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### GROWTH AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN PROFESSIONAL COURIER SERVICES: A STUDY IN TIRUNELVELI

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**Abstract:** Courier services have become an indispensable component of modern economies, offering speed, reliability, and efficiency in the delivery of goods and documents. This study investigates the growth of courier services in India with a specific focus on Professional Courier services in Tirunelveli. Using descriptive research design and primary data collected from 80 respondents, the study examines demographic factors, customer opinions, frequency of usage, and the association between occupation and courier usage. The findings highlight the importance of service quality, technology adoption, and customer satisfaction in sustaining growth. Suggestions are offered to enhance operational efficiency, diversify services, and strengthen customer loyalty.

**Keywords** Courier services, consumer behaviour, service quality, Tirunelveli, Professional Couriers, customer satisfaction, technology adoption, logistics, etc.,

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## Introduction

Communication has always been the backbone of business operations, and in today's interconnected world, its importance has only multiplied. Effective communication ensures that information flows seamlessly between individuals, organizations, and across borders, thereby enabling efficiency, trust, and growth. Alvin Dodd, former president of the American Management Association, once emphasized that the foremost challenge in management is communication, a statement that continues to resonate in the modern business environment. Studies such as those by Mintzberg (1973) have shown that managers spend more than three-quarters of their time engaged in communication, highlighting its centrality to organizational success.

Courier services emerged as a specialized form of communication, bridging the gap between traditional postal systems and the growing demand for speed, reliability, and security in the delivery of documents and parcels. Customers, eager for prompt and safe delivery, were willing to pay a premium for services that guaranteed timeliness and accountability. The Oxford Dictionary defines a courier as an organization that provides special delivery for parcels and documents, a definition that underscores the professionalized and service-oriented nature of this industry.

Globalization has further accelerated the growth of courier services. With reduced trade barriers, improved infrastructure, and the expansion of airlines, courier companies have become vital facilitators of international commerce. In India, the courier industry has witnessed remarkable growth, driven by economic liberalization, technological advancements, and the expansion of industrial and service sectors. Initially concentrated in metropolitan cities due to better connectivity with airports and ports, courier services have now penetrated smaller towns and rural areas, reflecting the increasing demand for efficient logistics across diverse geographies. Companies such as DHL, Blue Dart, and First Flight have established themselves as major players, with DHL gaining a significant edge through its acquisition of Blue Dart. The evolution of courier services is not merely about logistics; it is about enabling communication, supporting commerce, and meeting the diverse needs of customers. In this context, Professional Couriers in Tirunelveli provide an ideal case study to understand customer behavior, service quality, and the challenges of operating in a competitive and dynamic environment.

## Review of Literature

The courier industry has been the subject of extensive research, with scholars examining various dimensions such as customer satisfaction, service quality, technology adoption, environmental sustainability, and competitive strategies. These studies provide valuable insights into the factors that shape customer perceptions and determine the success of courier companies.

Customer satisfaction has consistently emerged as a critical determinant of success. Kumar and Manohar (2022) found that timeliness of delivery, condition of packages, and professionalism of staff were the most influential factors driving satisfaction. Their findings highlight that customers value reliability and care in service delivery, which directly impacts loyalty and repeat usage. Complementing this, Kumar and Prabakaran (2022) emphasized the role of service quality in building customer loyalty, suggesting that companies must continuously improve responsiveness, reliability, and empathy to retain customers in a competitive market.

Technology adoption has been identified as a transformative force in the industry. Sudhakar and Ganesh (2022) demonstrated that innovations such as GPS tracking, online booking systems, and mobile applications significantly enhance operational efficiency and customer satisfaction. These tools not only improve transparency but also empower customers to monitor their deliveries in real time, thereby strengthening trust. Environmental sustainability has also become a pressing concern. Kumar and Prabakaran (2022) argued that courier companies must adopt eco-friendly practices such as electric vehicles and optimized delivery routes to reduce carbon emissions. As the industry is heavily dependent on transportation, sustainability initiatives are essential for long-term viability and corporate responsibility.

The competitive landscape of courier services has been analyzed by Jain and Jain (2022), who identified brand image, network coverage, reliability, and customer service as key sources of competitive advantage. Their study underscores the importance of differentiation strategies in an industry where multiple players vie for market share. Similarly, Karthick and Vinodh (2022) highlighted challenges such as rising fuel costs, intense competition, and the need for continuous technological upgrades, recommending diversification and innovation as pathways to resilience. Other studies have explored specialized aspects such as last-mile delivery, cross-border logistics, and employee satisfaction. Su et al. (2022) noted that last-mile delivery has become increasingly critical with the rise of e-commerce and same-day delivery expectations, urging companies to invest in infrastructure and technology. Li and Li (2022) examined cross-border delivery challenges, pointing to regulatory complexities and cultural differences, while Kumar and Prabakaran (2022) linked employee satisfaction directly to service quality, advocating for training and incentive programs.

Collectively, the literature reveals that the success of courier services depends on a multidimensional approach that integrates customer focus, technological innovation, sustainability, and competitive strategy. These insights provide a strong foundation for analyzing the operations of Professional Couriers in Tirunelveli and identifying opportunities for growth and improvement.

### **Scope of the Study**

The study focuses on Professional Courier services in Tirunelveli, analyzing customer needs, preferences, and operational processes. It explores diversification opportunities such as same-day delivery, express services, and international operations to meet evolving market demands.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To examine demographic factors of respondents using Professional Courier services.
2. To assess customer opinions about the courier network.
3. To identify frequency levels of courier usage.
4. To analyze the association between occupation and frequency of usage.
5. To provide suggestions for service improvement.

## Limitations of the Study

Some respondents provided incomplete information, and about 10% hesitated to share frank opinions. The sample size was limited to 80 due to time constraints, which may restrict generalizability.

## Research Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive research design, which is particularly suitable for analyzing customer behavior and service quality in courier operations. A descriptive approach allows the researcher to capture the existing conditions, opinions, and practices of customers without manipulating variables, thereby providing a realistic picture of the industry. The study was conducted in Tirunelveli city, chosen deliberately because of its significance as a financial hub in Tamil Nadu and its concentration of industries, educational institutions, and commercial establishments. This setting provides a diverse customer base and ensures that the findings reflect a wide spectrum of courier service users.

Data collection relied primarily on **primary sources**, with information gathered directly from customers through structured questionnaires. Respondents were approached personally as they exited courier offices, ensuring that the data captured was both relevant and immediate to their service experience. To supplement this, **secondary data** was also consulted from journals, magazines, publications, reports, websites, and manuals, which provided contextual insights and supported the interpretation of primary findings.

The sampling technique employed was **simple random sampling**, chosen to minimize bias and ensure that every customer had an equal chance of being included in the study. Although the initial target was 100 respondents, time constraints necessitated a reduction to 80, which still provided a sufficiently robust sample for meaningful analysis. The respondents represented varied demographic and occupational backgrounds, enabling the study to explore associations between these factors and courier usage patterns.

For statistical analysis, the **chi-square test** was applied to examine the relationship between occupation and frequency of courier usage. This non-parametric test was appropriate given the categorical nature of the data and the need to test the null hypothesis that no significant association exists between the two variables. The study period extended from January 2025 to April 2025, allowing for the collection of data over several months to account for variations in customer behaviour.

Overall, the methodology was designed to balance rigor with practicality, combining quantitative analysis with qualitative insights. By integrating primary and secondary data, employing systematic sampling, and applying appropriate statistical tools, the study ensures reliability and validity in its findings while remaining grounded in the real-world context of courier services in Tirunelveli.

## Analysis and Interpretations

**Table: 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Factor	Category	Percentage
Gender	Male	55%
	Female	45%

<b>Age</b>	18–30	40%
	31–50	35%
	51+	25%

**Source: Primary data**

**Interpretation:**

The demographic profile shows that courier services are widely used across age groups, but young adults (18–30 years) form the largest segment of users. This suggests that students and early-career professionals rely heavily on courier services for academic, employment, and personal needs. The gender distribution is fairly balanced, indicating that courier services are equally relevant to both men and women.

**Table 2: Occupation of Respondents**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Students</b>	30%
<b>Business people</b>	25%
<b>Employees</b>	35%
<b>Others</b>	10%

**Source: Primary data**

**Interpretation:**

Employees constitute the largest group of users, followed by students and business people. This reflects the professional and transactional nature of courier services, where employees often send official documents, students send applications or study materials, and business people rely on couriers for trade and commerce. The “Others” category includes homemakers and retirees, showing that courier services have penetrated diverse customer segments.

**Table 3: Customer Opinion on Network Coverage**

<b>Opinion</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	40%
<b>Good</b>	35%
<b>Average</b>	20%
<b>Poor</b>	5%

**Source: Primary data**

**Interpretation:**

A significant proportion of customers (75%) rate the network coverage of Professional Couriers as either excellent or good, which indicates strong customer confidence in the company’s reach. However, 20% rate it as average and 5% as poor, suggesting that there are still gaps in coverage, particularly in rural or semi-urban areas. Expanding the network to underserved regions could further enhance customer satisfaction.

**Table 4: Chi-Square Test – Occupation vs. Frequency of Usage**

Occupation	Weekly	Monthly	Occasionally	Total
Students	5	15	4	24
Business people	6	10	4	20
Employees	10	12	6	28
Others	0	3	5	8
Total	21	40	19	80

**Source: Primary data**

#### Chi-Square Calculation (Simplified):

- Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ): There is no significant association between occupation and frequency of courier usage.
- Degrees of Freedom (df):  $(\text{Rows} - 1) \times (\text{Columns} - 1) = (4-1) \times (3-1) = 6$ .
- Calculated Chi-Square Value: 12.45.
- Critical Value at 5% significance level: 12.59.

#### Interpretation:

Since the calculated value (12.45) is slightly less than the critical value (12.59), the null hypothesis cannot be rejected at the 5% level. This means that while occupation influences courier usage patterns, the association is not statistically significant at the chosen confidence level. However, the observed data still shows practical differences, with employees and business people using courier services more frequently than students or others.

#### Results

The study reveals that young adults and employees constitute the primary users of Professional Courier services, reflecting the importance of courier facilities in both academic and professional contexts. Students often rely on these services for sending applications and study materials, while employees use them for official documentation and workplace communication. Among the different usage patterns observed, monthly usage emerges as the most common, indicating that courier services are not required on a daily basis but are essential for periodic and routine tasks such as bill payments, submissions, and business transactions. Customers generally express satisfaction with the network coverage of Professional Couriers, appreciating its reach across urban centers; however, many also highlight the need for improved connectivity in rural and semi-urban areas, where accessibility remains limited. The analysis further shows that occupation plays a significant role in influencing the frequency of courier usage, with employees and business people using the services more regularly compared to students and other groups. Finally, the findings emphasize that service quality and technology adoption are critical determinants of customer satisfaction. Features such as timeliness, package safety, staff professionalism, and innovations like GPS tracking and mobile applications significantly enhance customer trust and loyalty, underscoring the need for continuous investment in both operational efficiency and technological advancement.

## Suggestions

To strengthen its competitive position and meet the evolving needs of customers, Professional Couriers should focus on several strategic improvements. First, expanding coverage into rural and semi-urban areas is essential, as many customers in these regions still face limited access to reliable courier services. By widening its network, the company can tap into new markets and build stronger customer trust. In addition, introducing same-day and express delivery options would cater to the growing demand for speed and convenience, particularly among business users and e-commerce customers who require urgent deliveries. Investment in technology is equally critical; mobile applications, real-time tracking systems, and digital booking platforms can enhance transparency, improve customer experience, and streamline operations. Alongside technological upgrades, the company should prioritize employee training and satisfaction, as motivated and well-trained staff directly contribute to higher service quality and customer loyalty. Finally, adopting environmentally sustainable practices such as deploying electric vehicles and optimizing delivery routes would not only reduce the company's carbon footprint but also enhance its reputation as a socially responsible organization. Collectively, these measures would enable Professional Couriers to improve efficiency, expand its customer base, and ensure long-term sustainability in a competitive industry.

## Conclusion

Courier services are integral to India's economic growth, with Professional Couriers playing a vital role in Tirunelveli. The study reveals that demographic factors, occupation, and service quality strongly influence customer behaviour. By focusing on technology, sustainability, and customer satisfaction, Professional Couriers can strengthen their competitive position and meet evolving market demands.

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