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The Antecedents of Express Delivery Service Company Selection and Customer Satisfaction: Behavioral Intention from Bangkok, Thailand

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ABSTRACT

In the fiercely competitive landscape of the e-commerce sector, behavioural intention and customer satisfaction play pivotal roles in the pursuit of gaining a competitive edge for express delivery companies. This research endeavour is designed to comprehensively investigate the antecedent factors that exert influence on customer behaviour and satisfaction when they are in the process of selecting express delivery service providers in the vibrant market of Bangkok, Thailand. To conduct this study, a robust sample size of 321 respondents has been meticulously selected, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) has been employed as the analytical technique of choice. Our research findings shed light on the following key insights: Personal Contact Quality, Payment Method, and Order Information Sharing emerge as significant determinants that significantly impact customer satisfaction within the context of express delivery services in Bangkok. On the contrary, factors such as Delivery Service, Marginal Delivery Cost, Short Delivery Time, and Order Condition have been identified as statistically insignificant in their influence on customer satisfaction. Moreover, our study uncovers a significant and positive relationship between customer satisfaction and the decision-making process in favour of selecting an express delivery service company. These insights have profound implications for express delivery service providers, offering valuable guidance in terms of customer attraction, retention, and the attainment of competitive advantages. Furthermore, our study extends its significance beyond the industry, as it provides actionable insights for government entities to formulate guidelines that serve the interests of both customers and express delivery companies.



Introduction

Express delivery stands as a pivotal component within the logistics service sector, serving as a vital link between the e-commerce industry and the contentment of its customers, offering both consistency and adaptability (Nurdani & Sandhyaduhita, 2016). In today's fiercely competitive business landscape, comprehending customers and ensuring their satisfaction with the services provided is of paramount importance. Flexibility and collaboration levels exhibited by express delivery service providers significantly impact customer preferences, among other crucial aspects (Chou et al., 2018).

Thailand has witnessed substantial growth in its e-commerce sector in recent years, mirroring trends in many other Asian nations. Globally, Thailand currently ranks 19th in the e-commerce market, with projected revenue reaching US\$20,900.0 million by 2023. Moreover, the Thai e-commerce market is anticipated to grow by 14.3% in 2023, contributing to the global growth rate of 17.0% (ecommerceDB). Presently, the top three e-commerce platforms in Thailand are Shopee, Lazada, and Kaidee (Erin, 2023), all of which operate with advanced logistics and delivery infrastructures. Kerry, Flash Express, Thailand Post, DHL, and Ninja Van constitute the five dominant express delivery service companies in Thailand, commanding a 69% share of the local express delivery market (Marketing Oops, 2023). The local express delivery market in Thailand was valued at 50 billion baht in 2021, comprising roughly half of the total logistics division (Leesa-nguansuk, 2022). Express delivery service companies play a pivotal role in the expansive customer base of e-commerce platforms, ultimately influencing their competitive advantage. Consequently, the selection of the most suitable express delivery service providers is crucial for e-commerce platforms to meet the expectations of their customers.

Quality significantly influences customer satisfaction, behavioral intentions, and organizational performance within the service sector (Lewis & Mitchell, 1990; Cronin et al., 2000). Achieving a balance between customer perception and expectation is essential to deliver quality services (Zeithaml et al., 1990). This challenge persists for express delivery service companies as they seek to understand their customers and their evolving needs. Therefore, it is imperative for these companies to identify the factors that influence service quality and, subsequently, enhance customer satisfaction. Greater customer satisfaction equates to a more substantial competitive advantage for these companies, which, in turn, affects e-commerce platforms and other stakeholders in the service industry when selecting the optimal express delivery service provider. In this context, it is important to note that the literature in this region primarily focuses on the perspective of shippers, with limited attention given to the behavioral intentions of customers and their satisfaction in the selection process (Banomyong & Supatn, 2011; Nuengphasuk & Samanchuen, 2019; Lafkihi et al., 2019). The growing number of e-commerce platforms and the fierce competition among express delivery service providers highlight the increasing importance of research into the factors influencing customer behavior when selecting an express delivery service provider.

This article aims to identify the antecedent factors that influence customer behavior and satisfaction when choosing express delivery service providers in Bangkok, Thailand. The findings of this research carry significant implications for express delivery service companies, allowing them to better understand customer needs and enhance their overall service offerings, ultimately elevating customer satisfaction levels and securing a competitive edge in the market.

Furthermore, these findings will aid the government in crafting appropriate support and guidance for the future development of the express delivery service sector.

Review of literature:

Express delivery services play a pivotal role in cultivating customer loyalty and retention within the e-commerce industry (Farooq et al., 2019). When businesses deliver services of high quality that meet or even surpass customer expectations, they have the potential to create positive customer experiences, thereby nurturing loyalty towards the business (Sitorus & Yustisia, 2018). Express delivery services, in particular, offer e-commerce platforms a strategic avenue to gain a competitive edge by drawing traffic to their platform. Customers generally place significant trust in express services (Ding et al., 2016) and tend to return for repeat business due to their satisfaction with each delivery. By integrating the most dependable express delivery service providers into their platform, e-commerce websites can secure a larger market share and leverage competitive advantages in their marketing endeavors. To achieve this competitive edge, it is imperative for express delivery service companies to thoroughly analyze the determinants of customer satisfaction that influence behavioral intentions in the selection of express delivery service providers.

Existing research has identified several factors that exert influence on customer satisfaction with express delivery service companies. Based on the most recent research conducted by Liu et al. (2019), four essential qualities—safety, speed, convenience, and amiability—have been identified as significant determinants with a substantial link to customer satisfaction in the context of delivery services within the Chinese e-business sector. Furthermore, from the perspective of e-retailers, it has been revealed that factors encompassing soft infrastructure (experience, knowledge, and technology) and hard infrastructure (warehouse and transportation capacity), along with flexibility, contribute to customer satisfaction when selecting delivery service providers for e-commerce firms (Yu et al., 2015). In the realm of the restaurant industry, Kencana (2020) highlights that considerations such as tariffs, punctuality, and pricing have an impact on customer satisfaction with express delivery service companies in Indonesia. While a review of prior studies underscores the multitude of elements influencing customer satisfaction in the context of selecting delivery service businesses, there remains a limited body of literature that explores this topic from the perspective of customers in this region. This presents an opportunity for our research to delve into this issue, offering insightful information to the field. Our study seeks to provide valuable insights into the factors that shape customers' decision-making processes when selecting a delivery service company, as well as their overall satisfaction with the service they receive. Moreover, due to variations in market characteristics, cultural norms, and behavioral intentions (Malhotra & McCort, 2001), it is inappropriate to blindly apply research findings from one country to another.

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the antecedent factors that influence customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions when selecting express delivery services. Specifically, we concentrate on the following factors: product safety, marginal delivery cost, short delivery time, personal contact quality, order condition, payment method, and order information sharing. Our research findings will yield several practical implications, particularly beneficial for express delivery companies and e-commerce platforms, particularly those in

Thailand. These implications aim to enhance customer satisfaction, retain existing customers, and attract new customers within the fiercely competitive market environment.

Hypothesis development

Delivery service

Delivery service is included when customers receive the precise goods they bought, with proper packaging and on time, which are the most fundamental services customers expect from express delivery services. Guo et al. (2012) and Kurniawan & Remiasa (2022) pointed out delivery services are critical to customer satisfaction, especially in the online shopping experience. Thus the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: There is a positive relationship between delivery service and customer satisfaction.

Marginal delivery cost

Customer satisfaction levels are significantly impacted by the marginal delivery cost or low distribution fees particularly, in e-commerce platforms (Imran et al., 2019). If the delivery fees are prohibitively expensive, it can have a negative influence on consumer satisfaction and result in lower sales for the e-commerce platform. LEWIS (2006) highlighted that base delivery fee levels have a significant impact on improving customer satisfaction through customer retention and acquisition (Hansemark & Albinsson, 2004) in a more sensitive manner. As a result, it is hypothesized that:

H2: There is a positive relationship between marginal delivery cost and customer satisfaction.

Short delivery time

In online businesses, the short delivery time has a relatively high impact on consumer satisfaction levels (Imran et al., 2019). Customers are more satisfied with the service as well as more likely to use it again in the future when their deliveries arrive quickly. Customers may also be more likely to suggest the business to others if they receive their products in a short time. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H3: There is a positive relationship between short delivery time and customer satisfaction.

Personal contact quality

To assess the level of delivery service and to achieve customer satisfaction, communication between the consumer and the contact personnel is crucial (Zeithaml et al., 1988). In express delivery service, it is important to maintain a positive relationship with customers regarding service failure, compensation, return, or refund (Bitner, 1990). Personal contact quality is a key antecedent to customer satisfaction because it affects how frontline employees interact and how customers perceive delivery service companies (Uvet, 2020). Thus the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: There is a positive relationship between personal contact quality and customer satisfaction.

Order condition

Order condition is defined as when customers receive products that are in good condition and satisfy their expectations. Customers may have an unsatisfactory experience and become dissatisfied if the product they receive is flawed, damaged, or not what was described. Tontini et al. (2017) and Uvet (2020) pointed out that when a product is delivered to a customer, product safety or order condition of the goods directly influences the customer's positive intention toward employing the service, whereas if the product is damaged, it can lead to dissatisfaction to the service providers. Express delivery service companies must consider this factor while choosing delivery services that are related to customer satisfaction (Liu et al., 2019). Thus the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: There is a positive relationship between order condition and customer satisfaction.

Payment method

To ensure security traditional payment system is replaced by various electronic payment methods, including credit cards, Debit/ATM cards, mobile wallets or e-Wallet etc. (Mukherjee et al., 2017). Customers prefer having a selection of simple, safe, and convenient payment alternatives. The express delivery service provider's available payment options have a big impact on how satisfied customers are (Guo et al., 2012). Thus the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6: There is a positive relationship between payment method and customer satisfaction.

Order information sharing

The opportunity to share order information with customers influences how well express delivery services are evaluated by online buyers (Zhong et al., 2020). This antecedent is particularly effective when delivery service businesses share real time information about shipping, order status and operation. This implies that companies offering express delivery services can further improve customer satisfaction and experience by sharing order information with customers (Uvet, 2020). Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H7: There is a positive relationship between order information sharing and customer satisfaction.

According to the study conducted by YU et al. (2015), it was determined that customer satisfaction plays a significant intermediary role when customers choose express delivery service providers. Customers are more inclined to continue with an express delivery provider for their order and delivery needs when they are satisfied with the service they receive from that business. Customers' decisions persist with one company or select a different one depending on how satisfied they are with the service they receive from express delivery businesses. Thus the following hypothesis is proposed:

H8: Customer satisfaction has a positive influence on product delivery service provider selection.

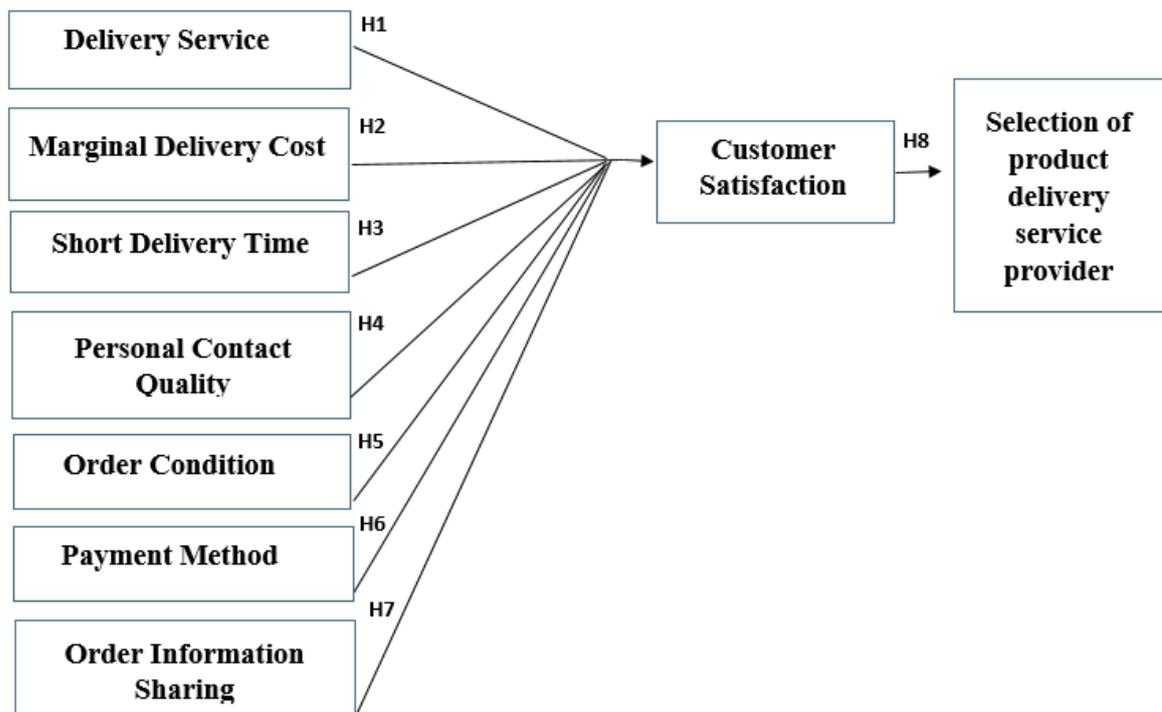


Figure 1: Proposed conceptual framework

Research Methodology

This study employs a quantitative approach with a primary data collection method centered on the use of a questionnaire. The target population for this research consists of Thai individuals who intend to select an express delivery service company for sending or receiving products. To ensure an adequate sample size, the study follows the guideline proposed by Hair et al. (1998), which recommends a minimum of 10 respondents per parameter in the input data matrix. Consequently, the minimum sample size is contingent on the complexity of the model under examination. In general, it is advised to have a minimum sample size of at least 200 responses. This guideline is particularly pertinent in the context of confirmatory factor analysis and path analysis as it guarantees a sample size sufficient to yield reliable and meaningful outcomes. Furthermore, Hair, Black, and Babin (2010) have asserted that a sample size ranging from 100 to 400 is considered adequate for testing all hypothesized relationships.

With this in mind, the sampling frame for this study was distributed to 400 potential respondents. The process of selecting respondents utilized purposive sampling, a method through which the researcher selects individuals based on their judgment of the sample's appropriateness in representing the target population (Cooper & Schindler, 2008). Essentially, the researcher handpicks participants based on their qualifications, characteristics, or other criteria, focusing on those deemed most relevant and valuable for the study. This approach empowers the researcher to identify individuals capable of providing significant insights and contributing meaningfully to the research objectives.

The study invited respondents to participate by providing access to an online questionnaire hosted on Google Docs. They were instructed to complete all the questions

presented in the survey. Following the exclusion of responses from non-target participants and incomplete submissions, a total of 321 questionnaires were deemed suitable for the study. The survey achieved an impressive response rate of 80.25%. The respondents consisted of Thai men and women aged 18 and above.

Research Instrument

The questionnaire items were formed based on previous research that was adapted from validated measures to fit the context of the present study. This study's questionnaire is divided into five sections. The measuring scale used to evaluate the responses is an interval scale. The scale has a scale of 1 to 5, and responders must indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each item. The following is the scale's definition: 1 means "strongly disagree," 2 means "disagree," 3 means "neither agree nor disagree," 4 means "agree," and 5 means "strongly agree." It should be noted that the questionnaire contains no demographic information on the respondents.

The first part was designed with screening questions in order to find target respondents. The second part asked about the antecedents of customer satisfaction are Delivery Service was guided by Parasuraman et al. (2005), Marginal Delivery Cost and Payment Method were guided by Imran et al. (2019), Short Delivery Time and Order Condition were guided by Mentzer et al. (2001), Personal Contact Quality was guided by Bienstock et al. (2008), and Order Information Sharing was guided by Glenn and Savitskie (2007). The third part asked about customer satisfaction was based on the existing literature of Mentzer et al. (2001). The fourth part asked about the selection of express delivery service companies based on the existing literature of Konuk (2017). And the fifth part was personal data.

Research Findings and Discussions

The following features were described in the demographic profiles of 321 respondents: most of the respondents are female (70.1%), age 18-30 years (48.3%), enterprise employee (32.4%), and income is 10,000-30,000 Baht/month (43.6%). Flash Express (39.3%) is the most express delivery service company that respondents are willing to use.

Reliability Analysis and Confirmatory Factor Analysis

A Cronbach's Alpha score greater than 0.7 is generally deemed appropriate for measuring internal consistency, according to Hair et al. (2010). According to the conclusions of this study, all of the factors in question are consistent. Cronbach's Alpha values are as follows for each variable: Delivery service (Cronbach alpha = 0.85), Marginal delivery Cost (Cronbach alpha = 0.79), Short delivery time (Cronbach alpha = 0.80), Personal contact (Cronbach alpha = 0.84), Order condition (Cronbach alpha = 0.76), Payment method (Cronbach alpha = 0.74), Order information sharing Cronbach alpha = 0.85), Customer satisfaction Cronbach alpha = 0.79), and Selection of express delivery service company (Cronbach alpha = 0.72).

Employing confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for model fitting can yield improved outcomes in path analysis. It employs two forms of goodness-of-fit measures: absolute and

incremental fit measures. The measurement model's absolute fit measures in this study indicate good fit, with the following results: CMIN/df = 2.37, $p < 0.001$, GFI = 0.87, and RMSEA = 0.07. These values are close to the recommended thresholds of CMIN/df < 3.0, GFI \geq 0.9, and RMSEA < 0.08 (Hair et al., 2010; Ullman, 2001).

In terms of incremental fit metrics, the baseline comparative fit indices NFI, RFI, IFI, TLI, and CFI all have values near to or exceeding 0.9, with values ranging from 0.83 to 0.91. These levels are consistent with the established guideline (Hair et al., 2010; Hu & Bentler, 1999). However, given the range of the computed baseline comparative fit indices, the possibility for further improvement in model fit (varying from 0.09 to 0.17) appears to be of little practical consequence. In other words, the incremental improvement in model fit that could be achieved appears to be rather tiny and may not have significant practical ramifications.

Hypotheses Testing

In this study, structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to investigate and clarify the relationships between the antecedents of express delivery service business selection and consumer satisfaction with the selection process. The researcher used SEM to examine and comprehend the underlying relationships among the variables, as well as to identify how the antecedents influence consumer satisfaction in the context of picking an express delivery service firm. The findings of this study are summarized in Table 1, which presents the results of hypothesis testing. The study results show that personal contact quality, payment method, and online information sharing have positive relationships with customer satisfaction. Contrary to predictions, the study's findings show that elements including delivery service, marginal delivery cost, quick arrival, and order condition don't have a meaningful impact on customer satisfaction. However, it was discovered that choosing an express delivery service provider is positively related to customer satisfaction. This implies that while elements such as cost, delivery time, and order condition may not directly affect customer satisfaction, total customer satisfaction plays a significant role in customers' decisions to select a specific express delivery service provider.

The square multiple correlations, commonly known as R-squared values, reveal how much of the variance is explained by the hypothesized model. According to the conclusions of this study, 28.7% of the variation in customer satisfaction remains unexplained. Alternatively, the seven variables' combined influence accounts for 71.3% of the variance in customer satisfaction. Similarly, in the case of express delivery service firm selection, 20.2% of the variation is unexplained, whereas the combined influence of the seven predictors and customer satisfaction accounts for 79.8% of the variation. These findings imply that while the hypothesized model explains a significant portion of the variance in both customer satisfaction and the selection of an express delivery service company, other factors or variables not considered in the model contribute to the unexplained variance.

Table 1. Structural Relationships between the antecedents of express delivery service company selection and customer satisfaction towards selection

Hypothesis No.	Structural Path	Standardized Regression Weight (β)	Critical Ratio (C.R.)	Results
H1	Delivery Service → Customer Satisfaction	0.11	1.91	Not Accepted
H2	Marginal Delivery Cost → Customer Satisfaction	0.08	0.91	Not Accepted
H3	Short Delivery Time → Customer Satisfaction	-0.02	-0.27	Not Accepted
H4	Personal Contact Quality → Customer Satisfaction	0.18*	2.23*	Accepted
H5	Order Condition → Customer Satisfaction	-0.00	-0.03	Not Accepted
H6	Payment Method → Customer Satisfaction	0.47***	3.87***	Accepted
H7	Order Information Sharing → Customer Satisfaction	0.21**	2.77**	Accepted
H8	Customer Satisfaction → Selection	0.80***	9.95***	Accepted

Remark: *** = $p < 0.001$, ** = $p < 0.01$, * = $p < 0.05$, Not Accepted = insignificant

This research indicates that customer satisfaction is primarily determined by the positive correlation between personal contact quality, payment method, and the sharing of order information. On top of that, according to the research's findings, a higher level of customer satisfaction is positively associated with the selection of an express delivery service provider.

Personal contact quality has a significant impact on customer satisfaction to selecting express delivery service companies (H4: $\beta = 0.18$, C.R. = 2.23). Effective communication plays a crucial role in informing customers about their shipping status, thereby instilling confidence in the selection of express delivery companies. The option of payment method (H6: $\beta = 0.47$, C.R. = 3.87) is another pivotal factor in determining customer satisfaction when selecting an express delivery service company. By offering a secure, reliable, and hassle-free payment experience, express delivery service companies can enhance customer satisfaction and foster loyalty. Lastly, order information sharing (H7: $\beta = 0.21$, C.R. = 2.77) has a substantial impact on customer satisfaction in selecting an express delivery service company. Express delivery service companies can exhibit their sincerity by providing real-time order information sharing with customers. In the specific context of Thailand, customer satisfaction (H8) exerts a positive influence on the decision to select an express delivery service company.

According to the findings of this research, it suggests that delivery service does not have a direct impact on customer satisfaction. The reason for this finding is that service quality and customer satisfaction are multidimensional constructs that involve certain uncertainty (Sureshchandar et al., 2002). The factors that influence customer satisfaction may vary depending on different contexts, cultures, and regions. Similarly, the marginal delivery cost does not exert a significant impact on customer satisfaction. This can be attributed to the fact that most customers prioritize the reputation and trust of the express delivery service company over marginal cost. When a company has an effective brand value and a strong reputation, customers tend to prioritize these factors over the marginal delivery costs (Diallo et al., 2020). Another component that can outperform marginal delivery cost is the convenience and flexibility of the delivery operations. Along with that, short delivery time is not positively associated with customer satisfaction. According to Świtłała et al. (2019), communication and trust play a pivotal role in determining customer satisfaction, where short delivery time does not necessarily have a mandatory impact. Additionally, another reason for this is that the fulfillment of orders is primarily dependent on e-commerce shops rather than express delivery companies. Lastly, order condition has an insignificant contribution to the selection of express delivery service companies. This is because, in most cases, the condition of the product upon delivery largely depends on the e-commerce websites or platforms (Rosillo-Díaz et al., 2019), while express delivery companies play a minor role in ensuring the order condition.

Conclusion and practical implications

This research concentrates on understanding the antecedent factors in the particular context of Thailand, which influence customer satisfaction and behavioral intention regarding selecting express delivery companies' services. Based on the findings from 321 respondents who expressed their intention to select the express delivery service company for sending or receiving the product, this research illustrates that personal contact quality, payment method, and order information sharing are all correlated positively and primary determinants to customer satisfaction. Surprisingly, there is no apparent association between delivery service, marginal delivery cost, short delivery time, and order condition with customer satisfaction which demonstrates the complexity and multifaceted nature of customer satisfaction. This research study emphasizes the specific setting of Thailand, comprehending that the factors affecting customer satisfaction in this particular settings may differ from those in other regions or countries (Mariani et al., 2019). Furthermore, the study reveals a higher level of customer satisfaction has a positive relationship with the selection of express delivery Service Company.

This study has several practical implications. Firstly, in order to optimize customer satisfaction, express delivery service companies should concentrate on consistent interaction and communication with their customers. Establishing a call center to get feedback about delivery service performance could benefit for these businesses. Secondly, express delivery firms might adopt personnel training programs to ensure sufficient information exchange with their customers. And finally, the government can develop a scheme for customers and express delivery service companies to apply for feasible and affordable payment methods.

Limitations and future research

Concerning this research's limitation, primarily, the sample used in the study may not precisely represent consumers from other regions in Southeast Asia, which could impact the generalizability of the outcomes. Additionally, the research concentrated exclusively on the perspective of consumers, suggesting scope for future studies to incorporate the standpoints of both customers and shippers. Lastly, there is potential for future research to delve into a global perspective in order to comprehend customer behavioral intentions when selecting express delivery companies.

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