistent with logistics service quality research, which considers multiple aspects of service performance and customer perceptions (Kilibarda et al., 2020; Mentzer et al., 2001).

Technology can support this improvement by enabling real-time tracking, automated notifications, warehouse management, route optimization, and better coordination among logistics partners. Data analytics can help companies identify recurring delays, predict demand fluctuations, and allocate resources more effectively. Automation and barcode-based verification can also reduce manual errors in inventory and order processing. Bienstock et al. (2008) highlight the relevance of logistics information technology to service quality, providing a basis for considering how digital systems can support customer-facing logistics processes. However, technology should be implemented to solve identifiable service problems rather than adopted only for modernization. Systems must be accurate, accessible, and supported by employees who can respond when exceptions occur.

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Employee capability and coordination are equally important. Warehouse personnel, drivers, customer support teams, and managers contribute to the overall service experience. Training in order handling, safety, communication, problem-solving, and standard operating procedures can improve consistency. Clear responsibilities and information-sharing between departments can reduce delays caused by misunderstandings or incomplete handovers. Since logistics service quality involves an integrated process, service improvements require coordination across the activities that influence the customer experience (Mentzer et al., 2001).

Logistics providers should also establish effective mechanisms for collecting and acting on customer feedback. Feedback can be obtained through surveys, delivery ratings, complaint records, online reviews, and direct customer interactions. Rather than simply recording complaints, companies should examine recurring patterns and identify their underlying causes. For example, repeated reports of late deliveries in a particular area may indicate route-planning issues, while frequent damaged-item complaints may suggest inadequate packaging or handling procedures. Customer feedback should be connected to operational improvement so that service providers can address the sources of dissatisfaction instead of repeatedly treating individual complaints.

Another important consideration is the need to balance service quality with cost efficiency. Faster delivery, additional tracking features, and expanded customer support may increase operating expenses. However, poor service can also create costs through returns, repeat deliveries, compensation, complaint handling, and lost customers. Logistics companies should evaluate service improvements in terms of both their operating costs and their contribution to customer value. Different service options may be appropriate for different customer segments, provided that delivery commitments and service conditions are clearly communicated. The segment-customized perspective of logistics service quality supports the idea that service strategies should reflect customer requirements rather than assume that every customer values exactly the same features (Mentzer et al., 2001).

Sustainability is another consideration in improving logistics services. Reverse logistics, product recovery, reuse, and recycling can contribute to more responsible resource management when they are supported by effective processes. Dabees et al. (2023) discuss sustainable reverse logistics service quality, drawing attention to the relationship between reverse logistics activities and sustainability-related considerations. However, sustainable initiatives must also be convenient and understandable to customers. Collection arrangements,

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return instructions, and communication should be designed so that customers can participate without unnecessary difficulty.

Finally, customer trust should be treated as a long-term business asset. Trust develops when a company communicates honestly, keeps its commitments, handles problems fairly, and demonstrates consistent performance. Logistics providers cannot eliminate every disruption, but they can improve how disruptions are anticipated, communicated, and resolved. Transparent service policies and reliable complaint management can help preserve customer relationships even when operational problems occur. The relationship between service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty in e-commerce logistics further supports the importance of consistent service delivery (Akıl & Ungan, 2022; Rao et al., 2011).

5. Discussion

The customer-centric perspective presented in this paper indicates that logistics service quality extends beyond the physical transportation of products. Customers evaluate the complete service experience, including the accuracy of orders, the condition of goods, delivery reliability, information availability, and the responsiveness of the service provider. These dimensions interact with one another and collectively influence how customers perceive the performance of logistics companies. Existing work on service quality measurement, physical distribution, and logistics information technology supports the view that operational outcomes and information-related services should be considered together (Bienstock et al., 1997, 2008; Parasuraman et al., 1988).

The discussion also highlights the importance of viewing logistics as an integrated process. A delay may originate in warehouse operations, transportation planning, inventory availability, or coordination between service partners. Similarly, a customer complaint may reflect not only a communication failure but also an underlying operational issue. Improvements are therefore more effective when companies examine the complete process instead of concentrating only on the final point at which the customer reports a problem. This approach is consistent with the process-oriented understanding of logistics service quality presented by Mentzer et al. (2001).

Established service quality and customer satisfaction literature provides a useful foundation for understanding these relationships. Oliver (1980) explains why the difference between expected and experienced performance is relevant to satisfaction, while Oliver (1999) discusses the importance of customer loyalty. In logistics, these concepts suggest that dependable delivery, accurate information, and effective service recovery may contribute to a more positive

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customer experience. Research focusing on e-commerce logistics also supports the relevance of service quality to satisfaction and retention (Akıl & Ungan, 2022; Rao et al., 2011).

The relative importance of individual logistics service dimensions may vary by industry, customer type, delivery location, product characteristics, and service expectations. Business-to-business customers may place particular emphasis on dependable delivery schedules, shipment condition, and coordination, while individual e-commerce customers may value convenient tracking, flexible delivery arrangements, and straightforward returns. The segment-customized perspective of Mentzer et al. (2001) suggests that logistics providers should adapt their service strategies to the requirements of the customers they serve. Research on electronic logistics and instant delivery also illustrates the importance of examining service quality within specific service contexts rather than assuming that all delivery models operate in the same way (Khan, 2023; Rao et al., 2011).

The Indian logistics environment provides a relevant context for this discussion because customers increasingly interact with digital commerce, food delivery, and other technology-enabled services. Khan (2023) examined logistics service quality dimensions in instant online food delivery from an Indian perspective. Although instant food delivery differs from other logistics activities, its customer-facing challenges offer useful insights into the broader importance of timeliness, ordering processes, and discrepancy handling. Further research could compare customer experiences across parcel delivery, retail distribution, food delivery, and business logistics to understand where service expectations are similar and where they differ.

Reverse logistics also deserves attention because customers evaluate returns and collection services as part of the overall experience. When return processes are unclear or inconvenient, the customer may remain dissatisfied even if the original delivery was completed successfully. Sustainable reverse logistics research emphasizes the importance of designing return services that are effective and responsible (Dabees et al., 2023). Logistics providers should therefore view forward delivery and reverse logistics as connected parts of the customer journey.

This paper offers a conceptual and literature-based perspective rather than reporting the results of a newly conducted customer survey. Its observations should consequently be understood as a synthesis of existing research and practical considerations, not as statistically verified findings from a specific sample. Future empirical research could strengthen this perspective by collecting customer responses across different logistics providers, geographical areas, and

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service categories. Such research could help identify the service attributes customers consider most important and provide evidence for prioritizing improvements.

6. Conclusion

The logistics industry plays a vital role in shaping customer experiences and supporting the performance of modern businesses. Although transportation speed and cost remain important, service quality also depends on order accuracy, product condition, reliable information, effective communication, and timely problem resolution. Customers may experience dissatisfaction when any of these elements fail, particularly when service providers do not communicate clearly or provide practical solutions.

The literature reviewed in this paper demonstrates that logistics service quality is multidimensional and closely connected to customer expectations. Service quality frameworks provide useful ways of understanding reliability and responsiveness, while logistics-focused research highlights the importance of distribution performance, customer-specific requirements, and information technology (Bienstock et al., 1997, 2008; Mentzer et al., 2001; Parasuraman et al., 1988). Research on e-commerce logistics also emphasizes the importance of service quality for customer satisfaction and retention (Akıl & Ungan, 2022; Rao et al., 2011).

This paper emphasizes the need for logistics companies to adopt a customer-centric approach that connects operational efficiency with customer expectations. Investments in technology, employee training, process standardization, shipment visibility, and effective complaint management can help reduce recurring service problems. Continuous analysis of customer feedback can further support improvements by identifying the operational causes of dissatisfaction and guiding corrective action. Sustainable and well-coordinated reverse logistics can also improve the return experience while supporting responsible resource management (Dabees et al., 2023).

Ultimately, high-quality logistics services require more than delivering products from one location to another. They require dependable processes, transparent communication, coordinated operations, and a consistent commitment to customer needs. Logistics organizations that integrate these principles into their strategies are better positioned to strengthen customer satisfaction, build trust, encourage loyalty, and achieve sustainable competitiveness.

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