



Research on After-sales Problems in the Express Delivery Industry

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Abstract. When E-commerce industry is becoming more sophisticated, online shopping is becoming more popular, the express delivery services apply more in the daily life. With the development of express delivery industry, the express delivery industry' management norms are becoming more perfect. However, express delivery industry still has some problems especially for after-sales problems. This article briefly discusses the after-sales problems in express delivery industry and the reasons for the problems. Finally, the adverse effects and some suggestions for improvement are discussed.

Keywords: Express delivery services, marketing, after-sales, human resources

1 Introduction

With the development of Chinese social economy and technology [1], the emergence of e-commerce has promoted the stable development of express delivery business [2]. Express delivery industry is the product of the development of Chinese market economy [3]. The vigorous development of e-commerce business has promoted the rapid changes in Chinese express delivery business [4]. Express delivery refers to the logistics company's own independent network or joint venture cooperation (that is, networking) to quickly and safely deliver the documents or packages entrusted by the user from the sender to the receiver's door. The rapid development of the express delivery industry has made unparalleled advantages in providing residents with convenience and promoting the development of purchasing power in online shopping. However, with the development of the big data era, the development of internal control in the express delivery industry is relatively backward [5].

2 Some Problems Occurred in Express Delivery Industry

According to the development of express delivery industry, that industry has some new regulations and after-sales services is gradually improved. For example, Express delivery requires sender's actual name in ID card; Internet and TV shopping's packages can be inspected before signing; delayed delivery can be claimed (more than 3 days in the

same city, more than 7 days in a different place); couriers who brutally sort will be fined; couriers who directly put fresh food in express cabinet without permission will be punished. Customer and express delivery companies' relationships could use simple repairs before bad news spreads. Because many customers in the same target market, bad experiences can spread quickly through social media and online reviews, leading to more customer distractions.[6]

Although the express delivery industry has formulated some rules to restrict and punish some irregular behaviors, there are still many after-sales problems in the express delivery industry: the most obvious are the complaint process and the quality of agent's customer service. Quality service plays a vital role in improving overall delivery service performance. Therefore, delivery service companies must provide high-quality services and must fully understand, meet needs and exceed customer expectations.[7]

2.1 The Complaint Process is Routine, Templated and Inefficient

When customers encounter some irregular behavior of the courier company, they can complain on the courier company's website or WeChat applet. However, the complaint process of most companies generally takes a long time and the customer experience is poor.

When customers submit complaints on the website, most courier companies don't actively solve the problem and only make phone calls in a procedural manner. For example, even if customers remarked "not to call, just send text messages to notify the result", the call will still be made. Normally, the efficiency of hotline customer service calls is relatively high.

The average time to receive a call after customers submit a complaint.(counted from the moment the complaint request is successfully submitted. Figure 1 is drawn based on data and information search by author)

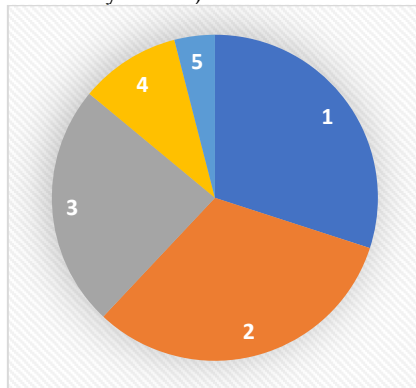


Fig. 1. Time to receive a Call After Complaint

*In China, express delivery company will divide outlet to general transfer station and district station. General transfer stations are usually in capital city of the province and transfer packages

in different city, different districts in same provinces. District station usually provide services for delivering packages to receivers and services for receiving packages for senders.

*1. <4h: 30%, 2. 4~8h: 32%, 3. 8~12h: 24%, 4. 12~16h: 10%, 5. >16h: 4%;

However, even if calls received, customers will not get further results after 24 hours of receiving the call. When customers ask again, customer services agents will only inform that the request has been remarked, and tell customers: the process cannot be modified. No matter how many times customers emphasize it, agents still call back. In many cases, agents' calls will be during working hours, and customers who complain have no time to answer the phone. Finally, the express delivery company will still notify those customers by text message.

When the customer connects the agents' hotline service, express delivery company will not propose solutions to the actual problems and will not advance the problem's solving process. Agents' hotline service will repeat words said by agents in the WeChat applet. Some agents in hotline service will reply that the employees in express delivery are toilsome and customers should sympathize with their hard work. Besides that, agents in the hotline will force customers to accept "the results".

The attitude of agents who handle the complaint is not serious. They don't investigate the actual situation of the package. Besides that, agents will provide wrong results which they think are likely to happen. For example, some agents will assume packages return to senders without investigating the actual situation. However, the actual situation is that the package is delayed at the previous stop.

When uncontrolled situations occur, some express delivery companies will directly not deliver the packages to receivers. Besides that, the express delivery company will not notify the senders and receivers. Those companies will not negotiate how to solve the problem and return that package to senders directly. In this situation, the package will not be out of delivery status for two days, when the package arrives at the receiver's address. After the receiver's complaints, no notification on the tracking page. When receivers ask for agents, agents will reply that the package can be delivery on time. However, the package will be automatically to senders. For example, in March 2022, some regulations occurred in Lanzhou which caused the express package cannot be delivered on time. ZTO Express knew that the customer's package was fresh food, and this package could not be delivered normally. ZTO Express didn't give any solution for the package for the next two consecutive days when the package arrived in Lanzhou and did not notify the receivers and senders. When receivers complained, the official website notified them that the package could be delivered within 24 hours after the complaint request was successfully submitted. After two days when a compliant request was submitted, the package was "automatically" returned to the sender. The receivers submit the complaint request again. In this situation, the agent in the senders' city Hangzhou called to receiver and informed her that the package could not be delivered. When receivers questioned why ZTO Express delivered this package before a regulation or notified the receiver or sender. After permission from the receiver or sender, ZTO Express can return the package to the sender. However, the agent thought that "due to regulation, the customers must accept the bad results caused by ZTO Express". When the receiver questioned the working attitude and ability to problem-solve in this

case, the agent thought the receiver's mood was unstable and the receiver's doubt was unfair.

The address-changing process is very confusing

1) The billing address can only be modified by the sender in most express delivery companies, and the receiver cannot do it;

2) Many express delivery companies do not have a complete process for modifying the receiver address, and can only be modified by agents after giving a new address. The website will not show the trace of modification.

3) For most companies, even if the modified new address and original address are in the same province; modifications are succeeded in the capital city's general transfer station. The package must be sent to the original address and sent to the new address again.

4) After communicating with the receivers, receivers cannot find any modification on the official website of the express delivery company. The system of the express delivery company will not record in the system. For example, customers who use YTO Express can only modify the address by senders, receivers cannot modify it. Besides that, after modifying the address, YTO Express will send the package to the original address first and send it again to a new address. Not only that, even if the receiver and the sender notify customer service, the system may not record the modified address. When the receiver asks the agent in the WeChat applet for the phone number of the general transfer station of the provincial capital of the receiving place, the agent gives the phone number of the sender's address. Because of YTO Express's mistakes which caused the delay in the package, the agent thought it was unfair for the receiver to complain and ask for some compensation.

2.2 Problems of Agent's attitudes

2.2.1. Classification of Agents.

Customer service agents in the express delivery industry are generally divided into agents on the WeChat applet (or online agents on the official site of the express delivery company) and hotline customer service. When customers open the WeChat applet or go to the website to directly search for the name of the express delivery company, they can find the customer services part and connect agents directly. After entering customer services pages, customers will first connect to the AI agents. The AI agents can provide solutions got some basic and simple questions according to keywords which customers type. For example, customers can get information on shipping rules, cost of shipping, and contact information for some district outlets. Besides that, you can know the estimated delivery time of the package when you enter the package tracking number. When customers enter "agents" two to three times, a real person agent will appear. That agent will solve more complex issues, such as no updated logistics information for 2 to 3 days. If customers encounter problems with their packages, they can directly call the official phone number and talk to the hotline agents through AI's direction. After successfully submitting the complaint process, you may receive a call from hotline agents within 24 hours or 48 hours.

2.2.2. Some Problems Caused by Agents.

Generally, not only agents in the WeChat applet or the official website but also agents in the hotline are not trained by the HR department. The work patterns are very mechanized.

1) Customer services agents in the WeChat applet or official website only copy and paste the answers of AI agents, and repeat the companies' rules. Besides that, customer service agents will answer "It's a mistake of mine." and "It's our company's fault." However, agents will not provide any solutions for their faults and force customers to forgive their mistakes.

2) Customer services agents in the applet or official website will not notify the specific cause for the problem and give any answer that agents think might happened to customers. When customers questioned why the agents didn't investigate and verify the real circumstances for this case, agents thought their method of problem-solving was rational. It's unreasonable for customers to question their attitudes toward handling problems and their hard work.

For example: When a ZTO Express package stayed at the nearest general transit station in the provincial capital city for two days without any special circumstances (without any uncontrollable factors), the receivers found a customer service WeChat applet and asked about the situation for this package. The customer services agents directly gave the result "the package was returned because of receivers' request" without contacting general transfer stations. The receiver stated that she didn't submit a return application for this package, and no notification for returns due to the receiver's request on this package's tracking page. However, the customer service agents did not verify the actual status of the package, repeated what they said before, and thought that the package was returned by the receiver. Not only that, the agents thought that the receiver was directly looking for trouble for this package after submitting the return request. When the receiver asked for the evidence for the return request page, the agent could not provide the evidence. Until the customer argued the omission at work for agents with this agent for the entire afternoon, the agent decided to verify the actual status of this package. The result of the verification was: that because of too many packages at the transit station, the express item was not scanned and was delayed for the next station. However, after getting the actual status of this package, the agent didn't admit the mistake and thought the receiver was too impatient. Finally, when the receiver complained about the customer service, the headquarters hotline customer service agents apologized but still did not admit the agents in the WeChat applet made some mistakes in the work. Until the receiver reported his dissatisfaction to the headquarters hotline customer service agents again, the package was delivered that night.

3) Customer services agents in the WeChat applet officially conceal the actual status of the package and deceive the customers. For example, the customer is willing to know the phone number of the courier at the receiver's delivery address; however, the customer agents give the phone number of the courier at the sender's address.

4) The customer service agents' attitude toward the WeChat applet or official websites is extremely poor, agents' understanding is poor and they will misinterpret customers' meanings. For example, when customers question the working attitudes problem problem-solving ability of the agent, the agent will not find their omission in their

work and will not solve the question. The agent thinks that the customer is personally attacking the agent.

2.3 Services' Quality of Outsourcing Express Service Outlets in Different Regions are Different

For example, the agents at some outlets have good service attitudes and solve problems efficiently and the couriers provide good service when delivering packages. However, agents for some outlets are almost "non-existent. These outlets' delivery efficiency is low and no real progress in solving complaints. Some agents will deceive customers in some cases.

3 Cause Analysis of Existing Problems

Although the after-sales problem in the express industry is still serious, the express company still has many customers. The specific reasons for this situation are analyzed as follows:

1) Many outlets are not directly managed by managers assigned by the headquarters but are outsourced to different people in different regions. The employees of express outlets are generally not directly recruited by the company but are dispatched by labor dispatch companies. Outsourcing employees do not receive unified training. The result is that the service attitude and service quality of different outlets are uneven even in the same express delivery company, and finally, the reputation of the express company is mixed. Likewise, the onboarding process for agents of customer service is similar.

2) Low efficiency of business process and lack of management system [8]. There are problems in the management process of express companies, and the regulations are too rigid; formalism is serious. There will be no flexible solutions in the case of customers' complaints. When encountering irresistible factors, most express companies do not have a reasonable and standard solution and prefer perfunctory customers.

3) There is a delay in customer service agents' information and outlet information. The agents cannot receive the real-time information of the outlet.

4) Agents' service quality is uneven. Most customer service agents are incompetent for work.

5) Most recipients don't pay attention to the delay of one or two days, even after complaining, they will just silently wait for the result.

6) The e-commerce industry generally chooses merchants with cheaper express delivery to save costs. Since the service models of most express companies are similar and generally do not have serious after-sales problems, practitioners in the e-commerce industry do not care about after-sales problems.

4 Conclusion

Given the problems in the after-sales service in the express delivery industry, the express delivery company should make the following improvements:

1) Conduct unified business training for employees before getting their jobs, not only for outlet employees but also for customer service agents through different channels. For example, agents do not need to be overly respectful when answering questions but only need to answer truthfully. Mistakes need to be admitted. If the situation is unclear, agents need to inform the customer and respond to the relevant department of the company before dealing with the problem. Agents cannot give unclear results for customers.

2) The express delivery company must implement a strict reward and punishment system, and strictly punish the agents who fail to admit their mistakes which they caused. Besides that, those agents need to actively solve the mistakes, especially for customer service agents with a bad attitude after training. The chat history will be recorded to help with performance appraisal by HR managers. If the customer service agent's attitude is poor and angers the customers many times, HR departments need to know the real situation. If the problem is caused by a customer services agent, such an agent should be punished. For customer service agents, regular exams are required. If some agents fail an exam, re-training is required; only after passing the exam, they can work again.

3) The outlets of the same company in different regions can compete. Receivers and senders can rate the services of outlets, and outlets with high scores can issue certificates and provide prizes, and outlets with low scores should investigate the reasons and give corresponding punishments.

4) The express delivery company should simplify the complaint process and improve efficiency. If the case has a result, agents can give the result to customers directly. If customers don't need phone calls, agents can send messages to customers.

5) In case of special circumstances, it is necessary to call or send a text message to inform the customer in advance, and then process the packages. Except for fresh food, other packages can be temporarily stored at the outlets' warehouse and the customer should be notified of the actual reason, and then delivered one by one when the packages can be delivered normally. If the package contains fresh food, the express delivery company needs to inform the customer before returning it.

6) The operation of the address modification process should also be standardized and simplified. The express delivery company that does not have a channel to modify the address should set up a channel for address modification on the web page or the WeChat applet. Modifications for receivers and senders need to be recorded. When the address is changed, senders and receivers need to be reminded. Once the address of the same province arrives at the provincial capital transfer station, it needs to be changed, and the delivery will be made according to the new address.

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