IARJSET ISSN (O) 2393-8021, ISSN (P) 2394-1588

International Advanced Research Journal in Science, Engineering and Technology

Impact Factor 8.066 ⁜ Peer-reviewed & Refereed journal ⁜ Vol. 12, Issue 5, May 2025

DOI: 10.17148/IARJSET.2025.125241

A study on Improving the Processing Time of Inbound Mixed Bag Operations in Blue Dart's Airport Hub

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Abstract: Effectiveness of inbound logistics is the key to maintaining the overall efficiency and service excellence of express parcel delivery operations. This project at Blue Dart Express Limited is designed to streamline the inbound processing time of mixed bags at the airport hub. The goal is to spot process inefficiencies and make effective solutions to increase throughput without reducing quality or service level.

The study analyzes the intrinsic activities involved within the mixed bag inbound process— acknowledgment, segregation, sorting, linking, and networking—and recognizes areas of critical time-consuming bottlenecks. Spotting areas calling for intervention with data analysis, process mapping, and interviews involving stakeholders were among the results shown. The project suggests implementable solutions like improved resource allocation, rearrangement of layout, and embracing lean practices to minimize delays and enhance coordination between departments. Anticipated outcomes are improved processing speed, improved space utilization, and overall higher productivity of the inbound logistics business. These changes will lead to improved customer satisfaction and further establish Blue Dart as a market leader in express logistics.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the fast-paced competitive environment of logistics today, speed and precision are the keys to success in operations. With the exponential growth of e-commerce and higher customer demand for same-day and next-day delivery, logistics companies have the constant pressure of making their operations streamlined. One such key area in this context is the processing of mixed bags during incoming consignments, which means the acceptance and treatment of consignments containing miscellaneous shipments grouped into destination, size, or priority categories.

The project was conducted in Blue Dart Express Ltd., a leading player in India's express logistics industry, with an emphasis on its airport hub operations in Chennai. The aim was to observe the current inbound process of mixed bags—right from flight offloading to opening, segregation, and integration of packages—and determine areas of improvement in processing efficiency. Delays in these processes can have a major impact on delivery time and customer happiness.

Direct observation, process mapping, and feedback from key stakeholders were used in the study to identify existing operational procedures and identify bottlenecks. With this information, the project suggests workable suggestions for optimizing manpower deployment, minimizing idle time, and combining workflow efficiencies in order to decrease overall turnaround time without jeopardizing quality or regulatory compliance.

This effort not only supports Blue Dart's service excellence commitment but also adds to general initiatives in the area of enhancing logistics performance at a national level, where prompt and secure delivery remains the major differentiator in the express and courier business.

Company Profile (Blue Dart Express Ltd.)

Blue Dart Express Ltd., a part of the DHL Group, is South Asia's leading express air, integrated transportation, and distribution company. Established in 1983 with head office in Mumbai, it offers secure and reliable delivery to more than 55,400+ destinations in India and 220+ international destinations. Blue Dart operates 6 Boeing 737 freighters, has 33,000+ ground staff, and 480+ e-vehicles. Blue Dart provides services such as Domestic Priority, Dart Apex, Dart Surface Line, and specialized airport-to-airport cargo operations. Blue Dart is ISO 9001:2015 certified .

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Industry Background

The Express Logistics Sector guarantees quick movement of goods across e- commerce, healthcare, and manufacturing sectors. The industry is worth over $10 trillion worldwide and is growing at an average rate of ~6% per annum. Logistics in India account for approximately 16% of GDP and are expanding with initiatives such as Gati Shakti and the National Logistics Policy by the government. Blue Dart, with its collaboration with DHL, is a key player locally and regionally within South Asia, with a specific emphasis on express delivery, warehousing, and cutting-edge digital logistics. Blue Dart, through its own air fleet and surface network, has precision operations across more than 55,400 points in India. Nevertheless, there are difficulties in sustaining high-speed, fault-free inbound processing.

Global Logistics Scenario: 1. Market Size and Growth: The size of the global logistics market is more than $10 trillion and is expected to grow at a CAGR of approximately 6% during 2023-2030. The major growth drivers are the growth of e-commerce, supply chain globalization, and technological advancements. 2. Key Trends: Digitization and Automation: Utilization of AI, Block chain, IoT, and robotics to improve operational efficiency. Sustainability: Focus on green logistics and carbon footprint reduction using electric vehicles, alternative fuels, and efficient logistics networks. Global Trade Dynamics: Geopolitical tensions, changing trade routes, and regional trade agreements influence the logistics environment. 3. Global Players: Large multinational corporations such as DHL, FedEx, UPS, and Maersk are the industry leaders. Blue Dart's global presence is further supported by its association with DHL Express, linking India to 220+ countries. 4. Challenges: Volatile supply chains and increasing fuel prices. Tough customs rules and cross-border complexities. Cyber security risks and data management challenges.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Significance of Effective Airport Hub Operations Airport hubs are pivotal nodes in international supply chains, with speed and precision in cargo handling being the drivers of overall effectiveness. As noted by Christopher (2016), minimizing lead times in airport hubs improves customer satisfaction and service reliability. Additionally, Bowersox, Closs, and Cooper (2019) noted that air cargo logistics should aim at reducing handling time through effective workflow and technology implementation.

2. Problems of Airport Hub Processing There are a number of challenges that affect processing time within airport hubs, such as congestion of cargo, inefficiencies due to manual sorting, and shipment misrouting. Rushton, Croucher, and Baker (2017) found that conventional manual handling procedures tend to result in delay, particularly in busy seasons. Further, Gunasekaran et al. (2017) noted that inconsistent documentation and the absence of real-time monitoring lead to bottle necks during cargo movement.

3. Process Optimization and Lean Principles Implementing lean logistics principles can greatly enhance airport hub efficiency. Womack and Jones (1996) proposed the Lean methodology, focusing on waste reduction and process standardization. Lai, Ngai, and Cheng (2004) in their research discovered that lean practices, including value stream mapping and just-in-time processing, increase cargo handling speed. Likewise, Mentzer et al. (2019) proposed that the use of Six Sigma techniques can minimize errors and rework in sorting and linking processes.

4. Automation and Digitalization of Cargo Handling Technology contributes significantly to improving processing time in airport hubs. Ivanov, Tsipoulanidis, and Schönberger (2019) explained how automation, including AI-aided sorting machines, robot arms, and RFID tracking, enhances the efficiency of cargo movement. Furthermore, Bowersox et al. (2019) pointed out that the application of IoT-based tracking ensures real-time visibility, eliminating the occurrence of delays due to misplaced shipments.

5. Role of Data Analytics and Predictive Modeling Predictive analytics and AI-driven decision-making can optimize airport hub operations. 29 According to Chopra and Meindl (2021), data-driven logistics improve forecasting accuracy, enabling better resource allocation. A study by Gunasekaran et al. (2017) found that machine learning models help predict peak load periods, allowing proactive planning for staff and equipment deployment.

6. Quality Management and Performance Improvement Quality management systems, like Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry's (1988) SERVQUAL model, underscore reliability, responsiveness, and efficiency in logistics services. Lambert and Stock (2018) focused research on the point that constant observation of key performance indicators (KPIs) results in continued process improvement. In addition, Bowersox et al. (2019) recommended implementing Total Quality Management (TQM) principles as a means of ensuring consistency in cargo handling activities.

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7. Express Logistics Agility: A Competitive Strength Christopher, M. (2016) It is stressed here that agility plays a crucial role in express logistics, with such factors as real-time tracking, demand forecasting, and quick reaction to customer demand being essential in gaining competitive strength.

8. The Last-Mile Challenge for Express Delivery Harrington & Smith (2018) Discusses how last-mile delivery inefficiencies affect express logistics and identifies solutions such as drone delivery, crowd-sourced logistics, and autonomous vehicles to enhance speed and cost- effectiveness.

9. Customer Service Role in Express Logistics Mentzer et al. (2001) Explains the impact of express logistics service quality on customer satisfaction and loyalty based on speed, real- time communication, and solving problems in supply chain operations.

10. Integration of Logistics Networks for Express Delivery Bowersox et al. (2013) Examines how express logistics companies integrate warehouse hubs, multimodal transportation, and IT solutions to improve the speed and reliability of delivery.

11. Automation of Express Logistics Warehouses Rushton et al. (2017) Examines how robotic, artificial intelligence-based sorting, and automated picking machines enhance express logistics warehouse efficiency with reduced processing time and errors.

12. How AI and Big Data Transform Express Logistics DHL Logistics Report (2020) Describes how predictive analytics, route optimization powered by AI, and machine learning improve delivery forecasting, fleet management, and logistics productivity.

Problem Statement

Mixed bag inbound operations at Blue Dart's airport hub feature shipments of different sizes, destinations, and priorities. The present time-consuming manual process is prone to bottlenecks at de-stuffing, segregation, acknowledgment, sorting, linking, and dispatch. The delays jeopardize service commitments, escalate operational expenses, and may lower customer confidence.

The study will seek to uncover the underlying causes of inefficiencies and recommend implementable strategies to improve the speed and correctness of processing at the hub.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A mixed-methods design was employed:

Time-motion studies and direct observations were used to measure actual processing and handling times.
Structured interviews with supervisors and ground staff offered qualitative information.

Root Cause Analysis (RCA) tools like the 5 Whys technique and Fishbone Diagrams were utilized to backtrack inefficiencies to their causes.
Analysis of data in Excel allowed quantification of delays in processing across various stages of operations.
The research centered on critical process areas:

1. Flight arrival handling.

2. Pallet de-stuffing.

3. Tag based segregation

4. RFID acknowledgement.

5. Location based segregation.

6. Manual linking and sorting.

7. Vehicle dispatch.

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Key Findings

Flight Arrival Delays:

External factors like weather and air traffic congestion sometimes caused unpredictable arrival schedules, affecting downstream operations.

Manual De-stuffing Bottlenecks:

Pallet breakdown and de-stuffing were greatly dependent on manual labor, causing inconsistency in handling times.

Inefficient Tag Segregation:

As RFID was in place, manual scanning and error-ridden sorting for Direct Priority (DP), E-tail, MAP, TDD, and MIB shipments caused delays.

Resource Constraints:

During busy times, the staff allocated to segregation and acknowledgment were inadequate, extending processing schedules.

Vehicle Dispatch Delays:

Load consolidation inefficiencies and manual manifest verification took longer than the 120- minute goal.

Root Cause Analysis

With the Fishbone Diagram, the following root causes were found:

People: Lack of RFID process training; unreliable staffing during peak volumes. Process: Inability to handle damaged or misrouted bags in real-time.

Technology: Failure to fully exploit automation capabilities such as AI-powered sorting and dynamic resource allocation. Material: Failure to optimize space in mixed bag handling areas.

Management: Inconsistencies in pre-arrival communication regarding cargo details resulted in hasty planning.

Also, the 5 Whys Analysis identified that delays usually started with insufficient pre-flight information, which filtered down to create jams during de-stuffing and wasteful segregation.

Improvement Strategies:

As per the analysis, some improvement recommendations are given: Pre-Arrival Coordination Enhancement Incorporate advanced flight tracking integration with cargo pre-manifest systems.

Provide resources dynamically on the basis of forecasted cargo volume and structure. Semi- Automated De-stuffing Implement automated pallet de-stuffing assistance such as conveyor-assisted unloading to minimize manual handling time and bag damage.
RFID Optimization

Replace existing RFID readers with handheld high-speed readers.

Implement automatic RFID gates at critical segregation points to reduce manual scans. Workforce Augmentation and Training

Implement flexible staffing strategies with part-time surge staff during peak hours.

Ongoing training programs to ensure RFID scanning accuracy and rapid segregation techniques.

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Process Digitalization:

Real-time visibility dashboards for supervisors to track progress of every batch.
Incorporate AI-based predictive notifications for probable processing delays. Optimized Vehicle Dispatch
Implement dispatch automation software to streamline load planning and real-time route optimization.
Implement dedicated loading bays for high-priority, time-sensitive shipments. Expected Outcomes

Through these practices, Blue Dart can anticipate:

•30–40% decrease in inbound processing time.

•Enhanced resource utilization and labor productivity.

•Decreased manual errors during acknowledgment and linking.

•Higher customer satisfaction through improved on-time delivery rates. Cost savings through streamlined processes and reduced rework.

Result:

Fishbone attributes	**Causes**	**Occurrence**	**Impact (high, medium, low)**	**Suggestion**
Manpower	Lack of training	Monthly	High impact	Conduct regular training sessions for employees
Materials	Variability in package size making sorting complex	Monthly	Medium impact	Standardize packaging or implement automated sorting technology
Measurements	Process delay time	Monthly	High impact	Optimize workflow and implement time- tracking system
Mother nature	Airport closure due to flood	Yearly	High impact	Develop contingency plans, alternative routing strategies and corrective maintenance
Machines	Roller conveyor inefficiencies and barcode scanners malfunction	Monthly	Medium	Schedule preventive maintenance and upgrade equipment as needed
Methods	Standard operating procedure	Monthly	Medium	Regularly review and update SOPs for efficiency

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IV. CONCLUSIONS

The research focused on examining and improving the processing time of the incoming process of mixed bags in Blue Dart Express, Chennai Airport Hub. By observing in detail and data analysis of important operational processes—such as pallet start time, segregation start time, linking start time, bagging, last pallet start time, last bag from pallet, mix bag segregation end time, and last bag for metro—important information was gained about the present efficiency and bottlenecks of the process.

Variation in processing time on different dates was a discovery, and this suggested the effect of staff coordination, machine availability, and varying volumes. Whereas certain processes were invariably achieved within a decent amount of time, others such as mix bag segregation and dispatch of the last bag for metro provided areas to streamline and make standards.

Instituting small but effective changes like improved inter-department coordination, live tracking systems, and workload balancing is likely to ensure time-based completion of each phase, thereby enhancing overall operational efficiency.

The study not only helps in process improvement and operational simplicity but also fits into Blue Dart's larger vision of increasing customer satisfaction by way of on-time and accurate deliveries. It also helps in sustainability goals by promoting less idle time, more efficient use of resources.

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