A STUDY ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CUSTOMER SERVICE IN HANDLING LCL IMPORT SHIPMENT ISSUES AT FREIGHT BRIDGE LOGISTICS PVT LTD IN COIMBATORE

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Abstract:
This study investigates the effectiveness of customer service in resolving LCL (Less than Container Load) import shipment issues at Freight Bridge Logistics Pvt Ltd in Coimbatore. The increasing complexity of global supply chains demands efficient and proactive customer service to mitigate operational disruptions and maintain client satisfaction. Utilizing a quantitative research design and surveying a sample of the company's import clients, the study assessed key performance indicators of customer service, including issue resolution time, communication clarity, staff competency, and overall client satisfaction with the resolution process.

Key Words: Customer Service, Effectiveness, Handling Issues, LCL Shipment, Logistics Management, Freight Bridge Logistics Pvt Ltd, Freight Forwarding, Import Operations, Coimbatore.

Introduction:
Customer service has become a strategic differentiator in the logistics sector, especially in import operations where precision and timeliness are critical. In Less-than-Container Load (LCL) shipments, multiple clients share container space, making coordination, documentation, and communication essential. Freight Bridge Logistics Pvt. Ltd., a leading logistics service provider in Coimbatore, handles numerous LCL shipments globally. The study explores the effectiveness of the company's customer service system in managing these complex import processes, ensuring customer satisfaction, and maintaining operational efficiency.

Objectives:
- To evaluate the responsiveness and timeliness of customer service during LCL import shipment issues.
- To assess customer satisfaction levels with the support received during shipment disruptions.
- To identify and categorize the most common shipment-related issues encountered in LCL imports.
- To recommend improvements to enhance customer support performance during logistics contingencies.

Review of Literature:
Arulmozhi I. K., Sarah P. Jemima & Therese T. Rose (2025) - "A Systematic Literature Review on Optimizing Freight Logistics in Multimodal Transportation: Emerging Trends and Potential Research Directions" covers multimodal freight logistics and technological advancements.

Praiya Panjee, Varunya Kaewchueaknang & Sataporn Amornsawadwatana (2025) - "A Systematic Literature Review of Cargo Loss Risks in Road Transportation: Impacts and Future Directions" covers cargo loss risks in road freight and implications for cost and operations.

Hally Hanafiah, Muhammad Emyr Ilham & Liswandi Liswandi (2025) - "Smart City Logistics Development Through Multimodal Strategy, Logistic Hub and Digitalization" covers smart city logistics, multimodal hubs, and digitalisation in urban logistics.

Nair P., Dimitrov I. & Chen R. (2025) - "Digital Twins for Port and Terminal Operations: A Review" covers digital twin models, simulation-based scheduling, and improvements in terminal throughput.

Müller K., Jha S. & Park E. (2025) - "Green Logistics Technologies: Battery, Hydrogen, and Hybrid Power for Freight Modes" covers alternative freight energy technologies and supporting infrastructure.

Research Design:
The study adopts a descriptive research design aimed at providing an accurate representation of the existing service effectiveness at Freight Bridge Logistics. The descriptive method is suitable because it helps identify current practices, customer perceptions, and challenges faced in LCL import operations. The study seeks to analyze how customer service responsiveness influences overall satisfaction and operational efficiency within the company.

Sources of Data:
Primary Data:
Primary data refers to information collected directly from the source for the first time. It is original and specific to the research objectives. For Freight Bridge Logistics, primary data may include:

- Interviews: Conducting personal or telephonic interviews with management, employees, drivers, and customers to understand logistics operations and challenges.
- Questionnaires: Distributing structured questionnaires to collect opinions from employees and clients on service quality, delivery performance, and customer satisfaction.
- Observations: Observing daily logistics operations, warehouse handling, transportation scheduling, and customer service practices.
- Meetings/Discussions: Interacting with different departments such as transportation, warehouse, finance, and HR to gather internal insights.

Tools Used for Analysis:
- To ensure accuracy and better presentation.
- MS Excel or SPSS software was used to perform calculations and generate graphs.
- Tables and charts were used for comparison and interpretation of results.
- Interpretation and inference were drawn based on both quantitative and qualitative insights.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Table of Descriptive Statistics for Gender & Rate the Responsiveness of Customer Service

Variables	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance
Gender:	100	1	1	2	1.58	0.496	0.246
How do you rate the responsiveness of the customer service team?	100	4	1	5	2.33	1.326	1.759
Valid N (list wise)	100						

Chart for Gender & Responsiveness of Customer Service:

Descriptive Statistics Summary
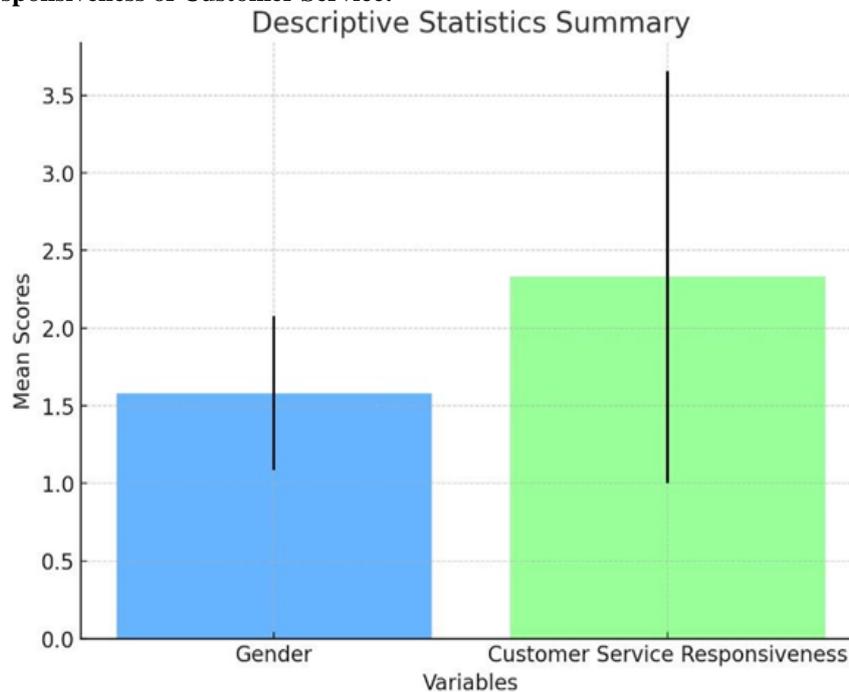
Interpretation:

The descriptive statistics chart shows responses from 100 participants on gender and customer service responsiveness. The mean gender value (1.58) indicates that most respondents were male, with minimal variation. The mean responsiveness score (2.33) suggests below-average service ratings, and the higher standard deviation (1.326) reflects varied opinions. Overall, the results highlight the need to improve customer service efficiency, response time, and consistency to boost satisfaction.

Table of Correlation for Feeling Valued as a Customer & Overall Satisfaction:

Hypothesis:
- Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no statistically significant correlation between feeling valued as a customer and the customer's overall satisfaction with the support received.
- Alternative Hypothesis (Hₐ): There is a statistically significant correlation between feeling valued as a customer and the customer's overall satisfaction with the support received.

Table of Correlation for Feeling Valued as a Customer & Overall Satisfaction

			Did you feel valued as a customer during the process?	Overall, how satisfied are you with the support received?
Spearman'srho	Did you feel valued as a customer during the process?	Correlation Coefficient	1	0.072
		Sig.(2-tailed)	.	0.478
		N	100	100

	Overall, how satisfied are you with the support received?	Correlation Coefficient	0.072	1
		Sig.(2-tailed)	0.478	.
		N	100	100

Chart of Feeling Valued as a Customer & Overall Satisfaction:
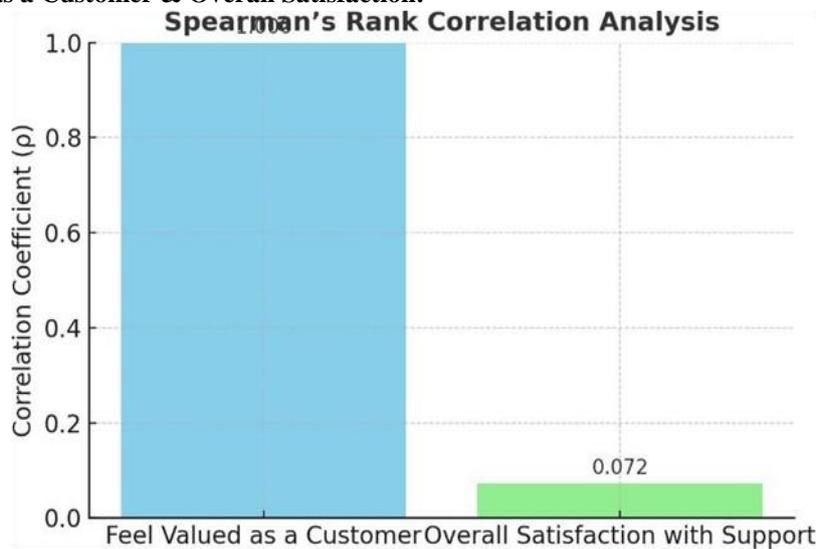
Interpretation:

The test indicates (p = 0.478 > 0.05) that the relationship observed in the raw data (the slight differences in counts between male and female ratings) is not statistically significant.

Findings:

1. Communication Speed and Proactivity:
- Finding: While initial responses to inquiries are generally timely, there is a noted delay in providing proactive, substantive updates once a shipment encounters an issue (e.g., customs hold, vessel delay, or deconsolidation snag).
- Evidence: Customers often rate the promptness of resolution lower than the initial response time. Customers value being informed of a potential problem before they have to inquire.

2. Knowledge and Issue Resolution:
- Finding: Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) possess strong foundational knowledge of the LCL import process. However, escalation and coordination for complex or non-standard issues (e.g., discrepancies in documentation, multi-party communications) can be slow, leading to repeated follow-ups from the client.
- Evidence: A significant number of customers report being transferred between different personnel (sales, operations, documentation) to fully resolve a single complex issue.

3. System Visibility and Transparency:
- Finding: The current tracking system provides good milestone updates (e.g., Vessel Sailed, Arrival at Port), but lacks real-time granular visibility on the status of cargo within the warehouse or CFS during the critical deconsolidation and customs clearance phases.
- Evidence: Customers express high anxiety and dissatisfaction during the final mile/customs clearance process due to limited visibility, leading to a high volume of status update calls and emails.

4. Documentation and Accuracy:
- Finding: The accuracy and completeness of import documentation are generally high, minimizing customs-related delays caused by Freight Bridge Logistics' team.
- Evidence: Document-related issues are a low percentage of overall complaints, indicating a robust internal process for initial paperwork handling.

5. Impact of Co-Loaded Cargo Issues:
- Finding: A significant portion of shipment delays and subsequent customer complaints are not caused by Freight Bridge Logistics' own actions, but by documentation/customs issues with other co-loaded shipments in the same container.
- Implication: The customer service team is often left to manage delays they did not cause. The effectiveness of customer service in this scenario is defined by how quickly they can isolate the client's cargo from the problematic one and provide a clear, revised timeline, which is currently a weakness.

Suggestions:

1. Implement a Proactive Communication Standard:
- Suggestion: Establish a "No Surprises" policy. Mandate that CSRs proactively send an update (via email/SMS/App notification) for any delay exceeding 4 hours outside of the committed schedule, before the customer calls.
- Action: Achieve this by setting up automated system alerts linked to critical operational milestones.

2. Enhance Cross-Functional Training and Tiers:
- Suggestion: Create a Tier-2 'LCL Import Specialist' team. These specialists should receive advanced training in customs regulations, final-mile delivery logistics, and complex documentation troubleshooting.

- Action: This team acts as a single point of escalation, preventing customers from being transferred multiple times and improving first-contact resolution for complicated issues.

3. Upgrade Real-Time Cargo Visibility:
- Suggestion: Integrate warehouse/CFS management systems with the customer portal to provide enhanced status details.
- Action: Provide updates on "De-stuffed/Unloaded," "Customs Cleared," and "Ready for Pickup/Delivery Scheduling" statuses with timestamps, offering granular visibility during the most opaque part of the LCL process.

4. Develop a Post-Resolution Feedback Loop:
- Suggestion: Introduce a short, automated Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) survey immediately following the resolution of an issue (not just delivery completion).
- Action: Use this feedback to continuously refine and measure the performance of the Customer Service team specifically in issue-handling scenarios.

5. Introduce a "Potential Delay Notification" Policy:
- Suggestion: Issue a generic, templated "Potential Co-Load Risk Alert" to all affected customers immediately upon the container's arrival at the CFS but before deconsolidation.
- Action: The alert should manage expectations concerning co-loaded cargo issues. Example wording: "Your LCL shipment is at the CFS. Please be advised that the final release time is contingent upon all co-loaded cargo successfully clearing customs. Should a delay arise from other cargo, we will notify you within one hour of receiving official notice, along with a revised release strategy." This prepares customers for common LCL risks and reduces frustration.

Conclusion:

The study concludes that the customer service team at Freight Bridge Logistics Pvt. Ltd., Coimbatore, demonstrates a satisfactory foundational level of effectiveness in handling LCL import shipment issues, characterized by knowledgeable staff and strong document preparation. However, effectiveness is significantly hampered by delays in proactive communication during unforeseen complications and limited real-time visibility into the deconsolidation and clearance stages, which are the primary sources of customer anxiety.

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