

## STUDY OF THE CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOR OF POSTAL SERVICES IN ROMANIA

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**Abstract:** *The article presents the field research on the consumption of postal services and the appeal to their main suppliers by the Romanian consumers. Basically, the demand for transport services has become a priority among the services that affect the development of both the particular and the general economic activity. Postal services remain deeply marked by an industrial logic related to the challenges of modernizing and adapting postal production and have been inspired since 2001 by a new customer orientation. They cover three dimensions, starting from the delivery schedule and continuing with the reception at the post offices and the processing of applications. The quality of the services represents a major challenge for the main postal operators, respectively the courier companies in Romania, which have countered their strategy of attracting customers by reducing costs. These strategies cause many operators to reconsider the different dimensions of service quality. Increasing user awareness can enable providers not only to renew their thinking and management tools, but also to revise their own working methods, to strengthen their ability to respond to a rapidly changing world.*

**Keywords:** demand, services, strategy, management, change

**Jel code:** M11, M21, L84, L87

### Introduction

Being the backbone of commercial and economic development, postal networks carry hundreds of millions of physical, electronic and financial transactions daily. The postal economy studies the economic problems related to these markets, models supply and demand, analyzes trends and compares sectoral policy developments in different countries. New information and communication technologies, reforms, the global economic and financial crisis, and the fight against poverty are all impacts on the postal sector to evaluate and understand. Whether they are less advanced countries, emerging countries or industrialized countries, economic realities are integrated differently in economic thinking. The objectives are to facilitate the sharing of costs, partnerships and interconnection between networks and the development of real global public goods.

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In a changing world, the vital role of contributing to the right to communicate by exchanging messages, transporting parcels or sending money is more relevant than ever.

Postal networks are essential for the development of e-commerce, ensuring the delivery of millions of packages every day. It also contributes in particular to facilitating trade, especially for micro and small enterprises, companies, through a range of products and services tailored to their needs. In the context of the development of technology news, the posts show innovation capabilities daily. Using the drone or motor vehicle for parcel delivery, launching hybrid mail, developing mobile or crypto currency payments for money transfers or creating virtual mobile operators are examples of anticipating the evolution of the environment in which they operate.

Thus, postal networks are, in most countries, an essential infrastructure for the functioning of the inclusive and efficient economy, with the objectives of sustainable development, especially in socio-economic development, combating climate change or even financial and social inclusion. Facilitating, measuring and reducing natural disaster risks or reducing the digital divide aim to better use postal infrastructure, especially in rural and inaccessible areas, to contribute to the development of countries.

### **Review of specialized literature**

In the face of the evolutions predicted by the development of new technologies, the postal actors must orient their services to the fast growing markets:

- E-commerce, which is growing very fast and becoming more and more used by Internet users, will evolve to commerce by telephone (m-commerce). For the special operators, these evolutions will lead to a total increase in the volume of parcels but also by an increase in the number of senders.
- Exploitation and dissemination of data: capitalizing on this data to enable the development of high added value services.

Logistics has a vital link in postal services. Postal actors will have to adapt to changes in this area: Real-time tracking of objects and the necessary development of a common system for identifying the package that allows increasing the productivity in the processing of packages; changes in the logistics of the first and last km.

Postal services are at the crossroads of logistics distribution, communication, commerce, maximum services, and business services. Since the 2000s, the postal sector is undergoing accelerated transformations and its borders are reconfigured.

The quality indicators of the postal service are related to the challenges of modernizing and adapting the postal production to a new orientation to the customer while maintaining certain needs and called customer figures (Cochoy F., 2002) [1]

In the contemporary era these indicators show a great stability. They cover three dimensions: the terms of delivery by post, the reception at the post offices and the processing of applications. Historically, the quality indicators of postal services represent more an internal management tool than a measure of customer satisfaction.

Starting with the 1990s, postal customers change and their demands change, nowadays business clients predominate. In 1995, we switched to industrial management oriented to thermal means, postal production and product logic to a management based on business segments, customers and market logic. This new orientation aims at improving postal productivity and extending the quality of services for customer satisfaction.

Community initiatives to reform the postal market began in the early 1990s with the green paper on the demand for a single European market. Directive 97/67 / EC, Directives 2002/39 have four main objectives: cheaper, faster, more efficient, more innovative postal services, to harmonize postal performance between different Member States; improving the quality of cross-border postal services.

It is important to take into account the interest of the users who are entitled to high quality services, which represents a major challenge for the main postal operators.

Considering the total opening of the European market to the competition (January 1, 2011), postal operators have traditionally built their competitive analysis upon the arrival of new operators through defensive strategies to reduce costs. This approach is practically a relevant management tool. These took place in a changing socio-economic context, in the face of their profound change in markets. and the postal industry: changes in society related to information technologies and different consumer choices (Cotten M. et Trosa S., 2008) [2]. In response to these strategies economic actors practice progressive innovation, ie a process of dislocating habits of reflection and use (Hatchuel A., 2010) [3]. Thus, collective intelligence, creativity and innovation are encouraged, which is called "a work about representations and values" (Hatchuel A., 2010)[4].

Reviewing the scientific literature, I have analyzed the current situation of different parts of postal services and I have also described the impact of information's technology on this activities. Thus, I have identified major problems that postal services might face until 2025 and five directions have been set in order to solve these issues.

The first direction comprises the growth potential of the companies

Taking into consideration the emerging technologies, the postal service operators have to direct their efforts towards powerful markets.

- Electronic commerce ("the commerce anytime, anyplace and anyway"). The electronic commerce will not only increase the number of packs but also will enhance the number of vendors, especially those who use the electronic way.
- The postal service operators create opportunities for optimizing the supplying process and for knowing the customers (identities, locations and flux).

The second direction talks about the possibility of widening the international activities

The postal service market should not be taken into consideration only on a regional level, but also on an international one.

The third direction is about how to adapt to the logistic changes that occur

It is very important to adapt your logistics for a real lifetime surveillance of the packages, all this allowing an improvement of productivity. Urban logistics is an extremely important source of jobs, an emerging market for e-commerce.

The fourth direction sets upon the emphasis of ecology

The fifth direction argues the importance of research development and the informatics abilities

This study has the main goal of anticipating and supporting not only the economic changes within postal services through identifying strategic perspectives connected to new uses and new ways of consuming and commerce but also the evolution of the borders between the postal markets.

### **Research methodology**

The general purpose of the paper is to study the consumer behavior of consumers of postal services.

### **Methods and techniques**

The sample: the study was carried out on a sample of 33 subjects (N = 33), women and men, aged between 18-65 years, living in urban and rural areas.

The research instrument used in the data collection was the questionnaire (Annex 1). It contains 13 items. Regarding its content, the questionnaire was structured in 3 parts: the first part includes items related to the types of postal services used and the frequency of their use, the second part refers to the postal service providers and the reasons that matter in their choice, and the third part contains questions about the reference population.

The period of conducting the opinion poll was short, given the small number of the sample, between the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> of April 2019. The type of survey used was the field one, the data collection being done directly by the operator.

### **The research objectives**

The main objective of the research is to identify the most suitable postal service providers and the frequency of their use. Secondary objectives are:

- Identification of the used postal services and their frequency
- To identify the reasons for keeping and changing the postal service provider.
- Identification of the user profile of postal service

### **Research hypotheses**

Hypothesis 1: The frequency with which postal services are used is every 2-3 months.

Hypothesis 2: The most widely used postal services are mail and parcel delivery.

Hypothesis 3: An increase in the postal tariff would lead to the replacement of the supplier.

Hypothesis 4: The choice of the postal service provider is related to the area in which the letter / package is sent.

Hypothesis 5: The main reason for changing the supplier is not covering the area where the shipment is made.

Hypothesis 6: People in the 18-35 age segments know more postal service providers than people in the 36-65 age segments.

Hypothesis 7: People in urban areas use more money and spend more money on the use of postal services than people in rural areas.

The data obtained were processed with the Excel program. Frequencies, percentages of responses and specific differences were calculated.

At Question 1, "When you need to send letters or parcels, who makes the decision in your household?", 64% of respondents said they personally make decisions when they need to send letters or parcels, 32% make decisions with someone else, and 4% said they did not deal with these decisions.

The answers to question 2, "Have you ever personally used postal services as a sender? Did you send correspondence (letters, greetings, visions, etc.) or parcels, in Romania or abroad? ", Indicates that 100% of the surveyed persons used postal services as a sender.

At Question 3, "Which of the following postal services do you know about? ", The results show that the most popular postal services are: national and international postal packages (80%), national and international correspondence (66%), reimbursement service (56%), national and international print (36%), mail advertising (30%).

When asked "How often are each of the following postal services used by your household or other people in your household?", 24% of those surveyed answered that they use postal services more often than once a month, 58% once at 2-3 months, and 38% once at 5-6 months.

At the next question, "On average, how much does your household spend in a year with each of the following postal services?", 44% of respondents spend between 10-20 Romanian lei, 40% between 21 and 50 ron. Only 16% of them are willing to spend over 51 Romanian lei for the postal services.

The answers to question 6 "If the tariff for the postal service would increase by 10% -15%, what would you do?" Shows that most would replace the current provider with another -30%, 28% would replace this service with another, 24% would continue to use this service as often or as needed. And only 18% would use this service less often.

According to question 7, "What postal service providers do you know, whether or not you personally used their services?", The most popular postal service providers are: Romanian Post Office - 92%, Urgent Cargus-68%, Fan Courier Expres-66%.

Interpretation of question 8, which tries to highlight the reason for choosing the supplier, shows that most accessible tariffs matter - 76%, then coverage in the area where they live and coverage in the area where the shipment is made - 54%. Only 1 respondent had the reason that he was satisfied with the personnel taking over the postal mail.

Question 9 brings to the attention of the questioned persons the reasons why they would change the provider for the postal service, and the results show that the main reasons for changing the postal service provider would be the best rate practiced by another provider - 72%, not covering the home area, - 46%, non-coverage in the sending area of the letter- 36% and dissatisfaction with the personnel taking over the postal delivery.

At question 10, "What are the reasons why you would not change the provider for the postal service?", Most respondents had as reasons that it would be the only provider with coverage in the home area - 52%, that it would be the only provider with coverage in the shipping area of the parcel, letter - 40% or never having delivery problem - 36%.

Regarding the identification of the profile of the participants in the study, questions were drafted to obtain information regarding: level of education, number of people living in the same household, occupation, gender, age.

As the answers to question 13 prove, most of the respondents are employed with average education - 40%, employed with higher education - 12%, skilled workers and students or students - 10%.

As the graphs show, it can be seen that the representative segment is the age of 31-40 years, and the proportion of the sexes is relatively high, the female one having a 66% share of the surveyed persons. The reference population is the one with a stable residence in the urban environment. The major weight in terms of occupancy of the study participants is held by the employees with average education-40%, and then employed with higher education-12%, skilled worker 10% and student / student-10%.

Moreover, people in the 18-35 age range know more postal services than people in the 36-65 age range. The average number of postal services known by each age category was 4.44 for the first category, respectively 3.68 for the second category.

Moreover, a comparative analysis of the data provided by the people belonging to the urban environment and the people belonging to the rural environment, shows that those in the first category use more frequently and spend more money on the use of postal services than the persons in the second category, as they are you can see in the graph below.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

Through this project I tried to find as much information as possible about the postal services used by the people from the urban and rural areas.

The questionnaire presented shows that the first five questions are related to the types of postal services used and the frequency of their use, the second part refers to the postal service providers and the reasons that matter in their choice - questions 6-10, and the third part includes questions regarding the reference population - questions 11-13.

After analyzing the data obtained, it can be appreciated that those who respond personally make decisions when they have to send letters or parcels, have used postal services as a sender, and the best known postal services are: national and international postal parcels, national and international correspondence, the refund service.

Regarding the frequency of use of postal services and the amounts of money allocated to these services, it was found that people in urban areas spend more and use postal services more often than people in rural areas.

The most well-known postal service providers are C.N. Posta Română, Urgent Cargus and Fan Courier Express and they were mainly chosen according to the accessibility of the prices and

the coverage of the location and the shipping area. If the supplier increased its rates, this would be a reason to change it, but it would be retained if it were the only one in the delivery area.

Another important aspect of data analysis is that there are age differences in postal services. People between the ages of 18-35 have more knowledge about these services than people in the age group 36-65.

Therefore, the profile of the postal services user is identified by the following characteristics: he lives in the urban area, he is between 18 and 35 years old, he uses these services on average every two to three months, spending about 21-50 lei per year and is employed with high school.

### **Verification of hypotheses**

Hypothesis 1, "The frequency with which postal services are used is every 2-3 months" is confirmed.

Hypothesis 2, "The most used postal services are those of mail and parcel delivery" is confirmed.

Hypothesis 3, "An increase in the postal tariff would lead to the replacement of the supplier", it is confirmed.

Hypothesis 4, "The choice of the postal service provider is related to the area in which the letter / package is sent", is not confirmed.

Hypothesis 5, "The main reason for changing the supplier is not covering the area where the shipment is made", it is not confirmed.

Hypothesis 6, "People in the 18-35 age segment know more postal service providers than people in the 36-65 age segment", it is confirmed.

Hypothesis 7, "People in the urban area use more frequently and spend more money on the use of postal services", it is confirmed.

The functioning of courier companies is vital in the realization of modern commerce. Ecommerce services are changing the way you shop.

The clients of the courier companies are becoming more aware of the quality, expecting this from the provider of these services.

The article presents the result of the research of the efficiency and terms of the deliveries made by the courier companies in Romania.

The demand for transport services determines the supply of products. Transport is recognized as one of the most important factors affecting the development of the economic activity and the general economic development.

Romanian courier companies offer a wide range of services to cover the needs of their clients. These include door-to-door delivery services, customs clearance, and daily deliveries or agreed or delayed time (eg. slower delivery), tracking and location. In general, companies and people appreciate qualities such as global coverage of the service, its reliability, transparency, speed and security.

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