



The effect of service guarantee on customer satisfaction: Evidence from elected companies in the Ghanaian courier industry

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Abstract:

This research examined how courier companies in Ghana use service assurances in their operations while serving consumers. It investigated how service reliability, responsiveness, certainty, and empathy impact customer satisfaction. In this study, a quantitative research technique was applied. Questionnaires were given to 120 customers from 10 Ghanaian local courier businesses to get first-hand information on internal procedures and consumer impressions of service guarantee. Correlation and regression analyses were used to investigate the impact of a variety of service quality parameters on customer satisfaction. All the traits, including reliability, responsiveness, certainty, and empathy, were found to be positively associated to customer satisfaction. Again, the study found that courier companies in Ghana lack a systematic way to track the efficiency of their service guarantee initiatives, relying instead on user feedback. Furthermore, these Ghanaian courier firms concentrated on breakdowns while ignoring time and human mistakes, which account for most reported failures. Customers' reluctance to complaining says companies should take the initiative and respond to complaints swiftly. To improve their service, guarantee efforts, and ensure customer satisfaction after a service failure, couriers should create an automatic invocation guarantee policy and ensure that they monitor and respond to customer complaints.

Keywords:

Service guarantee; Customer satisfaction; Service quality; Courier services.

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1. Introduction

Every firm or business aims to continue to be useful and successful in the fast-growing global market. In terms of generating profitable growth and standing out in the competition, firms must begin by strategically competing through service and new solutions for business clients. Quality service cuts across various industries and businesses, and this area cannot be highlighted enough without emphasizing the services the courier industry provides. Businesses engaging in this industry are meant to provide guaranteed speed, safety, and service, which are one of the core reasons they stand out of traditional postal companies (Hasni, 2015).

The growth of global ecosystems has necessitated the use of courier services and Ghana's courier service is no different. Connectivity, speed to market, and simple digital product offerings are at the forefront of what enterprises across the supply chain are focusing on in terms of business strategy, thanks to increased mobile activity (Sullivan, 2021). Global competition is so ubiquitous – this is because firms are increasingly focusing on improving their marketing strategies to survive and remain competitive (Katsikeas et al. 2019). This is proven by the increasing number of courier organizations or enterprises in Ghana's courier services industry, as well as the popularity of online shopping (Alimo & Zhao, 2018). Some courier companies have realized the need to look for new strategies for gaining and maintaining a competitive edge over their competitors by using unique service features to provide superior value for the customers (Ilovi, 2008).

Considering the current global pandemic which calls for social distancing, the services of the courier industry have become very critical. This is evidenced in the Philippines where the demand for the services of the top five courier services peaked in the heat of the Covid-19 pandemic (Dones & Young, 2020). As a result, the courier industry has subsequently received considerable attention. Maintaining overall service quality in courier services might help establish a competitive edge. As a result, courier service is a key element that may influence customer happiness as well as the company's profitability. (Libo-on, 2021).

The literature on the subject reviewed showed a dominance of studies within the hospitality industry (Atsutsey & Tandoh-Offin, 2013; Chang & Cheng, 2021); the banking industry (Ahmed et al., 2020; Lubis et al., 2021). Arguably, several studies centered on the courier industry (e.g., Pei et al., 2021; Rajendran, 2020; Zhang et al., 2021). Rajendran (2020), for example, explored online evaluations submitted for package and delivery service firms on social networking sites and discovered that shipment mishandling, products being delivered late or lost in the system, unhelpful online customer support among others to be the primary causes for customer dissatisfaction.

These studies on the courier industry however, also focused on the United States (Rajendran, 2020), and Asia (Dones & Young, 2020; Pei et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021) with a handful arguably on Ghana (Ofori-Atta, 2015; Sarfo, 2018). The research in Ghana, on the other hand, focused on the approaches that courier firms have in position as service guarantee procedures when there is a service failure from the perspective of the managers or business owners. This leaves a gap for further research on the topic in Ghana where the focus will be on the frontline staff of the courier firms instead of only the managers, as the front-line employees are particularly important to the service experience of customers (Solomon et al., 1985).

Furthermore, few service businesses, according to Crisafulli and Singh (2016), have given much thought to service guarantee. The service guarantee as a recovery approach has a lot of advantages. In the Ghanaian courier business, however, there are presumably fewer studies that have investigated the impact of service guarantees on customer satisfaction. Despite the efforts of several academics to explore the topic of service assurances, the problem remains unsolved (McCullough, 2010; Meyer et al., 2014). This study is conducted based on the realization that research focusing on service guarantee as well as the impact it has on consumer

satisfaction in the courier sector in African countries especially Ghana is limited. The goal of this study is to fill a current gap in information as well as add to knowledge.

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the effect of service guarantees on customer satisfaction within the Ghanaian courier industry. The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To identify the extent to which service reliability affects customer satisfaction in the Ghanaian courier industry.
2. To assess the effect of responsiveness on customer satisfaction in the Ghanaian courier industry.
3. To find out how assurance in service provision affects customer satisfaction in the Ghanaian courier service sector.
4. To identify the role of empathy on customer satisfaction.

The study focuses on the courier firms who operate predominantly within the capital city of Ghana.

2. Literature review

This chapter examines previous research work and information relating to the research questions of the study which are to examine the effect of implementing service guarantees for improved customer satisfaction in the Ghanaian courier industry.

2.1 Overview of the courier industry in Ghana

In 2006, the Ghanaian government established the Postal and Courier Services Regulatory Commission (PCSRC) (2019) to oversee the industry. Since then, the commission has been instrumental in bringing the sector to its current level. This is evident in the industry's current growth. Certainly, the increase in the number of players in the business from a few to over 1000, as well as the development in services and the fierce rivalry that exists, all point to growth in the courier industry.

Locally, Eagle Express and many other businesses are building a name for themselves by offering excellent customer service. On the international landscape, however, prominent firms like as DHL, EMS, and FedEx are also making significant contributions to the industry's growth. Even though the courier service business has a bright future, it must be fostered to remain consistent. It will also be vital to provide level playing fields for all participants for the industry's growth, since competition will play a significant role.

It will need a concerted effort by participants and the PCSRC to ensure full manifestation the industry's growth. The commission will be expected to keep its restrictions in place to ensure an equality of opportunity; participants will be compelled to provide quality services; and competition will ensure that consumers pay a fair price for the services they get.

2.2 A brief review of service delivery concept

The Kanban Method is founded on the premise that by viewing the workplace as an environment of interconnected activities and being able to control and organise in a service-centered way, firms will be equipped to deal with the plethora of complexities (Adaku et al., 2018). This simplifies things significantly by allowing an organization to be conceived as a range of providers, with each node representing a service that spans many roles across the corporate structure. This allows for business management to allow each service to grow individually, using fitness criterion measurements that reflect the desired quality of service each consumer require to satisfy their own demands. As a result, external consumer demands and expectations can

spread throughout a company's interconnected services, resulting in large-scale and holistic improvements from localized changes at the service level (Jovčić et al., 2019).

2.2.1 Service delivery principles

Three service delivery concepts that apply to the whole network, and not just one service, are recognized by Kanban as discussed in the next subsection. Making policies plain allows these three concepts to be debated (Anderson, 2016). It allows them to be reviewed by many people, and it typically makes the policies purpose clear. The dangers associated with policy transactions are well acknowledged. Therefore, if risks alter the policy, it may be questioned and amended. The policy's propriety, as well as the effect it creates, might be questioned.

Service classes are a collection of policies. A collection of policies that specify how a piece of work should be handled is referred to as a class of service. Consumer expectations and the fitness criteria through which the customer evaluates performance should be clearly matched with service classes (Aguinis, 2019). Organizations that think in terms of policies are better positioned to serve their consumers.

Policy considerations can aid in aligning with change management concepts. When organisations think of a system as a framework of measures for making a decision on how work is handled instead of a methodology based on predetermined work process, positions, and obligations. They focus on the task rather than the workforce making it less possible to address behaviour resistance to change, when changing a strategy or an individual's responsibilities.

2.2.2 Focus on the customer

Recognize and concentrate on the requirements and expectations of your consumers. When it comes to establishing consumer loyalty and keeping them coming back for more, being fit for purpose is critical (Shafiee & Bazargan, 2018). Focusing on the consumer, necessitates an understanding of their requirements. The consumer base must be segmented depending on their requirements and expectations. Customers must also be evaluated based on the criteria they use to determine whether they are pleased with the service and whether they would suggest or speak highly of the company.

Fitness Criteria are these criteria and must be embraced as the criterion that drives improvement initiatives (Juran & De Feo, 2010). To do so, you must first have a clear grasp of who your consumers are, what they ask for, and what they want in terms of service. By focusing on the client, a system with appropriate capacity, capacity allocation, and service classes that can satisfy their demands may be developed to meet within the organization's limits and risk tolerance level.

2.3 Service quality and customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction, according to Abd-El-Salam et al. (2013), is the consequence of a customer's assessment of perceived quality and actual service performance. Customer satisfaction or discontent may result from this comparison. According to Kaura and Datta (2012), customer satisfaction shows a consumer's belief that using or possessing a certain service would elicit favourable sensations. While Li-hua (2012) compared customer satisfaction to an expectancy/disconfirmation paradigm, most customer satisfaction research is based on this paradigm. Expectations, performance, disconfirmation, and satisfaction are the four constructs covered. The confirmation or incredulity that may emerge from a mismatch between expected and actual service quality during or after service consumption.

Client satisfaction may be characterized as contentment, joy, or ambivalence depending on the sort of service offered to the customer at a certain purchase occasion (Namkung & Jang, 2010). Price, service features, product

perceptions, and service quality may all influence customer happiness. Customer perception, on the other hand, has a direct influence on how consumers rate the service (Ryu et al., 2012).

2.4 Service recovery

The process of regaining consumer confidence after a service breakdown is known as service recovery (Wang & Alexander, 2018). After a failure, service recovery is designed to compensate for the customer's dissatisfaction in not being pleased (Borah et al., 2020). After issues in the usual service, service recovery is a specific activity made to guarantee that clients receive the proper level of service (Hewagama et al., 2019).

There are three strategies to achieve service recovery: distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice (Babin et al., 2021; Mujiyanti et al., 2020). Customers feel distributive justice because of the interaction process between customers and employees during the complaint handling procedure; procedural justice would be the value of fairness embedded in the trustworthiness of the complaint submission process; and interactional justice is the value of justice perceived by consumers because of the interaction process between customers and workers during the complaint handling method (Babin et al., 2021; Bacile et al., 2018). Furthermore, service recovery can be measured using the dimensions of online service recovery, which include responsiveness, compensation, and contact.

2.5 Characteristics of effective service guarantee

According to this study, the characteristics reliability, assurance, and empathy, as well as their individual effects on customer satisfaction, were utilized to quantify the amount of service guarantee.

2.5.1 Reliability

According to Izogo (2017), reliability demonstrates the service provider's capacity to deliver dependable and accurate services. Furthermore, it entails making the proper decision on the first attempt, and it is a critical customer service component (Shanka, 2012). To increase service guarantee, reliability must be improved. This is because when a company is unreliable, it communicates a lack of interest in what customers care about. Customers may create a poor impression of the company and will quickly move to a rival (Hays & Hill, 2006).

Many types of service firms find it difficult to maintain a greater degree of reliability daily. Customers see, feel, and assess service sector catastrophes as soon as they interact with the company (Parasuraman et al., 1991). When services are supplied in a sector like the courier business, there is a lot of heterogeneity.

2.5.2 Assurance

It means to instil trust and confidence in others. Assurance is described as workers' comprehension of civility and the firm's and its employees' capacity to maintain a high level (Ramya et al., 2019). This factor is likely to be especially significant for services that consumers consider to be high-risk and/or about which they are unsure of their capacity to appraise. Trust and confidence may be represented by the person who connects the client to the firm, such as the marketing department. As a result, staff are aware of the need of establishing customer trust and confidence in order to acquire a competitive edge and client loyalty.

2.5.3 Empathy

Understanding consumers' needs and offering them special attention is the foundation of empathy. Empathy is a factor that reflects employee and customer relationships (Raza et al., 2023). Customers have an expectation that the service provider would understand and care about their specific requirements and desires.

As a service provider, attempting to comprehend the issue from the perspective of the consumer provides a clearer picture of what is occurring (Stickdorn et al., 2018). In the service sector, it is critical to demonstrate awareness and knowledge to address clients' concerns.

Empathy requires staff to pay special attention to customers, to interact with them in a caring manner, and to understand their needs (Raza et al., 2023).

2.6 Customer satisfaction and the effect on service reliability

Providing service as promised

According to Meesala and Paul (2018), the reliability and reputation of a courier business are the primary reasons for clients to pick one over another. Customers are frequently assured of security and urgency by courier providers during transactions. Customers will have more faith and trust if the required service is provided by staff (Utami, 2015).

One of the main components of customer happiness, according to Selvakumar (2015), is providing services as promised. Delivering on promises and getting things right the first time is a great approach to impress consumers, this will lead to repeat business. According to research, delivery is the most crucial aspect for consumers, and if it is not met, it is one of the leading causes of desertion (Bell et al., 2020). As a result, delivering on promises is critical in every business. This will enhance a company's reputation, and a strong reputation increases the likelihood of repeat business. Furthermore, word of mouth will drive new revenue and will set a company apart from its competitors. The reason being that they may sell similar products, but their company could lack in delivering as promised.

2.6.1 Reliability in handling customer service problems

Complaints, according to Stauss et al. (2019), provide businesses with an opportunity to remedy current problems. Furthermore, they frequently offer helpful suggestions for refining products and services, changing marketing strategies, or adjusting material and service information. Customers should not be disregarded when they have problems. This should allow a company to listen to challenges that arise from time to time. Error recovery is a skill that businesses may master. Dissatisfied customers may become loyal customers if problems are handled appropriately. This is necessary for maintaining a good reputation.

According to Ilovi (2008), courier firms compete in every manner to keep existing customers and sign on new ones to demonstrate their reliability. We no longer have an industry where effective advertising and corporate social responsibility bring in customers in today's market. Customers must be persuaded to remain loyal to a company rather than switching to a competitor. Clients have a plethora of options to pick from because of the huge growth, and most businesses will want to have these customers on their side (Nimnada, 2022). Customers' expectations of courier services are frequently higher than their perceptions of those services. Customers are continuously on the lookout for any signs that could be used as indicators of trustworthiness.

2.6.2 Performing services right at the first time

The most efficient technique for minimizing mistakes in a service organization is to ensure that tasks are completed correctly the first time. This entails ensuring that all jobs are completed correctly the first time and every other time in a company (Wasshausen et al., 2016). The initial step in correctly running service processes the first time is to evaluate current performance. Employees might start by calculating and comparing the volume of transactions that meet this criterion to the total number of transactions. That is any internal procedure that allows input from a third party to be assessed. Employees can then address the problem logically and discover the reasons behind poor service performance (Paul et al., 2016).

Managers of courier services may be accustomed to judging their employees based on how long it takes to resolve a client issue. Customers may not always receive complete information from workers, which might lead to frequent complaints. As a result, it is critical to link an employee's performance to activities accomplished correctly the first time (Abualoush et al., 2018).

2.6.3 Maintaining error free records

A company's capacity to engender trust is based on its ability to capture and keep customers. This conveys trustworthiness since their representatives and agents are available to assist them when needed, and the fact that their clients' records are error-free (Odhiambo, 2019). According to Karanja (2014), keeping accurate records allows a company to run more efficiently. This, in turn, could lead to profit. Accurate records enable businesses to keep track of their income, expenses, assets, and liabilities in real time. Error-free records are a crucial necessity for service companies.

It can be difficult to keep track of business records initially. Breaking down activities and responsibilities into simple, achievable tasks is the key. This will allow an employee to keep their data up to date and readily access them in the future. When a company's records are questionable, it is impossible for a client to see how business operations have improved (Ukil, 2016).

2.7 Effect of assurance on customer satisfaction

2.7.1 Keeping customers informed as to when services will be performed

The methods adopted to keep customers informed when difficulties arise, according to Ukil (2016), can enhance or weaken the connection. Keeping clients up to date on what's going on can have long-term consequences for the connection. Firms squander an opportunity to improve customer connections by letting customers sort through their difficulties alone and not demonstrating proactiveness. The client will feel properly taken care of and that he is receiving his money's worth if the customer understands that the company is working hard to solve the situation (Ramya et al., 2019).

Employees should be given the opportunity to exercise discretion in notifying clients on the progress of their demand, as well as a platform for asking questions when they are unsure (El Saghier & Nathan, 2013). Employees should know their customers' needs and what they think of the firm. Firms may be able to develop relationships with customers that will benefit both parties by talking to them about their needs. Moreover, organizations can form a platform where customers can give their views about products or services to ensure that they meet their needs. Greater understanding of their requirements and informing them through feedback from customer communications increases customer satisfaction (Dadfar et al., 2013).

2.7.2 Prompt service to customers

Al Idrus et al. (2021) claimed that no matter how good one is at work, one should constantly deliver great service to customers. Responding immediately to consumer questions and inquiries, as well as contacting your clients, are examples of these. Customers' rapid comprehension of the firm is demonstrated by greeting them cheerfully, involving them in determining what they have come for, and answering swiftly and accurately to inquiries. Failure to do so might cost a company money and hurt its reputation (Sadgrove, 2015).

Prompt services encourages a feeling of connectedness. Customers will trust that the provider can provide the service. If the consumer believes that the services provided are frequently delayed, he or she will be dissatisfied. It casts doubt on the service provider's competency (Ramya et al., 2019). Customer happiness hinges on the level of service offered by employees and the ties they establish. Employees must comprehend, believe in, and be proud of the company in which they work. As a result, they will be able to serve their consumers more quickly (Tax et al., 2013).

2.7.3 *Willingness to help customers*

First impressions are important. Specifically, how businesses respond to and treat first-time clients influences whether they will return. If customers are well served, they may recommend the company to others (Parasuraman et al., 1991). Sincere appreciation, probing questions to determine what customers require, and swiftly and accurately responding to inquiries demonstrate commitment and eagerness to assist. Customers' willingness should always be enhanced to receive a tip of contentment. By freely asking direct questions and having knowledge of the customers' records and progress, the firm sends a message to the customers that it wants to help them, resulting in a sense of satisfaction. Employees who are creative problem solvers are essential for businesses.

They should constantly ensure that they fully comprehend the customer's situation and offer alternative solutions. Employees are frequently expected to come out with answers that meet the requirements of a specific consumer as they arise (Ramya et al., 2019). It is beneficial to aid an employee in obtaining more assistance if they are unable to find a solution that works for the customer. Customers' perceptions can be shifted by following up to ensure that problems are fixed. It is stated that the most significant parts of customer retention and happiness is demonstrating to customers that the provider is eager to help them in their time of need (Tax et al., 2013).

2.7.4 *Preparedness to respond to customers*

Customers anticipate prompt responses to queries, according to Al Idrus et al. (2021). As a result, they should not be ignored or deferred only because there are underlining difficulties. Some companies offer online support, allowing customers to get quick answers to their issues. Email inquiries and phone calls should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and dealt with as needed (Dadfar et al., 2013). Customers are relationships that take time and effort to build and maintain. Losing customers results in the loss of a business opportunity. Most firms focus on obtaining or earning clients, but they are hesitant to follow up to keep them.

A business and its personnel should be prepared to answer customers' queries concerning products and services they provide (Shanka, 2012). Customers want to engage with entrepreneurs who are eager to answer quickly to questions regarding the good or service they are marketing or providing. It represents staff' preparedness and ability to service clients as quickly as possible. When courier service providers treat their customers professionally and competently, they can instil feelings of preparedness in them. Customers have faith in a company's ability to respond to their request based on previous experience. Customers can be reasonably certain that their next request will be responded to if a company routinely responds quickly to their enquiries.

2.8 Effect of empathy on customer satisfaction

2.8.1 *Giving customers' individual attention*

Customers are more satisfied, according to Ramya et al. (2019), if they believe they have been served in a way that considers their own specific requirements. When it comes to customer service, businesses frequently deal with many clients who appear to be the same, but it is crucial to realize that each one is unique. Anything that can be done to make each customer feel as if they have had the firm's undivided attention and have been treated with respect boosts their pleasure. Creating two-way communication between customers and businesses, tracking customer Behavior, and providing customers with personalized information all add to a sense of belonging to a particular brand or company.

Any beneficial improvement in today's competitive business climate is likely to create a competitive advantage. Employees that pay attention to their consumers leave a favourable impression in the minds of their clients (Ukil, 2016). Clients love a firm that provides them with options and alternatives, especially when company personnel make them feel as if they want their customers to have the finest experience possible by providing

them with personalized service. Customers will feel valued and treated differently as a result of this approach. It is critical to comprehend not only what a customer says, but also how they feel, in order to offer them the attention they deserve. Recognizing and understanding the emotional condition of customers is a necessary ability for providing this service.

A consumer may be persuaded to choose one courier company over another, but without a strong relationship marketing plan based on market knowledge, the customer may simply choose another company that provides identical services. While courier companies use elements of both relationships and transactional marketing or paying attention to consumers, is becoming more important (Tax et al., 2013).

2.8.2 Employees who deal with customers in a caring fashion

Employees, as pointed out by Ukil (2016), are the company's frontline, interacting with customers and representing the brand on a regular basis. Customers who are abused or ignored by employees will not always complain about what they perceive to be impersonal treatment; instead, they will leave and never return, which no company wants. Instead, a company should begin by caring about its clients to adopt a competitive advantage and attract customers. A business that hires personnel who enjoy what they do attracts customers and makes a good impression. Customers will desire to engage in business with a particular organisation if the reps provide real and thoughtful service (Dadfar et al., 2013).

2.8.3 Employees that are informed of their customers' requirements

Every business needs a reason for their customers to choose them over their counterparts. Customers are quite satisfied with companies like Fidelity Bank and MTN. It is not surprising, given that these businesses place a premium on market research and marketing as techniques for determining what customers want and need (Al Idrus et al., 2021). Knowing what customers want and being able to direct actions to meet those needs can increase client loyalty.

When working with consumers, a true professional should always answer in a way that demonstrates that they are aware of their demands (Ukil, 2016). That principle is reciprocated in the operations of the most successful corporate relationships. Customers who are satisfied, according to Abualoush et al. (2018), inform others about their experiences. As a result, favourable word of mouth advertising will increase. Existing clients are frequently an underutilized source of income that may save organizations time and money through referrals. It is only natural that you would want to keep them around if possible. In today's competitive market, a firm must ensure that more of its consumers are loyal, emotionally involved clients who not only spend with the company, but also generate revenue by recommending it to others.

Workers at companies should be allowed to work in dynamic, stress-free environments that allow them to interact with consumers in a cost-effective manner while not jeopardizing the firm's reputation or driving away customers (Odhiambo, 2015). Overall staff productivity and mission performance will improve when the materials used for the service are compatible. This can be accomplished by utilizing modern technologies in the workplace to assist in meeting client requests. Consumers may rely on organizations to a considerable extent, so organizations' dedication to understanding their customers' needs is critical. Employees must truly grasp the demands of their clients and provide a comprehensive explanation of each product to customers while dealing with complex items like insurance, finances, and courier. When these clients are provided with the services they desire, they will feel a sense of connection, which may lead to their loyalty to a certain company.

Whenever customers are presented with a problem that necessitates the knowledge of the employees, they become upset when firms fail to provide them with what they require. Customers' needs will aid a company in defining and creating new market prospects. As a result of the constantly changing economy and dynamic technology, customers perceive a rapid shift in personal likes and preferences, and they want businesses to grasp these shifts (Timothy & Ron, 2013).

2.9 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is based on research from Njeru et al. (2019) that suggest empathy, assurance, and reliability have the biggest impact on customer satisfaction. According to Kaura and Datta (2012), empathy, assurance, and reliability dimensions of service quality are also observed through the people component of service quality. According to previous studies (e.g., Chatterjee et al., 2022; Sharma et al., 2022), these Service Quality (SERVQUAL) criteria have the significant effect on customer satisfaction; therefore, the five service quality components have been reduced to empathy, assurance, and reliability and used in developing the conceptual framework for this study (see Fig. 1). Also, since these components can only be obtained through the people element of service quality, the elements of service quality (people, process, and physical evidence) have been limited to the people component.



Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework

Source: Authors' construct, 2022

3. Research methods

In order to investigate the impact of service guarantee on customer satisfaction, the study used a quantitative survey. Quantitative research, according to Creswell et al. (2007), is suitable for analysing and understanding a phenomenon by gathering numerical data and analysing it using statistical or mathematical methodologies borrowed from statistical areas.

3.1 Population and Sampling

This study focuses on the local courier industry in Ghana. The study covered ten (10) courier companies which included Aramex Ghana Limited, Bolt Food, Eagle Express, Emirad Express, Unique Express Courier Services, Ghana Post Company Limited, Glovo Ghana, Jumia Ghana, StreetXpress, and Swift Courier Services. Because the research is an industry inquiry, numerous cases were used instead of a single example. This method was chosen to provide an in-depth understanding of the courier industries' service guarantee.

As per Saunders et al. (2009), there are two types of sampling strategies. Non-probability or judgemental sampling and probability or representative sampling are the two types of sampling. According to Bell and Bryman (2007), probability sampling occurs when in a population, a unit has the same chance of being chosen. Because data would be obtained from respondents as they were available, the study used a simple random sampling technique.

Customers of ten local courier firms were included in the study. Customers are served by courier firms who deliver their items to various locations. For the study, a total of 120 questionnaires were issued.

3.2 Profiles of sampled firms

Aramex offers a wide range of innovative transportation and logistics technologies to support business needs. From warehousing to facility management and value-added services, they help make businesses more efficient and increase customer satisfaction. Services can be easily applied to a variety of business models across varying industries.

Eagle Express Limited is a logistics service provider experienced in the management of courier/dispatch operations. Incorporated in 2008, Eagle Express is licensed by the Postal and Courier Services Regulatory Commission (PCSRC) to provide delivery solutions within Ghana. Eagle Express consistently support firms by providing bespoke and complex delivery and value-added services including Cash on Delivery (COD) for leading e-commerce giants.

Emirad Express is a dependable delivery, transportation & logistics service registered in 2019 under the Registration of Business Names Act, 1962 (No.151) of the Republic of Ghana. Emirad Express is committed to deliver on time and ensure all goods and packages are handled with extreme care to enhance maximum safety and security.

Ghana Post was incorporated by an Act of Parliament, Act 505 in August 1995 thereby formally separating it from Ghana Telecom Company. By this Act of incorporation, the corporation was expected to operate on sound commercial lines, and to be self-supporting. As the nation's designated operator, with a network of 360 post offices across the country, Ghana Post provides courier, financial services (remittances, post assurance and agency services) and traditional mail services.

Glovo is an online delivery platform (web and app) that connect customers with businesses that want to expand their offer beyond the doors of their establishment and sell online. Present in 30 countries and with more than 3.4 million active users, Glovo leads the food delivery market in both orders and the number of restaurants.

Bolt Food is a delivery platform that provides fast, high-quality food delivery services at affordable prices. The food team is responsible for the entire process, from ordering to the customers' doorstep. Bolt Food also offers thousands of couriers the chance to earn extra money on their own schedule.

Jumia, Ghana's no. 1 online retailer was established in 2014 with the aim and vision to become the one-stop shop for retail in Ghana with implementation of best practices both online and offline. Jumia is the largest online retail store in Ghana.

StreetXpress Logistics is a limited liability company registered under the Companies Code of the Republic of Ghana, incorporated in 2017, licensed and in good standing with the Postal and Courier Service Regulatory Commission, Ghana. StreetXpress is also a proud member of the Invest in Africa (IIA) Partner Pool. StreetXpress is a wholly owned Ghanaian company.

Unique Express Courier Services is a domestic courier service established in 2007 which is also registered in Ghana with the Postal and Courier Service Regulatory Commission. Unique Express Courier Services offers

services such as parcel delivery, special service, freight air and sea freight, imports, door to door services, proof of deliveries, online tracking, and mass mailing. The company operates across all Ghanaian regional capitals.

Swift Courier is a subsidiary of Swift Courier Services –U.S. A’s largest parcel delivery network. Swift Courier Services was founded in 1990 and has more than 25 years of operating experience, with presence in over 10,000 locations. Swift Courier is a strategic partner of DPD Group, an International Parcel Delivery Services Company owned by Swift Courier.

3.3 Data Collection Instrument

Nurani (2009) delineates data collection instrument as a device utilized to elicit data for research. It comprises questionnaires, interviews, laboratory experiments and polls among others. Creswell et al. (2007) further assert that the choice of collecting data is dictated by the nature of the study, sample size, the objectives, period and available resources for the study. The questionnaire was the primary research tool used to gather information from the chosen respondents. The questionnaire was created based on a review of the literature on the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first section required the respondents to give their background characteristics (age, sex, level of education among others).

The subsequent sections required respondents to give responses in relation to the extent of their satisfaction with the four service quality dimensions (reliability, assurance, empathy and responsiveness). Table 1 presents the number of items for each construct and their sources. The last section of the questionnaire focused on overall satisfaction of customers. Questionnaires were administered to respondents mainly during the hours of 8am to 3pm. Considering the fact that these are the productive hours of the day, some respondents were hesitant to partake, and even those who made time to answer questionnaires were impatient.

Table 1. *Satisfaction Levels Regarding Various Services Quality Dimensions*

Construct	No. of Items	Source
Reliability of Service	5	Sullivan et al. (1996)
Responsiveness	5	Lee et al. (2000)
Assurance	4	Donthu and Yoo (1998)
Empathy	5	Shanka (2012)

Source: Authors’ construct (2022)

Pilot research was carried out to detect faults in design and instruments, as well as to provide proxy data for sample selection (Ikart, 2019).

3.4 Data Processing and Analysis

The first step of data analysis in this study was to check for accuracy, consistency and completeness. Each questionnaire completed by the respondent was checked for accuracy and consistency of the responses to the items on the instrument. The questionnaire was also checked for comprehensiveness of the responses. After editing, a template was developed and used to create a data analysis matrix on the computer, as well as code

responses to the items on the instrument. After coding, the data was then entered into the computer's analysis matrix developed with the computer software, SPSS version 21.

A frequency distribution table was used to illustrate the results on the respondents' socio-demographic variables. To determine the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction, a simple linear regression was performed for each of the service quality attributes and total customer satisfaction. Test for statistical significance was obtained at 95 percent confidence level (Marshall & Jonker, 2011).

4. Results and discussions

The demographic features of respondents were explored in Table 2. The gender distribution of the responses is represented graphically.

Table 2. *Demographic details of respondents*

Demographics	Categories	Frequencies	Percentages
Gender	Male	58	48
	Female	62	52
Age	18 – 25 years	27	22
	25 – 30 years	28	23
	31 – 40 years	57	48
	41 – 50 years	5	4
	51 – 60 years	3	3
Level of Education	No formal education	4	3
	Secondary	5	4
	Tertiary	92	77
	Postgraduate	19	16
Profession	Government employee	31	26
	Private employee	37	31
	Self employed	26	22
	Student	15	12
	Unemployed	11	9
Courier Companies	Aramex GH	4	3
	Bolt food	31	26
	Eagles Express	7	6
	Emirad Express	5	4
	Ghana Post Company Limited	15	13
	Glovo Ghana	13	11
	Unique Express Courier Services	4	3
	Jumia Ghana	33	28
	StreetXpress	3	2
	Swift Courier Services	5	4

Source: Field data, (2022)

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The use of descriptive statistics to analyse the data is critical. To put it another way, descriptive statistics analysis is a prerequisite for understanding more advanced statistical analyses, such as inference drawing. When data is presented effectively, it is typically obvious whether the author collected and processed the data correctly and in accordance with accepted field practice (Spriestersbach et al., 2009). The descriptive statistics are used to determine the degree to which respondents agree or disagree with the questions in numerical terms. Table 3 shows the overall mean and standard deviation of all the variables.

Table 3. Central Tendency Measure of Variables

	Number	Mean	Stand. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum
Reliability	120	3.67	0.833	1.20	5.00
Responsiveness	120	3.56	0.900	1.20	5.00
Assurance	120	3.61	0.696	1.75	5.00
Empathy	120	3.77	0.790	1.25	5.00
Service Satisfaction	120	3.82	0.710	2	5.00

Source: Field data (2022)

4.2 Data Validity and Reliability

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test found in Table 4 determines how well the data is suited for factor analysis. The test determines sampling adequacy for each variable in the model as well as for the entire model. The statistic is a measure of the proportion of variance that may be common variation among variables. The lesser the proportion, the better your data is suited for Factor Analysis. KMO values between 0.8 and 1 suggest acceptable sampling. KMO values less than 0.5 indicate that the sampling is insufficient, and that corrective action should be performed (Creswell et al., 2007).

Considering the above, all the variables in the table have KMO above 0.5 and are considered adequate. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity compares an observed correlation matrix to the identity matrix (Taherdoost et al., 2014). Essentially it checks to see if there is a certain redundancy between the variables that we can summarize with a few numbers of factors. The null hypothesis of the test is that the variables are orthogonal, i.e., not correlated. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity test show the data is not an identity matrix and that the construct correlate with each other ($P < 0.05$).

Table 4. Validity Test (KMO and Bartlett's Test and Factor Loadings/CFA)

		Reliability	Responsiveness	Assurance	Empathy
		0.707	0.784	0.539	0.755
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Square Df	560.394	838.142	214.433	342.658
	Sig.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

Source: Field data, (2022)

4.3 Validity of Instrument

Factor analysis in Table 5 allows us to measure the ratio of an item's unique variance to its shared variance, known as communalities. It is advisable to remove any item with Communalities score of less than 0.2 (Wasshausen et al., 2016). Hence, from the Communalities table, the third item of Empathy construct was removed from the analysis. Reliability was analysed with five items, Responsiveness with five items, Assurance with four items, Empathy with five items.

Table 5. Validity of Instrument

Communalities				
Initials				
Construct	Reliability	Responsiveness	Assurance	Empathy
1	0.868	0.836	0.807	0.729
2	0.863	0.854	0.905	0.840
3	0.959	0.898	0.831	0.350
4	0.875	0.813	0.887	0.740
5	0.960	0.841		0.839

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Source: Field data, (2022)

4.4 Reliability Test (Cronbach Alpha test)

From the Cronbach's Alpha interpretation, the Responsiveness has the highest internal consistency reliability with the value of 0.955 followed by Reliability with 0.889. From the result in Table 6, all variables have good internal consistency reliability because they passed the threshold of 0.6. Most professionals use a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.6 or higher as a requirement for combining several items into a new reliable variable. For this study, we also set the alpha at 0.6 as a minimum for creating new variables that represent a construct (Creswell et al., 2007). From the result, all variables have good internal consistency reliability.

Table 6. Reliability of Instrument

Reliability Statistics						
No	Variable	Before adj.		After adj.		Number of respondents
		Cronbach's Alpha	No of item	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	
1	Reliability	0.889	5	0.889	5	120
2	Responsiveness	0.955	5	0.955	5	120
3	Assurance	0.756	4	0.756	4	120
4	Empathy	0.876	5	0.908	4	120

Source: Field data, (2022)

4.5 Multiple Regression Analysis

The components were validated and assessed using multiple regression analysis. This was done after checking all the regression assumptions to make sure none of them had been broken. The multiple regression analysis approach was chosen because of its capacity to forecast the variables given as well as analyze the proportional impact of each variable (Pallant, 2011). Consequently, conventional multiple regression was performed, which is allowed when the study's goal is to learn more about the relationship between a dependent variable and independent variables (Pallant, 2011).

The relationship between service guarantee and customer satisfaction was studied using regression analysis. Customer satisfaction was the dependent variable, with reliability, responsiveness, empathy, and assurance as independent factors. From Table 7, the R square for the model is 0.564. This means that the four predicting variables (Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy) explains about 56.4 percent of the variance of the dependent variable (Service Satisfaction). The prediction of Service Satisfaction might be off by 0.477 points using the four predicting variables scores from the standard error estimates.

Table 7. Regression analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.751 ^a	0.564	0.549	0.47667		
<i>ANOVA Table</i>						
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	33.837	4	8.459	37.229	0.000 ^b
	Residual	26.130	115	.227		
	Total	59.967	119			
<i>Multiple Regression Analysis</i>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.352	0.238		9.888	0.000
	Reliability	-0.739	0.146	-0.867	-5.042	0.000
	Responsiveness	-0.342	0.120	-0.434	-2.852	0.005
	Assurance	1.063	0.138	1.042	7.690	0.000
	Empathy	0.411	0.097	0.458	4.252	0.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy.
b. Dependent Variable: Service Satisfaction

Source: Field data (2022)

5. Discussion of findings

This section discusses the results of the research work and their relationship with the literature review. Using data from Ghana's courier business, the study's purpose was to look at the impact of service assurances on customer satisfaction. The discussions were therefore done in line with these specific objectives.

5.1 Effect of service reliability on customer satisfaction

The study's initial goal was to determine the extent to which service reliability influences customer satisfaction. The study's findings revealed that customer satisfaction was influenced by reliability. The findings on the impact of reliability on customer satisfaction are consistent with those of Chingang and Lukong (2010), who discovered that reliability had an impact on consumer satisfaction. Similarly, Bonsu and Mensah (2013) discovered that reliability and customer happiness are inextricably linked.

The results on the influence of reliability on customer satisfaction corroborate those of Khan and Fasih (2014), who found a positive and substantial association between reliability and customer satisfaction. Bharwana et al. (2013) did a study on the influence of Service Quality on Customers' Satisfaction and discovered that there was a positive and substantial association between reliability and customers' satisfaction, which supports the conclusions of the current study. The results, on the other hand, contradict the findings of Munusamy et al. (2010) who showed that reliability had no substantial influence on customer satisfaction at the 99 percent confidence level.

5.2 Effect of responsiveness on customer satisfaction

The second purpose of the study was to see how responsiveness affected customer satisfaction. Responsiveness has a statistically significant impact on customer satisfaction, according to the data. The findings in respect to the influence of responsiveness on customer satisfaction are comparable to those of Lau et al. (2013), who found that responsiveness had a statistically significant effect on customer satisfaction in similar research. Another study by Kant and Jaiswal (2017) discovered that responsiveness had a substantial influence on customer satisfaction.

As a result, high-quality service improves customer satisfaction and may even result in client loss, whereas low-quality service decreases customer satisfaction and may even result in client loss. According to Twum et al. (2023), responsiveness is one of the service quality factors that has the greatest impact on customer satisfaction. Amin and Isa (2008) discovered that there is a significant relationship between perceived service quality and customer happiness in banking in their study. In particular, responsiveness was shown to have the largest impact on customer satisfaction.

5.3 Influence of assurance and customer satisfaction

The study's third goal was to look into the impact of assurance on customer satisfaction. The study's findings revealed that assurance had a statistically significant impact on consumer satisfaction. As found in this study, Chingang and Lukong (2010) also found that assurance had an effect on customer satisfaction. Similarly, Twum et al. (2023) also found that one of the service quality dimensions with the highest effect on customer satisfaction was assurance. On the contrary, Munusamy et al. (2010) found that assurance does not have any significant impact on customer satisfaction.

5.4 Effect of empathy on customer satisfaction

The study's final goal was to see how empathy affected consumer satisfaction. According to the findings, empathy has a statistically significant impact on customer satisfaction. The conclusions of the study are backed

up by the findings of a study by Fida et al. (2020), which found that empathy had the highest impact on customer satisfaction. Empathy, according to Chingang and Lukong (2010), has a positive influence on customer satisfaction. In the banking business, Bonsu and Mensah (2013) discovered a clear correlation between service quality factors and customer happiness. One of the key dimensions that affected customer satisfaction was empathy.

6. Summary, conclusion and recommendations

The study's goal was to see how service guarantees affected customer satisfaction, with a focus on the Ghanaian courier industry. Specifically, the study sought to identify the role of empathy on customer satisfaction, examine the extent to which service reliability affects customer satisfaction, find out how assurance in service provision affects customer satisfaction, and assess effect of responsiveness on customer satisfaction. Based on the stated objectives of the study, relevant literature was reviewed to know what existing studies had been done in line within the topic and therefore build on existing knowledge rather than perform a study that had earlier been conducted.

The methods of the study made use of the positivist philosophy of research, thus the use of quantitative primary data collected from the field. A closed-ended questionnaire was used in the collection of data which was distributed mainly through virtual platforms where the target population could be accessed. The gathered data was then coded and analyzed using SPSS. The SERVQUAL Model by Parassuraman was used to calculate service guarantee, which included variables like reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Following the data analysis, the study's summary and conclusion were provided, along with the study's limitations and recommendations on how courier service providers in Ghana might raise the standard of their service to increase customer satisfaction.

6.1 Summary of Findings

Four objectives guided the conduct of this study. The results demonstrated that responsiveness has a direct beneficial influence on customer satisfaction with respect to the first objective. This is manifested from the findings as indicated in the earlier chapter. It was indicated by respondents that the speed with which service is delivered to them is a great way they are guaranteed of quality service. They also value such attributes as assistance provided by employees, and clarity of information provided by company employees, which explains they all influence customer satisfaction. After using the company's services, customers look for other things that can give them with satisfaction.

The second objective of the study demonstrated that reliability has a direct and positive impact on customer satisfaction. This is evident from the findings of the indicator research. Trustworthy information is valued as much as service accuracy and promised services that show that they all influence consumer satisfaction. This condition shows that if the ability to provide promised services is better, more accurate, and reliable, it will affect the psychological condition of consumers to give a positive appreciation of the company's products.

The findings of the study's third objective revealed that assurance has a direct positive impact on customer satisfaction. This is seen from results of research on the indicators. The ability of employees to have answers to all questions asked by customers, politeness and friendly staff, as well as willingness of employees to provide further assistance, and the availability of an experienced management team that can address customer concerns and effectively direct customers were all variables that respondents gave positive answers to. Customers therefore derive great satisfaction from these attributes. This shows that if assurance of quality service is guaranteed and fulfilled, it yields great satisfaction in customers.

The results of the last objective of the study showed that empathy has a direct positive effect on customer satisfaction. This can be seen from the results of that variable such as opening hours, safe transportation of goods and packages, waiting time, confidentiality of data of customers and privacy of customers were of great value to customers. They go a long way to provide great guarantee to the customer that the company is ready to meet and possibly exceed their expectations.

6.2 Recommendations

First, since courier industry is a service-oriented organization; management should provide continuous training to the employees on issues like courtesy, etiquette and communication skills while dealing with customers.

Secondly, to retain the existing customers and to improve service guarantee, the courier companies should continuously maintain error-free transactions, since they transport goods, packages and sometimes very sensitive documents from one destination to another. Maintaining an error-free transaction ensures that the privacy of customers as well as the security of goods transported are important to the company.

Thirdly, management needs to improve quality services to satisfy customer needs. The management of courier companies need to pay much attention to the customer complaints to satisfy customers' expectation. Customers should be provided individual attention to better understand and meet their demands.

Again, management should do research regularly to keep track of consumer satisfaction levels and develop strategies to fulfil them if they fall.

6.3 Suggestions for Future Studies

The effect of service guarantees on Ghana's courier firms was investigated in this study. It was restricted to Ghana's local courier sector, which was mostly located in Accra. It is recommended that research be conducted by researchers and industry players on courier service customers outside Accra to ascertain the degree to which they are certain of receiving high-quality service. This will help to discover the differences in client perceptions and expectations, allowing for better generalization and informed decision-making in the courier sector.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicting interest in the conduct of the study.

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