

CONSEQUENCES OF COVID -19 PANDEMIC ON COURIER DELIVERY SERVICES

Ahmad Ghazali Kidwai¹, Dr.Adeel Maqbool²

¹Ph.D Student, Department of Commerce and Business Management, Integral University,
Lucknow, UP, India

Integral University, Kursi Road,Lucknow-226.26 (Uttar Pradesh),India
ORCID : 0009-0004-8850-4760

²Associate Professor, Department of Commerce and Business Management, Integral University,
Lucknow, UP, India

Integral University, Kursi Road,Lucknow-226.26 (Uttar Pradesh),India

Abstract

In the present scenario, e-commerce industry has come up as one the largest growing industries in the world. With an increasing number of people getting introduced to smart phones, online shopping through various mobile applications has become very common. It is not only used by young generation but older generation as well. While E-Commerce industry was flourishing, on January 30, 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) announced the epidemic on 30 January 2020 thereafter pandemic on 11 March 2020 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/COVID-19_pandemic). Because of lockdown and practice of social distancing people were not allowed to move out of their residences and so they faced problems in arranging for daily needs. Here e-commerce industries played an important role in providing daily needed items through courier partners. Throughout the period of Pandemic and lockdown, the business operations of most of the industries remained closed, but e-commerce industry kept running by providing all necessary goods and services to the people at their doorstep with the help of courier companies. Courier deliveries played an important role during pandemic in delivering necessities while following social distancing.

Keywords: Courier Service /Pandemic/E-Commerce/Covid-19/Groceries/Smart phones

Introduction

Every facet of life was disturbed by COVID-19 pandemic throughout the world be it personal professional or commercial. It included courier /shipping industry that came to stand still due to lockdown and restrictions of movement. Everyone was forced to stay at home due to lockdowns and curfews, which resulted to closure of many businesses. People started getting panicky worrying for grocery and food items and other products of daily use. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the national public health agency of the United States came into picture giving guidelines to be followed during pandemic. Some of the guidelines of CDCs deliveries without physical contact are as below:

- Six feet distancing from people.
- Restricted contact with surfaces being touched again and again such as door bells, door knobs and handles, lift buttons etc.
- Preventing customers touching the items belonging to delivery agents like pens, scanner etc.
- Wearing, washing and changing gloves on regular intervals.

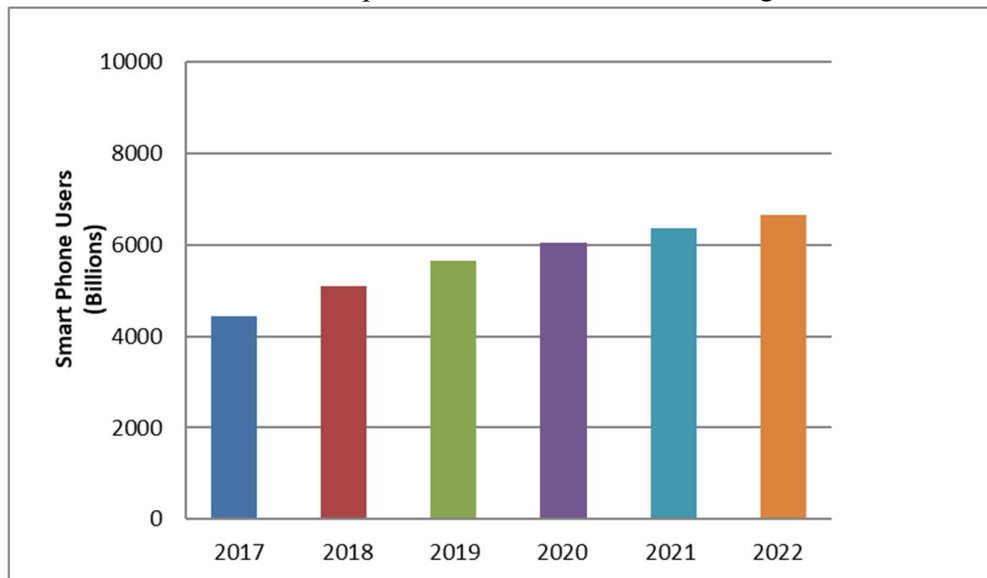
Like the CDC, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) also suggested

organizations to carry on all possible contactless deliveries as far as possible. Following strict and mandatory guidelines were introduced.

- Initiate flexible working hours and advise the workers to stay at home when not feeling well.
- Minimise the interaction between customers as well as co workers whenever possible.
- With the consent of customer, leave the deliveries at doorstep to avoid physical contact.
- Encourage staff members for personal hygiene by providing sanitizer and handwash.
- Sharing of tools, equipments, scanners etc to be avoided.
- Make use of disinfectant advised by Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to fight against COVID-19.
- Employees to be made aware about the pandemic and importance of informing the employer in case they find COVID-19 related health or safety concerns.

Courier service before Covid-19 pandemic

Mehtab Alamet.al (2021) With increasing smartphone users, demand for online trading increased before COVID pandemic (Refer Fig.1). World experienced huge growth in parcel volume since the year 2013. Courier services for delivery of documents, small and large shipments, parcels and freight shipments was being used heavily before pandemic. The promise and commitment of courier companies for accuracy, timely pick up and quick delivery increased the faith of customers. The high growth in the movement of goods, manufacturing companies, retailers and online e-commerce helped courier industry grow rapidly during the years 2010 to 2019. Courier industry growing steadily with the establishment of online e-commerce companies like Amazon and Flipkart. Many of these giants could foresee the prospective demand of delivery system so they introduced their own self-controlled delivery systems thus cutting down the cost being incurred in payment to other courier services. It can be inferred that with an increase in smartphone users, demand for online purchase increased thus increasing the number of deliveries.



Laliv Egozi.et.al (2022) Couriers are important part from the fleet of any courier company. They are always moving out for pick-ups and deliveries where they are exposed to extreme climatic conditions, pollution and risk of accidents. With these risks, the increased workload and fear of getting infected with Corona virus increased their stress. Study threw light on need of keeping the well being of couriers.

Reginald Lance E. Dones (2020) People changed their buying criteria and opted for buying through online platforms. Demand for courier services thus has grown since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Youth started using courier services as compared to people from older generation. Since movement outside the house was totally restricted, people got dependent on courier service to deliver their essentials.

Dr. Hermann Gruenwald (2020), Covid-19 virus caused lockdowns throughout the world and people were unable to go shopping. But delivery of parcels increased with an increase in on line sales.

Dawei Chen Shuangli Pan(2020), Study realized the need of contactless distribution system for food distribution. It was found that the physical contact between the courier and the customer can be reduced to a great extend if joint contactless distribution service is adopted. This will reduce the risk of infection transmission, and safeguard the couriers during COVID-19 pandemic from getting infected. In addition, the contactless joint distribution service aims to enhance customers' satisfaction, price of food distribution, food distribution rates and distribution efficiency.

Shipa ,shipa.com (2020), The COVID-19 pandemic hampered the established retail and commerce practices as people had to practice social distancing to prevent viral transmission. Courier companies had to change few of their major functioning processes.

- At the time of delivery of shipment, the delivery person started to place the shipment on the ground away from the doorstep and inform the consignee about it instead of handing it directly to the consignee.
- Consignee's signature at the time of delivery was avoided as some of the companies made delivery person himself sign the document instead of consignee. This avoided the need of direct touch of documents by both the parties. Some of the companies such as FedEx decided not to ask for signed proof of delivery at all during pandemic.
- Courier companies strictly made their delivery person (courier) wear mask and other kit if necessary while delivery the shipments. Mask was made compulsory to avoid transmission of infection, for customer safety and confidence.
- All the packages were treated with disinfectant before taking them out for delivery.
- Vehicles and equipment (if any) used for transportation were also treated with disinfectant at the beginning and end of each shift to lower down the coronavirus risk.
- Proof of delivery was sent electronically on the mobile app of shipper.

Department of post (2020) Covid -19 not only effected the private courier and shipping companies but also to India Post. Even during lockdown, instructions were given to keep postal services active to help the people in need in the country. Supply of essential items like medicines, medical equipments, PPE kits, masks etc were supplied to remote areas by India post while facing the crises of movement and staff. Mobile application called “Post Infor” was developed by India Post in order to cater the demand of door delivery. The main objective of India post was to ensure that common people did not face any difficulties in receiving medicines or medical equipments.

Courier service post Covid-19 pandemic

After lockdown people started opting for ordering daily needs items, groceries, medicines and other items which are essential for mankind to live. This brought a huge wave in the deliveries of shipments/parcels through courier service.

Stephy Grace Oommen. et.al (2022) The Covid-19 resulted to lockdowns imposed all over the world, People were forced to stay at home, and this gave rise to online sales which in turn increased number of deliveries. The movement of airflights were prohibited to cross borders due to lockdowns and closed borders, other air couriers and cargo got delayed and cancelled. The importance of courier services was greatly acknowledged as they made a bridge between businesses and customers. Customers started making online purchases and companies started concentrating on online selling impacted the need of deliveries. During the Covid-19, the courier services played an integral part to the supply chain.

Damianos P. Sakas (2022) Pandemic Covid-19 changed the purchase habits of companies and individuals from traditional to online or digital purchase. They adapted themselves to online shopping. Growing demand of e-commerce has given challenge to courier service in terms of customers expectation in contact less delivery, digital signatures for proof of delivery etc. Growing inclination of customers towards online shopping have changed the priorities for choosing the courier companies. They are now looking for safe pick up and delivery. It was found that customers tend to go for the known brands of courier companies and remained loyal just because of safety reasons. Customers should be made comfortable on safety front which will keep loyalty of brands and switching over to the competitor.

Avinash Unnikrishnan (2020) Lockdowns imposed due to COVID-19 pandemic have changed the shopping behaviour. Household income was found to be the main factor to understand the changes during the lockdown. People started spending money for home deliveries of groceries and meals due to health and safety concerns. During the period of lockdown, people became heavily dependent on home delivery service for their basic needs. Their expectation increased for same day or next day delivery of groceries towards ordering of basic needs. The study concludes that government should improve the policies related to low income households towards online shopping and grocery deliveries.

Vincent Phang, (2021) The logistics, shipping and courier companies had to cope up with reduced productivity due to safety and health guidelines and lack of manpower during and for some time after COVID pandemic. Due to closed borders of countries no shipment could be moved. This resulted into delivery delays across the board. The domestic last-mile deliveries got affected.

Xiaokun (Cara) Wang, et al. (2021) Study identified the customers on the basis of their adoptability to delivery service and type of product being delivered (Table 1). It was found that number of customers using delivery services for groceries and necessities increased considerably during Covid-19. It is believed that new customers of delivery services would continue using this service even after the pandemic is over since this increased demand was the result of restrictions on people for moving out for shopping. Number of customers for delivery of goods other than necessities and groceries did not change much.

Type of customer	Before Covid-19	During Covid-19	Post Covid-19
Non Adopters (Not ready to adopt delivery services at all)	No	No	No
New Adopter (Adopted delivery services during Covid-19)	No	Yes	Yes
Prior Adopter (Already adopted delivery services before Covid-19)	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table: 1 Type of consumers for use of delivery services

Y. Jiang et al. (2023), Aggressive acceptance of contactless delivery services in retail industry, food delivery, and all other industries involved in logistics and delivery services have become a general trend in the market and is expected to be continued even after Covid-19.

Hui Shen A et al. (2022), Study aimed to find the individual grocery shopping (GS) preference as compared to physical grocery shopping (PGS) and online grocery shopping (OGS) in influence of Covid-19. It was found that online grocery shopping became more popular during and after Covid-19. Main factors of customers' opting for online grocery shopping was health and safety concern, home delivery convenience and time saving.

Conclusion

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted in all the aspects of our lives, be it personal or professional. We have learned to cope up in severe emergency situations. Pandemic disturbed regular pace of lives and we adopted new ways of living. In terms of delivery services. Some of the new trends that we embraced during pandemic have even continued even in post –Covid era such as making goods and services available to the customers in easier way. People who started using online purchase are now used to the home deliveries for every product and service. So delivery service is still in demand Post-Covid. Due to the pandemic and the increase in the online purchase, the target for online deliveries for 2026 is expected to be achieved in 2023 itself. The trend shows that it will continue to grow in coming years. The increase in the use of smartphones and internet among all the generations and in both urban and rural areas led to an increase in the number of deliveries. The COVID-19 pandemic has proved to be a boon to the shipment industry as well as the online business have got benefitted with COVID-19 and they expected to grow further as people now are used to click and deliver service. They now don't have to take trouble of going out to market but everything is available just on their click.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

This is to certify that this research paper has been written purely for academic purpose in Ph.D program and hence it is confirmed that there is NO CONFLICT OF INTEREST (financial or non financial) with other party.

Acknowledgment

I thank Integral University for giving me an opportunity to pursue Ph.D program and for providing MCN: IU/R&D/2023-MCN0001888 to publish this paper.

References

Research Papers

1. Unnikrishnan A. et.al (2020) *A Study of the Impact of COVID-19 on Home Delivery Purchases and Expenditures*, PDX Scholar, Portland State University,
2. Dawei Chen et.al (2020) *Vehicle routing problem of contactless joint distribution service during COVID-19 pandemic*, *Transportation Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Vol8(12), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trip.2020.100233>
3. Damianos P. Sakas (2022) *The Long Term Risk Familiarity Effect On Courier Services' Digital Branding During The Covid-19 Crisis*, Vol17(4), <https://doi.org/10.3390/jtaer17040084>
4. Hermann Gruenwald (2020) *Parcel Delivery Services boom during Covid-19*, *Research Gate*, 10.13140/RG.2.2.35180.18569
5. Hui Shen A et al. (2022) *Investigation of online grocery shopping and delivery preference before, during, and after COVID-19*, *Transportation Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Vol14(), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trip.2022.100580>
6. Lali Egozi et.al (2022) *Couriers' safety and health risks before and during the COVID-19 pandemic*, *International Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health*, 95(3), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00420-021-01795-8>
7. Alam Mehtabet.al (2021) *Shipment Delivery and Covid-19: An Indian Context*, *International Journal of Advanced Engineering Research and Science (IJAERS)*, 8(8), <https://dx.doi.org/10.22161/ijaers.88.17>
8. Reginald Lance E. Dones (2020) *Demand on the of Courier Services during COVID-19 Pandemic in the Philippines*, *International Conference on Frontiers of Industrial Engineering (IEEE)*
9. Stephy Grace Oommen et.al (2022) *Courier Service demand during COVID-19 Pandemic in India*, *Proceedings of the National Conference on Emerging Computer Applications (NCECA)-2022, Vol4 (1)*, DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.6364879.
10. Phang Vincent, (2021) *Logistics and last-mile delivery in a post-Covid-19 world*
11. Wang Xiaokun (Cara) et.al, (2021) *Adoption of delivery services in light of the COVID pandemic: Who and how long?*, *Transportation Research Part A*
12. Y. Jiang et al. (2023) *Exploring the factors that drive consumers to use contactless delivery services in the context of the continued COVID-19 pandemic*, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*
13. Kidwai Ahmad Ghazali (2023) *Recent Developments in Courier Services: A Review*, *Journal of Research Administration*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2023)

Websites

14. Shipa ,shipa.com (2020)

E-Book

15. Department of post (2020)India Post meets meets Covid-19 Challenge