

Challenges and Solutions in the Management of Cold Chain Logistics – A Case Study from Palakkad, Kerala

Dr. M. Kousalyadevi, Associate Professor & Head, Department of Management,
Rathinam College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore

H. Surya Kiran, BBA (Logistics), Rathinam College of Arts and Science

Mr. A. Prakash, Assistant Professor, Department of Management, Rathinam College of Arts and Science

Kalaiyarasan N BBA(Logistics)

Chockalingam R M Assistant Professor, Department of Management, Rathinam College of Arts and Science

ABSTRACT

Cold chain logistics is essential for transporting and storing temperature-sensitive goods such as pharmaceuticals, perishable foods, and chemicals. Despite technological advancements, this sector continues to face critical challenges including inconsistent temperature control, inadequate infrastructure, regulatory gaps, and logistical inefficiencies. This study, focusing on the Palakkad region, explores both the challenges and viable solutions through a mixed-methods approach, incorporating survey data from **98** respondents. Key findings reveal significant product spoilage due to improper storage and delivery, consumer demand for better packaging and faster delivery, and willingness to pay for improved service. Solutions include adopting IoT-based monitoring, better insulated packaging, staff training, and policy reforms. These insights serve as a practical guide for enhancing cold chain operations in semi-urban and rural Indian contexts.

KEYWORDS: Cold Chain, Logistics, Temperature-Sensitive Products, Palakkad, Real-Time Monitoring, Cold Storage, Consumer Perception, IoT in Logistics, Last-Mile Delivery, Perishable Goods.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cold chain logistics ensures that products requiring specific temperature conditions—such as dairy, vaccines, or frozen foods—are preserved throughout the supply chain. This is vital for public health, safety, and product quality. However, gaps in infrastructure, monitoring, and awareness, especially in semi-urban areas like Palakkad, pose risks of spoilage and inefficiency. This paper investigates these challenges and examines strategic solutions for improving cold chain performance.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify critical challenges in the cold chain logistics sector in Palakkad.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of technological and logistical solutions implemented.
- To assess consumer experiences and expectations regarding cold chain services.
- To propose feasible recommendations for improving cold chain efficiency.

Figure 1: Cold Chain Delivery Vehicle and Urban Distribution:



Figure 2: Integrated Cold Chain Infrastructure:



3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study covers cold chain logistics practices in the Palakkad district, focusing on sectors such as dairy, frozen food, and pharmaceuticals. It evaluates infrastructure, last-mile delivery, consumer awareness, and technology integration. Primary data from urban, semi-urban, and rural stakeholders provides a comprehensive perspective on ground-level issues and expectations.

4. Research Methodology

The present study adopts a mixed-method empirical approach combining descriptive statistics and perceptual analysis to investigate the challenges and potential solutions associated with cold chain logistics in the Palakkad region of Kerala, India. The methodology has been designed to capture both quantitative insights from consumer responses and contextual understanding from regional logistics practices.

4.1 Type of Research The study is both empirical and descriptive in nature. It seeks to collect first-hand data from stakeholders involved in or affected by cold chain logistics and to describe the existing conditions, challenges, and service expectations without manipulating any variables.

4.2 Study Area The research was conducted in Palakkad District, located at the Kerala-Tamil Nadu border, which functions as a key corridor for transportation of perishable goods across southern India. The district includes a mix of urban and rural areas, offering a balanced view of cold chain infrastructure and service gaps.

4.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique A total of 98 respondents were selected through a convenience sampling method. The respondents included individual consumers, small retailers, delivery agents, and cold storage facility personnel.

4.4 Method of Data Collection Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed on Google Forms. The questionnaire comprised both closed-ended and Likert-scale-based questions focusing on respondents' purchasing behavior, service experiences, challenges faced, and expectations from cold chain service providers.

4.5 Analytical Tools Used Collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools including: Percentage analysis to assess the frequency of specific responses. Graphical representation to visually depict trends and distributions. Likert scale analysis to measure the intensity of consumer opinions and satisfaction levels.

4.6 Limitations of the Study The study is region-specific and limited to the Palakkad district, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other regions with different logistical conditions. The sample size ($n = 98$), while sufficient for preliminary

analysis, may not represent the entire cold chain stakeholder population in the district. Self-reported data may introduce bias, as responses are based on individual perceptions and may not fully capture operational realities.

5. KEY FINDINGS

- 67% of respondents are aged 18–30; 61.2% are female.
- 74.5% frequently purchase dairy; 42.9% buy cold products weekly.
- 57.1% received poorly stored products; 44.3% noted in-store refrigeration failures.
- 83.5% say proper handling is extremely important.
- 58.8% would pay extra for better service.
- Top demands: Faster delivery (68.4%), better packaging (66.3%).

Figure 3: Interior of a Cold Storage Warehouse:



6. MAJOR CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

- Inadequate Infrastructure
- Lack of Real-Time Monitoring
- Regulatory Non-Compliance
- Consumer Unawareness
- Last-Mile Delivery Risks

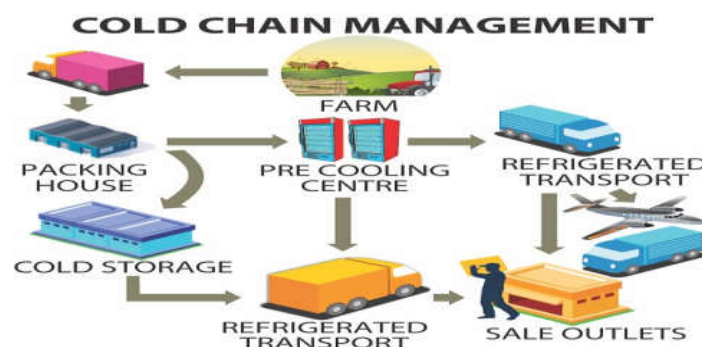
7. PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

1. IoT-Based Monitoring
2. Affordable Cold Storage
3. Packaging Innovation
4. Staff Training
5. AI-Based Route Optimization

6. Digital Coordination Platforms
7. Government Incentives
8. Consumer Education
9. Refund Policies
10. Cold Chain SOPs

8. CONCLUSION

Cold chain logistics is fundamental to food safety, healthcare, and economic development. The findings from Palakkad reveal both systemic weaknesses and high consumer expectations. Addressing these through scalable technology, workforce development, regulatory reforms, and stakeholder collaboration can significantly improve cold chain integrity. A resilient and efficient cold chain system is no longer optional—it is essential for sustainable growth.



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