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Evaluating the efficiency of shipping agencies: an analysis of exporters' opinions in Coimbatore district

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Abstract: Logistics plays a pivotal role in ensuring the smooth flow of goods from production to consumption, particularly in a globalized economy. Shipping agencies act as key intermediaries in international trade, facilitating export and import processes. This study examines exporters' opinions regarding the performance of shipping agencies, focusing on operational efficiency, documentation, cargo clearance, and service quality in the Tiruppur region. A descriptive research design was adopted, and primary data were collected from 50 exporters using structured questionnaires. The findings highlight key issues such as delays, cost concerns, and documentation challenges, while also suggesting improvements for enhancing logistics service performance.

1 Introduction

Logistics plays a crucial role in business by ensuring that products and services are delivered to the right place at the right time. In today's globalized environment, customers expect high levels of efficiency, making logistics a fundamental component of both marketing and manufacturing processes. The scope of logistics has expanded significantly, integrating various functions that contribute to operational excellence and customer satisfaction. Business logistics refers to the planning, organizing, and controlling of activities that facilitate the flow of goods from raw material acquisition to final consumption. The concept originated from military logistics during World War II, where effective movement and storage of supplies were critical for success. Over time, logistics has evolved into a comprehensive system that includes transportation, inventory management, warehousing, packaging, and information systems.

The Council of Logistics Management redefined logistics in 1991, emphasizing the importance of managing both goods and information flow efficiently. Logistics accounts for a significant portion of business costs, often ranging between 20 to 25 percent of total operating expenses. The mission of logistics is to meet customer requirements efficiently while minimizing costs. This involves ensuring product availability, maintaining operational performance, and achieving service reliability. Availability focuses on maintaining sufficient inventory to meet demand, while operational performance relates to the speed, consistency, and flexibility of delivery. Service reliability emphasizes maintaining quality standards and continuously improving logistics processes to ensure customer satisfaction. Shipping agents act as intermediaries between exporters and ship owners, playing a vital role in the smooth functioning of logistics operations. They are responsible for handling documentation, coordinating cargo clearance, and facilitating communication among various stakeholders. The relationship between the agent and the principal is based on mutual agreement, where the agent represents the principal in all dealings. Transparency and accountability are essential in this relationship, ensuring that all transactions and communications clearly reflect the agent's role.

Scope of the study

The shipping industry plays a significant role in Tiruppur, a major hub for export and import activities. This study focuses on understanding the operations of shipping agencies in this region, particularly in relation to documentation procedures and cargo clearance processes. It also examines aspects such as bills of lading, handling charges, and other operational practices that influence exporter satisfaction.

Objectives of the study

The study aims to understand the activities of logistics companies, analyze export clearance procedures, and review various shipping documents involved in the export process. It also seeks to identify issues faced by exporters, such as

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cargo delays and high charges, while assessing customer expectations regarding logistics services. Furthermore, the study attempts to suggest measures to improve the quality and efficiency of shipping agency services.

2 Review of literature

Export credit insurance has long been recognized as a crucial instrument in facilitating international trade, particularly in developed economies such as Canada, Great Britain, Japan, and Australia. Historically, countries like the United Kingdom have utilized export credit insurance since as early as 1919 to strengthen their export sectors, embedding it within broader foreign trade policies [1]. Over time, the role of export credit insurance has evolved from a basic risk mitigation tool to a strategic mechanism that supports exporters in navigating uncertainties associated with global markets.

Early studies emphasized that exporters require insurance primarily to safeguard their accounts receivable against the risk of non-payment [2]. Researchers argued that export credit insurance functions more as a protection against liquidity constraints rather than direct financial loss, thereby ensuring continuity in business operations. Subsequent literature clarified that export credit insurance should not be viewed as a subsidy; instead, exporters must remain competitive in international markets, with insurance serving only as a support mechanism rather than a guarantee of success.Recent developments highlight the growing importance of export credit agencies and private insurers in addressing financial risks associated with global trade [3]. Chinese financing institutions have expanded their role in overseas investment and financing, including in infrastructure projects in emerging markets [4]. These initiatives demonstrate how export credit insurance has become intertwined with national economic strategies and international investment flows. Furthermore, studies have shown that export credit insurance contributes to economic stability by mitigating default risks linked to low capital investment and unfavorable economic conditions. It also enhances exporters' access to finance by improving their creditworthiness, thereby enabling them to secure pre-shipment and post-shipment financing from commercial banks. In addition to financial protection, export credit insurance provides valuable market intelligence, helping exporters assess the reliability of foreign buyers and make informed decisions.

The literature also underscores the importance of export promotion institutions, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). These institutions play a vital role in assisting firms with market entry strategies, including the selection of agents, brokers, and marketing representatives [5,6]. By reducing informational and operational barriers, such support systems enable SMEs to overcome risks and expand their presence in international markets. However, certain challenges and limitations have also been identified. The cost of export credit insurance can fluctuate with market and risk conditions, making it less predictable for exporters [7]. Additionally, the effectiveness of export credit guarantees may be constrained by difficulties in verifying the quality of exported goods [8]. There is also an ongoing debate regarding whether export credit insurance serves as a genuine trade promotion tool or indirectly acts as a subsidy, especially in the context of international regulations set by organizations such as the WTO and OECD. Empirical studies provide evidence that export promotion measures, including credit insurance, can support export performance by helping firms overcome political and commercial risks [9,10]. In the contemporary global trade environment, export credit insurance continues to play a significant role in enhancing exporter confidence, facilitating access to finance, and promoting sustainable international trade growth. Overall, the literature indicates that while export credit insurance is not without its limitations, it remains an essential component of modern export management and trade facilitation strategies.

3 Research methodology

Research methodology refers to the systematic approach used to address a research problem. This study adopts a descriptive research design to examine the opinions of exporters regarding the performance of shipping agencies. A non-probability sampling method is used, considering an infinite population, with a sample size of fifty exporters. Data collection involves both primary and secondary sources. Primary data are collected through structured questionnaires comprising open-ended, closed-ended, and multiple-choice questions, while secondary data are obtained from published sources such as government reports, market surveys, journals, and online resources. Statistical tools such as percentage analysis and the chi-square test are used for data analysis. Percentage analysis helps in presenting the proportion of responses in a simple manner, while the chi-square test is used to examine relationships between categorical variables by comparing observed and expected frequencies.

Area of the study

The study is confined to Tiruppur, a prominent textile export hub known for its extensive involvement in international trade. The Coimbatore district region provides a suitable context for analyzing the performance of shipping agencies due to its high volume of export activities.

Limitations of the study

Despite careful planning, the study has certain limitations. Time constraints limited the extent of data collection, and the research is restricted to the Tiruppur area, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. The sample size of

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fifty respondents may not fully represent the entire population of exporters. Additionally, some respondents were hesitant to disclose information regarding shipping charges, and the accuracy of certain data could not be independently verified. Nevertheless, the study provides valuable insights into the perceptions of exporters regarding shipping agency performance and highlights areas for improvement in logistics operations.

3.1 Activities of the logistics industry

Logistics is essentially the science of movement, concerned with ensuring that products and services reach the desired place at the right time. In today's highly competitive environment, companies continuously examine, restructure, and reposition their operations to gain a strategic advantage. Transportation mode selection is a critical part of logistics strategy, with sea and air transport serving as the primary modes in international trade. Logistical competency is achieved by coordinating activities within a network design that includes information management, transportation, inventory control, warehousing, material handling, and packing. The Council of Logistics Management, in 1991, redefined logistics as "the process of planning, implementing, and controlling the effective, efficient flow and storage of goods, services, and related information from point of origin to point of consumption to meet customer requirements." This broader definition reflects the integration of logistics with overall supply chain management.

3.2 Logistics and the value chain concept

Michael Porter's value chain framework identifies logistics as a key contributor to competitive advantage. Logistics encompasses inbound logistics, operations, outbound logistics, marketing, and sales, supported by infrastructure, organizational systems, personnel, and procurement processes. By linking logistics to strategic business functions, firms can enhance efficiency and create superior performance in both operational and market outcomes. Logistics functions in an organization include:

Inventory Control: A critical area of logistics, inventory control ensures adequate stock to meet customer demand without incurring unnecessary carrying costs. Techniques such as Just-in-Time (JIT) inventory allow materials to arrive shortly before production, reducing storage costs, while Quick Response Systems use bar-coding, point-of-sale scanning, and container marking to speed deliveries.

Order Processing: Accurate and timely order handling is essential. It involves communicating orders to shipping departments, scheduling production, selecting and packaging stock, and preparing documentation for export transactions. Transportation: Transportation is a key logistical activity. Shippers move products via rail, air, truck, water, or pipelines, evaluating cost, reliability, capacity, and transit time. Electronic information management enhances operational coordination, reduces costs, and improves service quality. Warehousing: Warehouses store goods until needed, perform activities such as assorting, marking, and assembling, and provide both economic benefits (consolidation, break bulk, cross-docking) and service benefits (spot stocking, market presence, product support).

Packaging: Efficient packaging reduces costs and weight, which is particularly important for international trade. Modern packaging techniques improve productivity and help in minimizing unnecessary materials, which can account for nearly 40% of shipped product weight. Material Handling: Proper handling equipment and techniques increase warehouse productivity, speed up dispatch, and reduce handling costs. Activities include receiving, in-storage handling, and shipping.

3.3 Customs clearance procedure for export

Exporters must comply with government regulations for clearance of goods [11,12], including obtaining export licenses from the Controller of Exports and GR/E.P. forms under the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act. These documents are attached to the shipping bill prepared by the exporter.

Registration: Exporters must obtain a PAN-based Business Identification Number (BIN) from the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), register foreign exchange dealer codes, and maintain a designated bank account for export proceeds. Shipping lines, airlines, and port agents must also be registered in the Customs system. For exports under promotion schemes, licenses and DEEC books must be registered at Customs stations.

Processing of Shipping Bills: Under manual systems, shipping bills are filed with original documents such as invoices, packing lists, and export licenses. The Export Department verifies goods, assesses duties, and may call for samples for inspection. Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) systems streamline this process, allowing exporters to submit declarations, generate shipping bill numbers, and pay export cess electronically.

Customs Examination and Let Export Order: After filing, goods are presented to the dock appraiser. Examination ensures the physical shipment matches the shipping bill and other documentation. Discrepancies are referred to Customs officers for resolution. Once verified, a "Let Export" order permits shipment under supervision. Amendments to shipping bills, including freight or insurance changes, are approved by relevant Customs authorities depending on the stage of export.

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Drawback Claims and Shipping Bill Generation: Post-export, drawback claims are processed via EDI on a first-come, first-served basis. Banks credit the exporter's account after sanction. Shipping bills are generated in duplicate (Customs and exporter copies), signed by officers, and integrated with AEPC quota and certifications for compliance. Export General Manifests (EGMs) are submitted electronically and manually within seven days of vessel departure.

Arrival of Goods at Export Examination Sheds / CFS: Goods enter Container Freight Stations (CFS) based on checklists, declarations, and system-generated data. Shipments must arrive within 15 days of filing declarations. Exporters and CHAs are responsible for delays or damages. Corrections in checklists can be made before or after the generation of the shipping bill, with approvals granted by the Assistant, Deputy, or Additional/Joint Commissioners depending on the stage.

Securing Payment, Payment methods for exported goods include: Documentary Bill of Exchange: Exporters attach invoices, bills of lading, insurance policies, and certificates to the bill, usually issued in sets payable after sight. Letter of Hypothecation: Enables exporters to receive immediate payment from banks against discounted bills of exchange, with the banker authorized to claim goods in case of default. Letter of Credit (Documentary Credit): Ensures prompt payment through banks, where the importer's bank guarantees payment to the exporter upon presentation of required documents.

Terminal Handling Charges (THC): THCs are ancillary charges for container operations, covering costs of transferring cargo between terminal gates and ships. Originally incorporated into sea freight, these charges were later disaggregated for transparency by the European Shippers Council in the 1980s. Shipping Documents: Export documentation is essential for compliance, trade facilitation, and payment. Key documents include: Export Order & Order Acceptance: Confirm commercial transactions and shipment terms, covering buyer and consignee details, product description, quantity, price, delivery, and payment terms.

Export License: Issued by government authorities to approve export of goods.

Shipping Bill: Filed with customs along with invoice, packing list, export license, quality certificates, and GR/AR-4 forms.

GR Form (Exchange Control): Submitted to Customs and banks for verification of export proceeds.

AR-4 Form: For excisable goods under duty rebate or bond, endorsed by Customs.

Bill of Lading: Negotiable document between shipper, consignee, and carrier, serving as receipt and title of goods.

Export General Manifest (EGM): Filed by shipping lines detailing cargo loaded, submitted electronically and manually.

Pro Forma Invoice: Preliminary invoice to facilitate L/C and exchange control formalities.

Bank Guarantee / Legal Undertaking: Required for duty-free imports under certain conditions.

Certificate of Origin: Confirms origin of goods for preferential or non-preferential treatment.

Mate's Receipt: Issued by the ship's mate confirming receipt of cargo onboard.

Other required documents include insurance certificates, technical literature, phytosanitary certificates, purchase orders, L/C copies, IEC code, bank AD code, and SDF forms. These documents ensure smooth export clearance, compliance with customs regulations, and access to financial instruments for exporters. The relationship between marketing activities and logistics functions is illustrated in Figure 1.

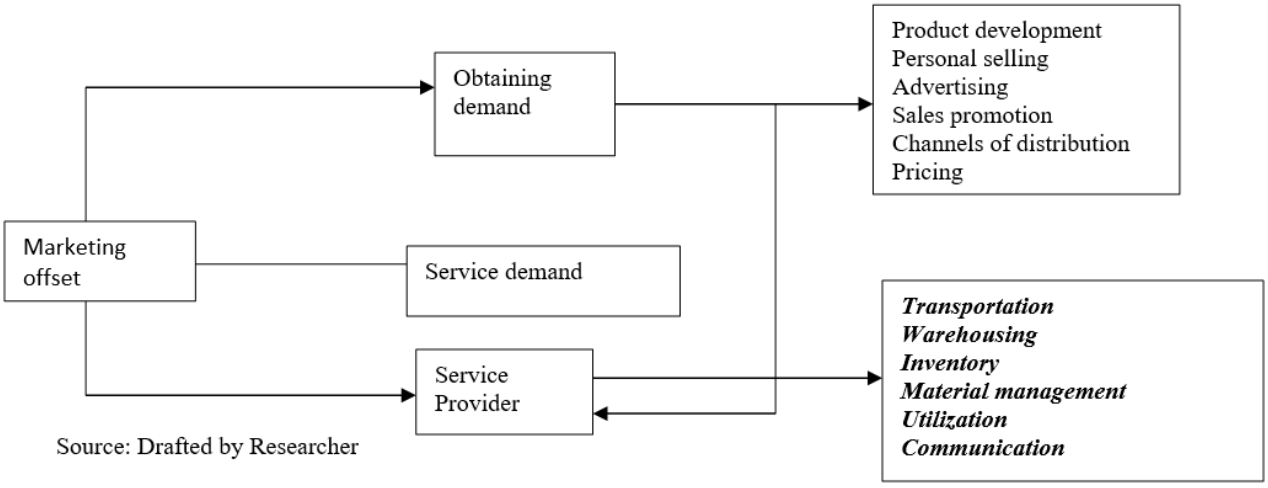


Figure 1 Marketing logistics interface

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4 Results and discussion of the study

Table 1 summarizes the descriptive survey results. The observations of the study provide a comprehensive overview of the operational practices, challenges, and satisfaction levels among respondents engaged in export activities, specifically in the garment sector. It was observed that 80% of respondents reported export activity and 20% reported import activity, while all respondents identified garments as their commodity. In terms of experience, the majority of respondents, accounting for 46%, have been operating in the business for more than sixteen years, indicating a highly experienced group of exporters. Regarding financial performance, over half of the respondents, 52%, reported an annual turnover exceeding 21,00,000, reflecting significant commercial activity and scale in their operations. However, operational challenges were evident in the export process. A substantial proportion, 76%, reported delays in cargo handling at the last minute, while 54% indicated that the cargo mostly reaches its destination on time. Despite this, a significant 86% of respondents stated that delays in cargo delivery cause problems, emphasizing the critical importance of timely logistics in maintaining smooth export operations. On the positive side, 92% of respondents confirmed that shipping agents provide their own container boxes, ensuring standardized handling and storage of goods. In terms of documentation and procedural challenges, 80% of respondents acknowledged delays in clearing export documents, and 66% noted that the charges for document amendments are very high, highlighting the administrative costs involved in international trade. Moreover, 72% of respondents reported that the issuance of the bill of lading is quick (28% reported it as slow), while 60% observed that the associated fees for terminal handling, documentation, and bill of lading are high, indicating areas where logistical efficiency could be improved. Respondents expressed overall satisfaction with certain services provided by shipping agents. Approximately 62% reported that the arrangement of cargo clearance is good, 54% were highly satisfied with the packing of goods, and another 62% expressed high satisfaction with the warehousing facilities. However, 68% of respondents indicated that the preparation of the shipping bill is slow, and the same percentage highlighted that no Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) facility is provided by shipping agents, reflecting areas where modernization and automation could enhance operational efficiency. Regarding selection and quality of shipping services, 76% of respondents reported selecting liners through buyer nominations in the descriptive survey (Table 1); the cross-tabulated frequencies in Table 2 imply a different split (56%/44%), which requires checking against the original responses, indicating reliance on importer preferences for shipping arrangements. In terms of service quality, 66% rated the quality of liner facilities provided by shipping agents as very good, and 72% assessed the quality of ocean freight as very good, suggesting a high level of satisfaction with core transport services despite procedural delays and administrative challenges. Overall, the study reveals a well-established and experienced group of garment exporters who are generally satisfied with the quality of logistical and shipping services, while also identifying key areas, such as document processing, EDI implementation, and last-minute cargo handling, that could benefit from further improvement.

Table 1 Survey responses of exporters on shipping agency services (n = 50)

ASPECT	RESPONSE	PERCENTAGE (%)
Nature of Business	Export	80
	Import	20
Nature of Commodity	Garments	100
	Machineries	0
Years of Experience	Less than 5 years	10
	6–10 years	20
	11–15 years	24
	Above 16 years	46
Annual Turnover	Less than 10,00,000	8
	11,00,000–15,00,000	16
	16,00,000–20,00,000	24
	Above 21,00,000	52
Cargo Delay at Last Minute	Yes	76
	No	24
Cargo Reaches on Time	Always	22
	Mostly	54
	Sometimes	18
	Not on Time	6
Problems Due to Delay	Yes	86
	No	14
Provision of Container Box	Yes	92
	No	8
Delay in Clearing Documents	Agree	80

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	Neutral	14
	Disagree	6
Charges for Document Amendment	Very High	66
	High	20
	Neutral	10
	Low	4
Issue of Bill of Lading	Quick	72
	Slow	28
B/L Fee, Terminal Handling & Documentation Charges	Very High	12
	High	60
	Neutral	18
	Low	10
Arrangement of Cargo Clearance	Very Good	16
	Good	62
	Fair	12
	Not Good	10
Packing of Goods	Highly Satisfied	54
	Satisfied	26
	Neutral	12
	Dissatisfied	8
	Highly Satisfied	62
	Satisfied	18
	Neutral	12
	Dissatisfied	8
Preparation of Shipping Bill	Slow	68
	Quick	32
EDI Facility Provided	Yes	32
	No	68
Selection of Liner	Through Buyer Nomination	76
	Through Shipping Agencies	24
Quality of Liner Facility	Very Good	66
	Good	14
	Fair	12
	Not Good	8
Status of Ocean Freight	Very Good	72
	Good	12
	Fair	16
	Not Good	0

Source: Primary data

For the contingency table in Table 2, the null hypothesis (H0) is that liner selection method and perceived liner service quality are independent. There is no significant difference between the nomination of liners operation and quality of liner service provided.

The alternative hypothesis (H1) is that liner selection method and perceived liner service quality are associated. There is significant relationship between the nomination of liners operation and quality of liner service provided.

Table 2 Liner selection and perceived quality of liner facilities

Selection of Liner	Quality of liner facilities				
	Very Good	**Good**	**Fair**	**Not Good**	**Total**
Through Buyers Nomination	17	6	4	1	28
Through Shipping Agencies	16	1	2	3	22
Total	**33**	**7**	**6**	**4**	**50**

Source: Primary data

Table 3 Pearson chi-square calculation based on reported observed frequencies

Observed (O), expected (E), differences, and cell contributions

O	E	O-E	$(O-E)^2$	$(O-E)^2/E$
17	18.48	-1.48	2.19	0.12
6	3.92	2.08	4.33	1.10
4	3.36	0.64	0.41	0.12
1	2.24	-1.24	1.54	0.69
16	14.52	1.48	2.19	0.15
1	3.08	-2.08	4.33	1.40
2	2.64	-0.64	0.41	0.16
3	1.76	1.24	1.54	0.87
Total				4.615

Degree Of Freedom

Degree of freedom = (r-1) X (c-1)
= (4-1) X (2-1)
= 3
Level of significance = 0.05
Table value = 7.815

Result Value:

Calculated value = 4.615
Table value @ 5%level = 7.815
Result = not statistically significant = not significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

The Pearson chi-square statistic calculated from the observed frequencies in Table 2 is $\chi^2(3) = 4.615$, $p = 0.202$ (Table 3). Thus, the null hypothesis of independence is not rejected at the 5% level. Six of the eight expected frequencies are below five, so the asymptotic chi-square approximation is unreliable. A conditional exact test using the Pearson statistic gives $p = 0.224$, likewise indicating no statistically significant association. The Table 2 row totals (28 and 22) are calculated from the eight reported cell counts, but they differ from the buyer-nomination totals (38 and 12) implied by Table 1. The underlying survey records must be checked to resolve this discrepancy; the corrected inferential results are conditional on the eight reported cell counts being accurate.

Firstly, shipping agencies need to address the problem of delays in clearing documents. Timely processing of export-related documentation is critical to avoid bottlenecks in the supply chain. By streamlining internal procedures, training staff, and ensuring proper coordination with customs authorities, agencies can significantly reduce delays and enhance the reliability of document clearance for exporters. Secondly, the preparation of shipping bills should be expedited. While 72% reported quick issuance of bills of lading, 68% reported slow preparation of shipping bills, which can disrupt shipment schedules and create operational inefficiencies. Shipping agents can implement standardized procedures, adopt modern software solutions, and allocate dedicated personnel for document processing to accelerate the issuance of these critical shipping documents. Thirdly, the charges associated with document amendments should be reduced. Many exporters perceive the cost of modifying shipping documents as excessively high, adding financial pressure to already tight operational budgets. Agencies should consider revising their fee structures or introducing flexible, cost-effective solutions to make document amendment charges more reasonable, thus fostering better exporter satisfaction and loyalty. Additionally, warehousing facilities provided by shipping agents can be improved. Efficient and secure warehousing is essential for storing goods before shipment, and improvements in storage space, handling equipment, and inventory management can enhance service quality. Agencies should consider investing in modern warehousing infrastructure, technology for tracking goods, and better maintenance practices to meet the expectations of exporters. Shipping agents should also review the overall fees associated with bill of lading, terminal handling, and other documentation. High costs in these areas were highlighted as a concern by the respondents. By rationalizing charges, improving operational efficiency, and adopting transparent pricing methods, agencies can reduce financial burdens on exporters and increase competitiveness in the shipping sector. The issue of cargo clearance delays should also be addressed. Exporters often face setbacks due to last-minute delays, affecting the timely delivery of goods. Shipping agencies can implement better coordination mechanisms with ports and customs, pre-clear cargo wherever possible, and ensure a smoother flow of goods to avoid these delays, thereby improving overall service reliability. Finally, shipping agencies are encouraged to adopt Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) processes, particularly for handling duty drawbacks and customs formalities. The integration of EDI systems can greatly accelerate the processing of shipping bills and other export documentation, reduce manual errors, and enhance transparency in transactions. By leveraging digital technologies, agencies can provide faster, more efficient services that meet the modern demands of international trade. In focusing on faster document processing, cost reduction, improved warehousing, timely cargo clearance, and adoption of EDI systems, shipping agencies can

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significantly enhance their service quality, improve exporter satisfaction, and strengthen their position in the competitive logistics and shipping sector. These measures are essential for ensuring smooth, timely, and cost-effective export operations.

5 Conclusion of the study

The present study was undertaken with the primary aim of identifying and analyzing the problems faced by shipping agencies, particularly in the context of exporters operating in Tiruppur. The researcher formulated specific objectives to guide the investigation and collected primary data directly from exporters associated with various shipping agencies in the region. The findings revealed significant operational challenges that impact the efficiency of shipping services and, consequently, the overall export process. Among the key issues identified, the study highlighted two major problems affecting shipping agencies: delays in clearing documents and delays in the preparation of shipping bills. These challenges were reported consistently by a majority of respondents, indicating that they are systemic and have a considerable effect on the timely movement of cargo. Delays in documentation not only slow down the export process but also create uncertainties for exporters, affecting their planning, shipment schedules, and financial transactions. Similarly, slow preparation of shipping bills can disrupt the export timeline, leading to dissatisfaction among exporters and potential financial losses. The study emphasizes that one of the most effective solutions to address these issues is the adoption of Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) systems by shipping agencies. EDI technology allows for faster and more accurate processing of shipping documents, minimizes human error, and provides real-time updates to exporters, customs authorities, and other stakeholders. Implementing EDI not only accelerates document clearance but also reduces administrative burden, ensures transparency, and improves overall operational efficiency. Furthermore, the study sheds light on the broader implications of these operational challenges for the shipping industry. By understanding the specific problems faced by shipping agencies, the findings provide valuable insights for improving service quality, reducing operational delays, and enhancing customer satisfaction. Exporters benefit directly when shipping agents streamline their processes, reduce costs associated with document amendments, accelerate the preparation of shipping bills, and adopt modern technological solutions for cargo management. In conclusion, this study serves as a comprehensive assessment of the challenges faced by shipping agencies in Tiruppur and underscores the critical need for process improvements and technological adoption. By addressing the problems of delayed documentation and slow shipping bill preparation through the implementation of EDI systems, shipping agencies can significantly enhance their efficiency, reliability, and competitiveness. Ultimately, the study contributes to a better understanding of operational bottlenecks in the shipping sector and provides actionable recommendations to ensure smoother, faster, and more cost-effective export operations, benefiting both exporters and shipping agencies alike. The contingency-table analysis based on the reported cell counts did not find a statistically significant association between liner selection method and perceived service quality (conditional exact $p = 0.224$). The discrepancy between marginal frequencies and the cross-tabulated observations remains unresolved pending verification of the original questionnaire data.

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