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## **EVALUATION OF THE LEVEL OF A COURIER SERVICES BY INDIVIDUAL CUSTOMERS**

### **Abstract:**

The market of logistics services in Poland has developed very rapidly in recent years. Making cooperation between enterprises and logistic companies creates new opportunities for development and improvement of individual customer service. In the area of outsourcing the most popular in the retail sector is a courier service. High competition and increased customer demands are forcing courier companies to seek still new value added to the standard services. In order to assess the level of service quality of the final consumer conducted a survey among customers of online shops who using courier services. The purpose of the research was to identify the key criteria for quality of service and meet customers' preferences in the area of activities of courier companies in the domestic market. As a result of the analyzes indicated factors of on-time delivery, price and the ability to track shipments as determining the choice of courier company.

### **Keywords:**

courier services, customer service, outsourcing, sector KEP

**JEL Classification:** M21

## **The market of logistics services**

An increasing complexity of the logistics systems makes it necessary for the companies to use the services of expert logistics companies from the TSL (Transport–Shipping–Logistics) industry. The market of logistics services itself is a system of many connections and relations between demand and supply. The efficiency of this market depends on crucial elements of the system such as: information, conditions of concluded transactions and the transfer of goods (Dyczkowska, 2014, p.14; Kościelniak, Łęgowik-Małolepsza, 2012, p. 130).

The features of a logistics service are the following:

- moving away from the typical secondary demand for a service, the transport service is provided as a result of a secondary demand;
- the price of the logistics service is a function of storage, transport and the provided customer service;
- the use of logistics services increases the value of goods as well as its competitiveness on the international markets (Kisperska-Moroń, Krzyżaniak, 2009, p.216).

Taking the Polish market into account, it can be assumed that there are the following types of logistics services:

- transport services – the basic type of services whose role is only to transport the goods from the source to the destination;
- shipping services – the preparation and organization of the transport process;
- logistics services – apart from the transport and forwarding activities, it also includes terminal services such as reloading and storage and other additional activities; it can also include stock management at the customer's enterprises, logistics consulting and distribution (Koszeluk, 2013, p.37-38).

## **Outsourcing logistics services**

The current nature of the competition makes the companies focus on the areas of their activity which give them advantage on the market (Starostka-Patyk, Brzozowska, 2010, p.3). Therefore the companies, while looking for opportunities to reduce costs and increase efficiency, more frequently decide to assign part or total of the logistics services to the external logistics companies (Baskiewicz, 2013, p.23) which work as their support. The key benefit of outsourcing is a quality improvement of services and an increase of customer's flexibility (Gadde, Hulthén, p.5).

When considering the economic issues, the biggest advantages of outsourcing are: increasing the company's specialization, decreasing the expenditure on logistics infrastructure, releasing human resources and decreasing the costs of performing the

necessary logistics activities while maintaining the same level of provided services. External logistics companies represent a different level of offered services (Logistic Services, 2003, p. 3). From the transport of regular loads, through the complete services provided by the operators depending on the customers' needs, to 3PL and 4PL operators which have assets and appropriate logistics management skills, keep developing their skills (especially in creating the information systems) and have experience based on highly specialized knowledge (Kempny, 2008, p. 22).

## Outsourcing the courier services

One of the key processes prevailing in the logistics services market is transport, which results from the need to transfer goods and people. In case of online shops, outsourcing is visible particularly when it comes to using the services of the courier companies which deliver goods to the final market (2014 Third party logistics study, p.6).

Courier services are one of the basic elements of the logistics services market and are one of the most dynamically developing area of the TSL services, i.e. transport, shipping and logistics services. They differ from other logistics services mainly because there is an opportunity to precisely define the date of shipment delivery to the customer (Rydzikowski, 2013, p. 47).

Courier services are part of the CEP market, i.e. courier, express and parcel services. The CEP services industry includes companies which differ not only in size but also in a variety of their services and their scope of work (Ledzion, 2013, p.32). Their hallmark is the specific added value which involves, among others, the manner and the quality of the provided services and the obligations resulting from it. The list of the best rated courier companies recommended by big companies operating in electronic market is presented in table 1.

**Table 1. Ranking of logistics operators recommended by big companies from e-commerce market**

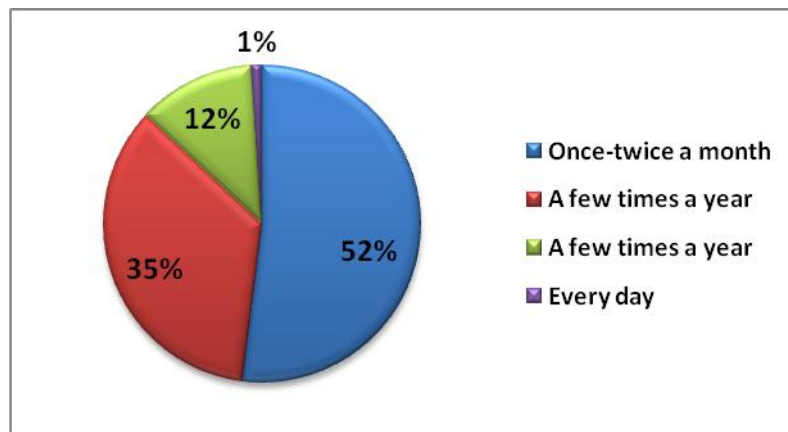
Logistics operators	% of using the services	% of recommendations of three best companies
DHL Express	54.60%	45.00%
DPD Polska	65.00%	43.70%
UPS Polska	42.30%	39.70%
Poczta Polska	83.40%	39.10%
GLS Poland	62.00%	37.70%
InPost	38.00%	12.60%
Siódemka	46.60%	11.90%
Raben Polska	28.20%	11.30%
FEDEX	22.70%	7.30%
ROHLIG SUUS Logistics SA	11.00%	4.00%

Source: Special report, [https://polonialogistyka.pl/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Raport\\_2014\\_01\\_56E.pdf](https://polonialogistyka.pl/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Raport_2014_01_56E.pdf), p. 45

## Assessment of courier services in national market

In order to analyze the courier services market in Poland from a perspective of an individual customer, a survey with the use of CAWI method has been conducted among the randomly chosen customers who purchase online. The task was to identify the main criteria of the service's quality and to find out what are the preferences of customers in relation to the activity of courier companies in the national market. Initially, the frequency of choosing the courier delivery option while doing online shopping has been analyzed (chart 1.).

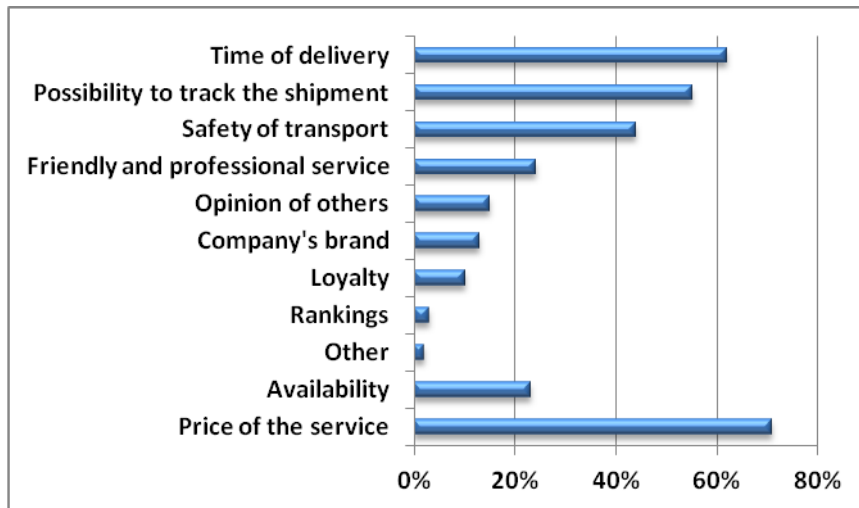
**Chart 1. Frequency of ordering goods with the use of courier companies**



Source: own study made on the basis of own survey

Over a half of the respondents use the courier delivery service for purchased goods at least once a month. Every third shopper chooses a courier delivery option once a year. At the same time, it must be highlighted that there is a strong correlation between the frequency of buying and the use of services of delivery companies. The figure showing the use of the courier services is in direct proportion to the frequency of purchasing online. Chart 2 demonstrates the criteria of choosing the delivering company.

**Chart 2. Criteria of choosing a courier company delivering the shipment**



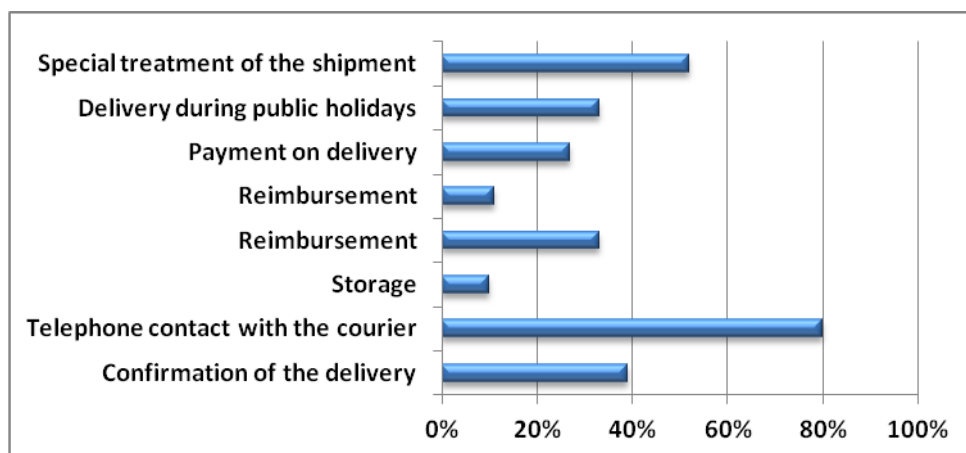
Source: own study made on the basis of own survey

Customers' preferences regarding the choice of a transport company are very diverse. The same factors that determine the choice of online shopping are dominant:

- price of the delivery service;
- time of delivery of the shipment;
- possibility to track the shipment;
- guarantee of security of transport.

Chart 3 presents the most frequent additional services offered by the CEP industry companies.

**Chart 3. Preferences regarding additional services**



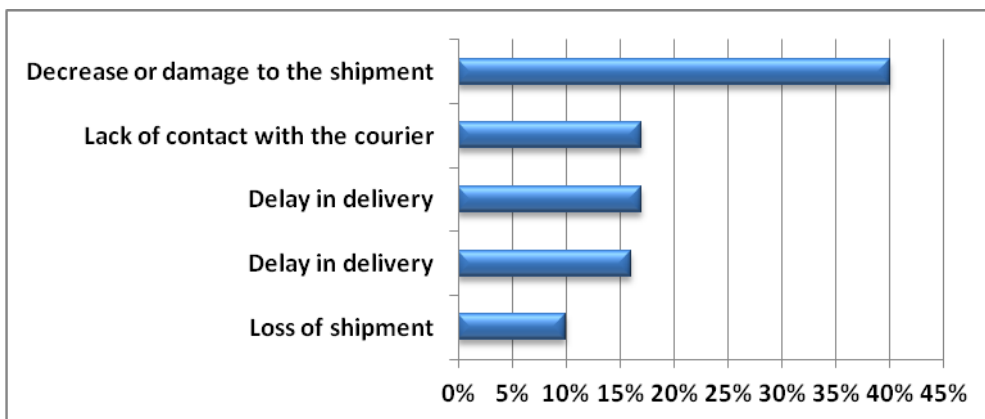
Source: own study made on the basis of own survey

Among additional services which are an added value to the standard services, most importantly, it seems, customers appreciate the opportunity to contact the courier directly over the phone in order to decide on the date and time of the delivery. Over a half of the respondents decided that careful handling of the goods is also very important. In addition, the 2015 forecast results showed that the dominant factors were the following:

- monitoring the shipment through mobile devices;
- tracking the shipment at any time;
- introducing changes to the order during its processing;
- receiving the shipment in a designated place, depending on the customer's current place of stay;
- making complaints with the use of mobile applications and keeping a short time of their proceeding (Kacperek, 2015).

Chart 4 demonstrates the most frequent reasons of complaints.

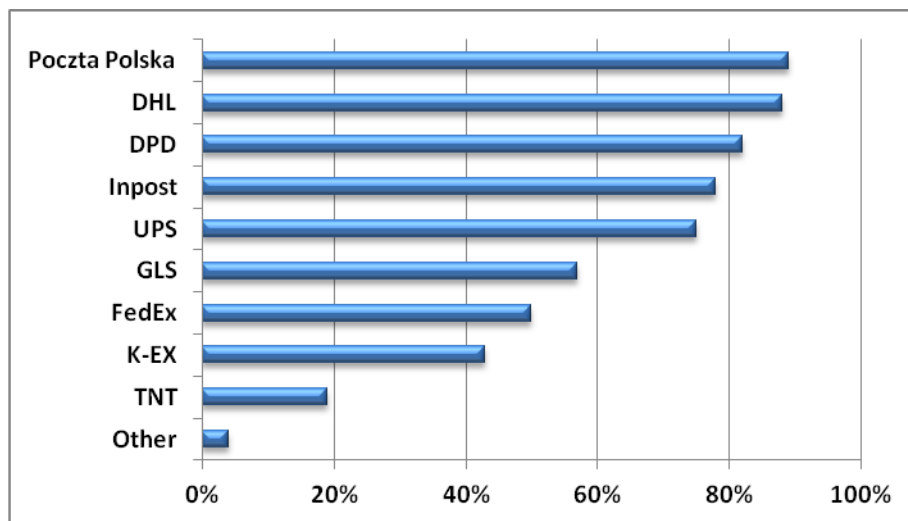
**Chart 4. Most frequent reasons of complaints**



Source: own study made on the basis of own survey

40% of the surveyed individuals made a complaint with a company delivering the shipment. The main reason of complaint was due to a partial loss or damage to the shipment. Other reasons which were mentioned included loss of shipment or lack of contact with the courier. At the same time, customers did not complain about overpricing the shipment, overstating its weight or about the lack of reimbursement. The ranking of the operators whose services were chosen most often by the respondents are the summary of the research (chart 5).

### Chart 5. The operators whose services were chosen most often with online shopping



Source: own study made on the basis of own survey

Despite the fact that there are many CEP companies, as many as 89% of the respondents chose Poczta Polska. Additionally, 80% declared using the services of DPD, successively followed by UPS, Inpost, FedEx and K-Ex. The structure is almost identical to the preferences of the operator's cooperation with big companies.

### Summary

The key factors influencing the condition and the development of the courier services industry are, without a doubt, the globalization processes and the expansion of the common customs territory of the European Union. Easier border controls positively influence the opportunities for companies which belong to the courier services industry. At the same time, this is accompanied by an increasing competition which makes the courier companies look for the added value to their standard services which aims to increase the quality and to customize the offers. Courier companies focus on the maximum possible reduction of the delivery time of the shipment, while offering also the customs service, storage and insurance of the shipments. It is also important for the courier companies to use computer technology as they improve the quality of the provided services, both in relation to businesses as well as to individual customers.

Undoubtedly, the development of companies in the CEP industry is related to the development of the e-commerce industry. The customers choose this form of shopping more often as it is easy and comfortable in comparison to the standard shopping, tangibly in shops. The survey, conducted among the customers of online shops pointed out the key factors which make the individual customers use services of courier companies while online shopping. The time of delivery, price and the possibility

to track the shipment are the dominant factors. Customers also appreciate direct contact with the courier.

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