

Consumers' Perception of the Importance of Sustainability and the Development Opportunities of Courier Companies in Romania

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Abstract

This article aims to highlight the level of Romanian consumers' perceptions regarding the importance of sustainability in logistics field, and also, how courier companies can involve clients in ecological initiatives. The research seeks to assess the level of awareness of environmental protection and how clients can be actively involved in adopting environmentally friendly behaviors. The research examines the role of environmental responsibility in shaping consumer behavior and the potential for sustainable development within the Romanian courier sector. **Keywords:** sustainability, green logistics, courier services, consumer perception, ecological practices, corporate responsibility.

1. Introduction

The current economic environment, characterized by significant and rapid changes, requires greater awareness and adaptability from businesses across all industries. As a result, streamlining organizational processes has become an essential strategic decision.

The concept of social responsibility has also evolved alongside innovation, and companies must integrate it into their action plans and future strategies. In this context, businesses need to reconsider their operations in order to meet the growing demand for sustainability and environmental protection while maintaining market competitiveness. Therefore, by optimizing internal processes, companies seek to enhance added value in a responsible manner.

The coronavirus pandemic, which struck five years ago, had a profound impact on humanity and forced a global reorganization. This crisis represented one of the most severe challenges since World War II. The changes implemented were not only socio-economic in nature but also left visible scars that affected personal, professional, political, and economic dimensions of life.

As a result, rebuilding trust between nations and between citizens and their governments became imperative. The pandemic revealed that the way we had been living up to that point was unsustainable, as it failed to mitigate the effects of climate change and social inequality; on the contrary, it contributed to the acceleration of global pollution. [1]

Travel restrictions during the pandemic reduced industrial and traffic activity, which in turn decreased the carbon footprint and temporarily mitigated the greenhouse effect caused by gas emissions.

According to the European Commission's 2022 Interim Report on EU Climate Policies, global greenhouse gas emissions returned to pre-pandemic levels in 2021. That year, worldwide emissions increased by 4.2%, reaching 52.9 billion tons of CO₂ equivalent (CO₂(e)), slightly higher than in 2019.[2]

However, between 2020 and 2022, logistics activities expanded rapidly, contributing to overall economic growth. This sharp rise led to several social and environmental challenges. For instance, the overall social cost of economic development increased due to high logistics expenses. [3].

To assess the degree of awareness about the significance of sustainability and the performance of Romania's logistics sector, a questionnaire with 23 questions was applied. Integrating these responses into the sustainability analysis is essential and represents an important element in understanding the evolution of the sustainability concept. Furthermore, the paper presents the analysis of sustainability elements for a renowned company in the logistics field, emphasizing the added value of process optimization in reducing environmental impact. [4]

Finally, the paper discusses the risks faced by companies operating in the logistics sector, along with the corresponding conclusions.

2. Methodology

The research was conducted between January 11 and April 30, 2025, through an online questionnaire addressed to users of courier services in Romania. The aim was to identify perceptions related to sustainability and to assess the degree of consumer involvement in environmentally friendly actions. A total of 62 respondents participated in the study, which included 23 questions (14 closed, 5 open-ended, and 4 socio-demographic). The structure of the questionnaire and the number of respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Structure of the questionnaire and number of respondents

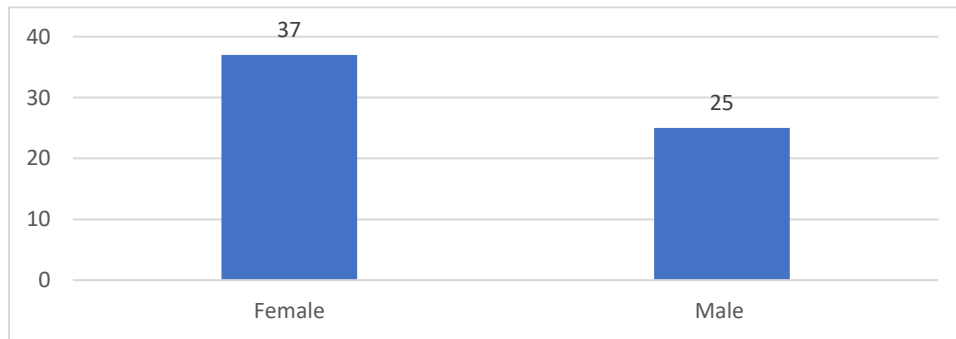
No.	Question	Number of respondents
1	What is your gender?	62
2	What is your age?	62
3	In what field do you work?	62
4	What is your role in the company?	54
5	How often do you use courier services?	62
6	What type of deliveries do you usually make?	62
7	Which courier companies do you collaborate with most frequently?	62
8	What factors influenced your choice of courier company?	62
9	How do you evaluate the ease of using digital platforms for placing courier orders?	62
10	How important is it for you that courier companies use ecological practices?	62
11	Have you notice environmentally friendly initiatives implemented by courier companies?	62
12	Would you be willing to pay more for environmentally friendly courier services?	62
13	Would you choose a slower but more sustainable delivery option if it reduced carbon emissions?	62
14	Would you choose packaging-free or recyclable packaging delivery option?	62
15	Would you be willing to return used packaging for recycling if the courier company offered this option?	62
16	How do you think you could personally contribute to reducing environmental impact in the context of deliveries?	43
17	Do you think courier companies should invest more in sustainability?	62
18	Would sustainability influence your decision to choose a courier company?	62

19	How do you evaluate courier service prices in relation to the services provided?	62
20	What are the main challenges you have encountered with courier companies?	62
21	Have you received assistance from customer service when needed?	62
22	What improvements would you like to see in the services provided by courier companies?	62
23	What recommendations would you make for courier companies in Romania to increase efficiency and sustainability?	62

Sources: Own contribution

The responses show a moderate balance between genders (37 women and 25 men), providing a representative picture of the overall perception

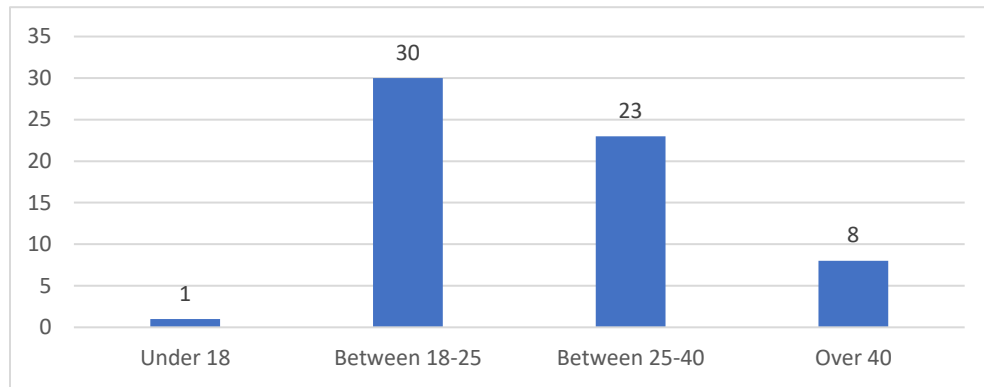
Fig. 1. Gender distribution of respondents



Source: Chart created based on the questionnaire responses. Own contribution.

The distribution of the 62 respondents by age is diverse: 53 falls within the 18–40 age range, a segment that is more professionally and digitally active and also more open to technologization and sustainability concepts; one respondent is under 18 years old, while eight respondents are over the age of 40.

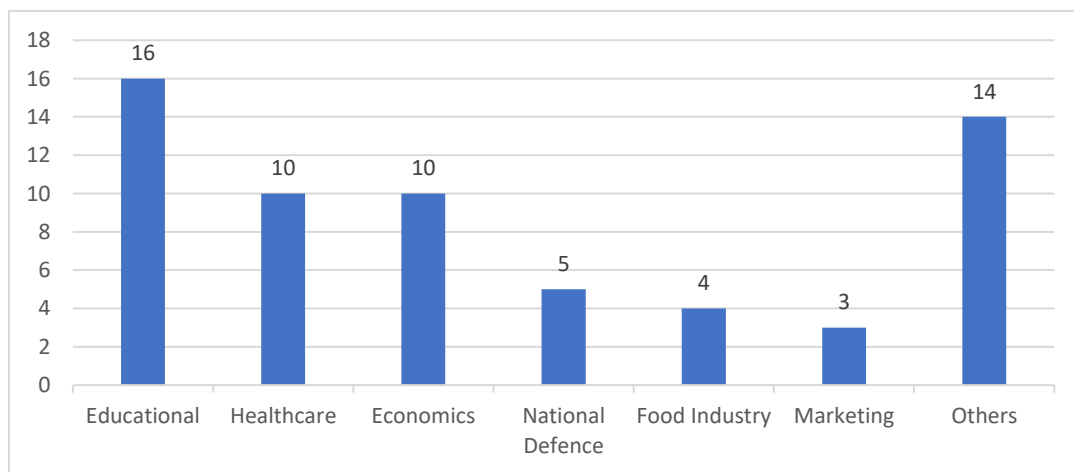
Fig. 2. Age distribution of respondents



Source: Chart created based on the questionnaire responses. Own contribution.

Respondents work in various fields such as education (16 persons), healthcare (10 persons), economics (10 persons), national defense- army (5 persons). Other fields with fewer responses include marketing, psychology and the food industry. Additionally, a total of 15 participants are students enrolled in bachelor’s, master’s or doctoral programs. The diversity of professional backgrounds in this study supports the validation of the data, providing an overview that is independent of any specific professional domain.

Fig. 3. Fields of activity



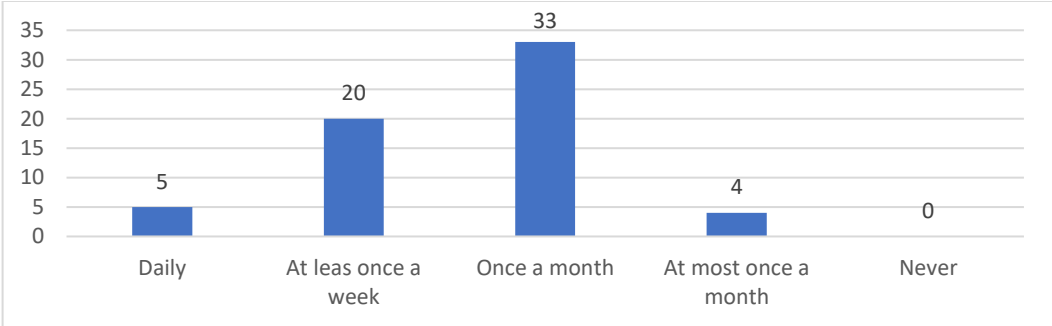
Source: Chart created based on the questionnaire responses. Own contribution.

The purpose of questions 5–8 was to assess respondents’ consumer behavior in relation to logistics and courier services, as well as to identify the factors that influence their choice of a

company to collaborate with. These questions help reveal patterns and preferences regarding the type of delivery and the criteria considered most important, such as price, sustainability, and service speed.

Following the analysis of responses on the frequency of courier service usage, it was found that the majority of respondents use courier services once a month (over 50%) or at least once a week (32.3%), indicating a significant dependence on these services. None of the respondents selected the “never” option, while only four individuals reported using the services no more than once a year.

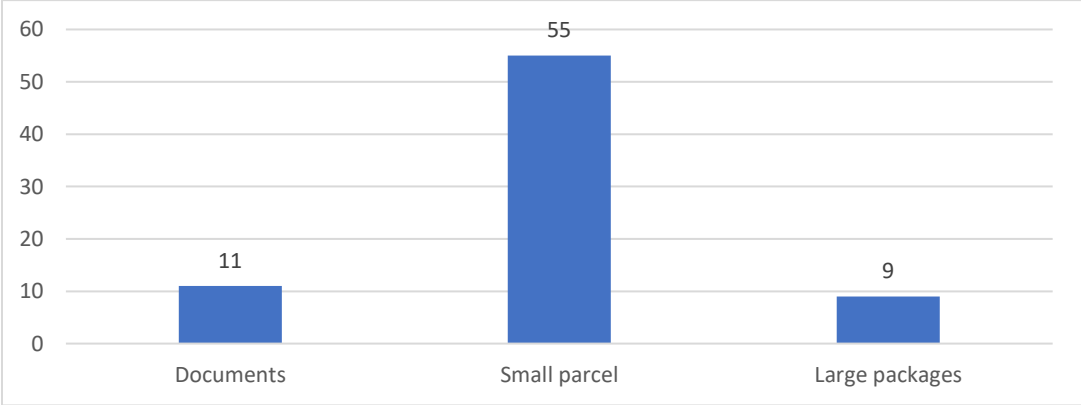
Fig. 4. Frequency of using courier services



Source: Chart created based on the questionnaire responses. Own contribution.

The growing popularity of e-commerce among consumers is reflected in the increased frequency of small parcel deliveries, a trend confirmed by the responses to the question regarding the types of deliveries made most frequently.

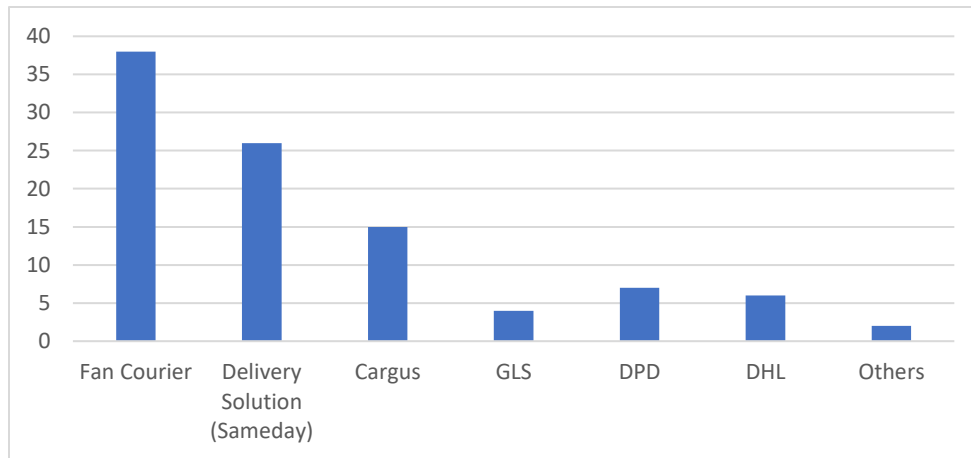
Fig. 5. Distribution of responses regarding the type of delivery



Source: Chart created based on the questionnaire responses. Own contribution.

Question 7 aimed to identify respondents' preferences regarding courier service providers. Fan Courier recorded the highest usage rate, being cited by more than 40% of participants (38 mentions). It was followed by Sameday with 26 mentions and Cargus, mentioned 15 times. Other companies, including GLS, DPD and DHL, were referenced less frequently, each receiving under 10 mentions. This was an open-ended question, allowing respondents to indicate one or multiple courier companies they use. The answers were consolidated based on the frequency of each mention.

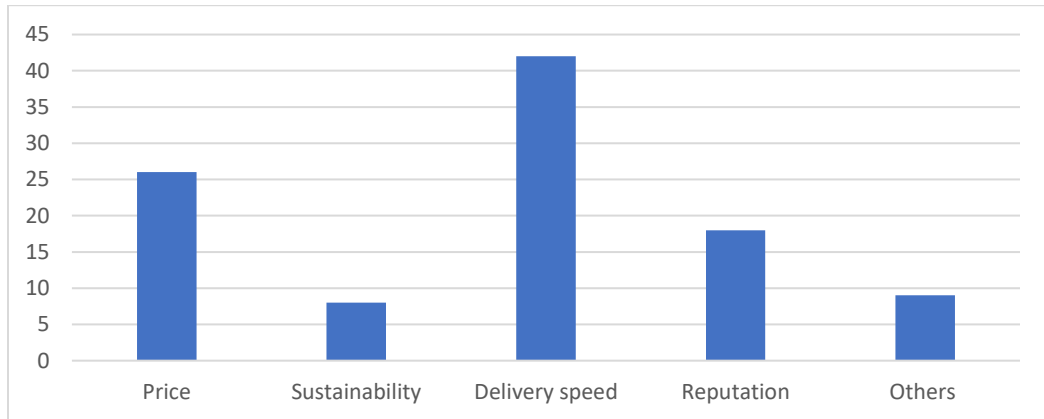
Fig. 6. Respondents' preferences regarding logistics service providers



Source: Chart created based on the questionnaire responses. Own contribution.

The purpose of question 8 was to examine the key factors guiding respondents in selecting a courier service provider. The results reveal that delivery speed represents the dominant criterion, mentioned by 67,7% of respondents. This finding suggests a clear tendency among users to prioritize efficiency and rapid delivery, reflecting the influence of globalization and the increasingly fast-paced nature of everyday life. Other significant decision-making factors for customers include price, mentioned by 41,9 persons and company reputation, cited by 18 participants. Sustainability ranks lowest among the factors influence the choice of courier companies.

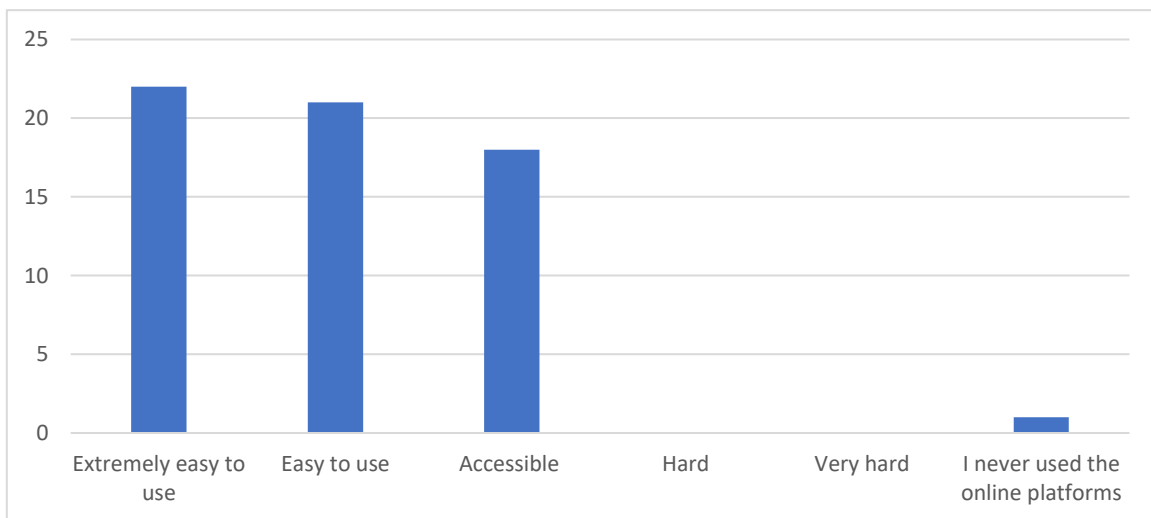
Fig. 7. Factors influencing the choice of logistics provider



Source: Chart created based on the questionnaire responses. Own contribution.

Question 9 was designed to evaluate respondents' perceptions regarding the accessibility of courier service online platforms as part of evaluating the overall digital experience. The results indicate that 35.5% of participants found the digital interface extremely easy to use, 33.9% considered it easy to use, and 29% rated it as accessible. These findings indicate that the majority of users are satisfied with the progress of digitalization in logistics processes and demonstrate a high level of adaptability to the electronic tools specific to the courier sector.

Fig. 8. Level of appreciation for the Ease of Use of Online Platforms

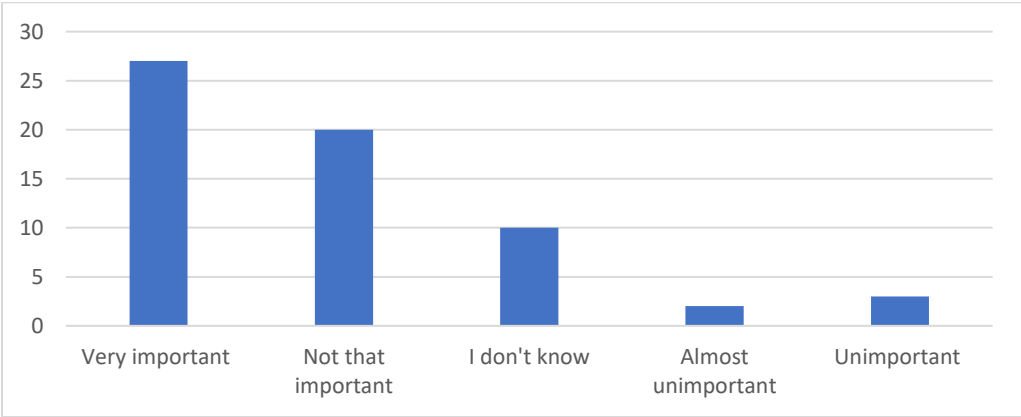


Source: Chart created based on the questionnaire responses. Own contribution.

In order to measure the level of interest and involvement of logistics service users regarding environmentally friendly practice, respondents were asked questions 10 to 18. The answers provide valuable insights into participants' willingness to actively contribute to changing how courier companies conduct their daily operations. This section of the questionnaire highlights both the degree of awareness and the level of involvement in ecological initiatives.

Although sustainability is not among the top criteria when choosing logistics providers, Question 10 shows that a significant portion of consumers represents an actively engaged group concerned with environmental practices, while another portion remains indifferent, insufficiently informed, or emotionally detached from the topic. The lack of a defined opinion or consistent attitude may stem from limited environmental education or the low visibility of sustainable actions undertaken by companies. A total of 27 respondents rated the implementation of green practices as very important, reflecting a moderately positive outlook, whereas 20 respondents paid less attention to sustainability. Furthermore, five participants considered this aspect irrelevant to the logistics field, and 10 respondents reported having no clear opinion on the matter. [5]

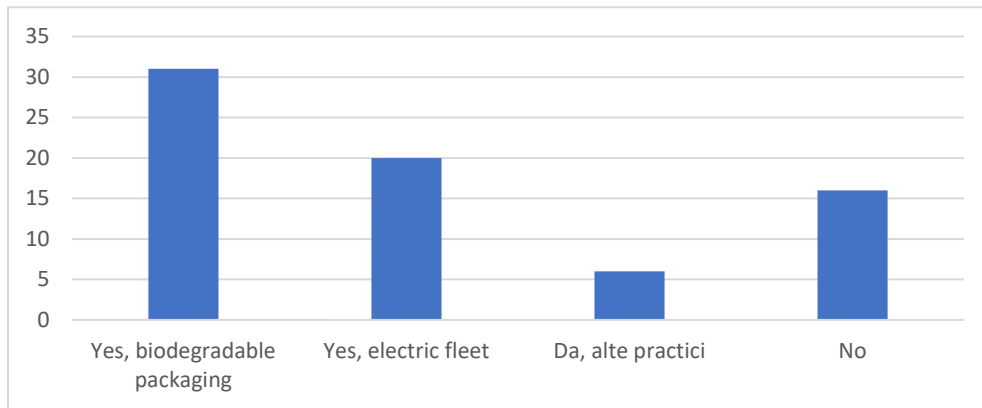
Fig. 9. Relevance of Sustainability in Respondents' Perception



Source: Chart created based on the questionnaire responses. Own contribution.

The responses to Question 11 highlight the environmentally friendly initiatives adopted by courier companies. The results show that 16 respondents reported not noticing any changes in this area, while 46 participants observed one or more such practices. Although some companies are actively involved and have made progress toward sustainability, their efforts are not communicated effectively to customers, leading to low visibility and generally negative perceptions regarding personal ecological responsibility.

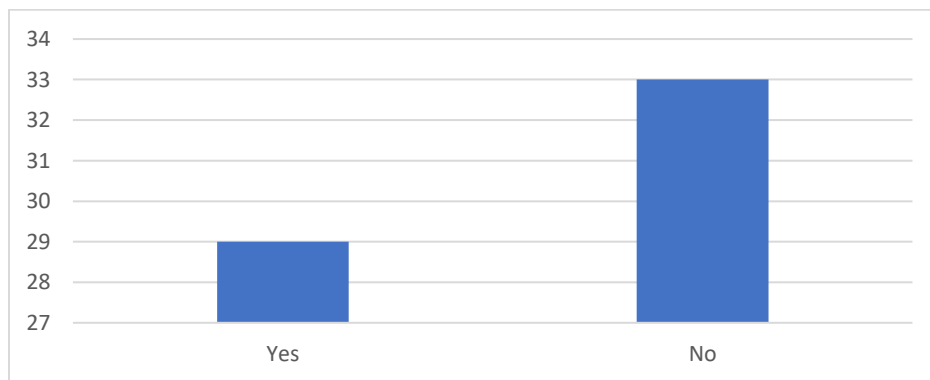
Fig. 10. Level of Awareness Regarding Sustainable Practices



Source: Chart created based on the questionnaire responses. Own contribution.

Questions 12, 13, and 14 were closed-ended and served to analyze respondents' attitudes and willingness to participate in environmentally friendly initiatives when interacting with courier service providers. According to Question 12, when asked about the possibility of paying an additional fee for sustainable services, 46.8% of participants expressed agreement, while a slightly larger share, 53.2%, indicated unwillingness to financially support such efforts. Although the percentage difference between the two groups is relatively small, it remains meaningful, reflecting both the financial constraints influencing part of the population's decision-making process and, at the same time, the environmental awareness and willingness to contribute among those prepared to invest in sustainable service options.

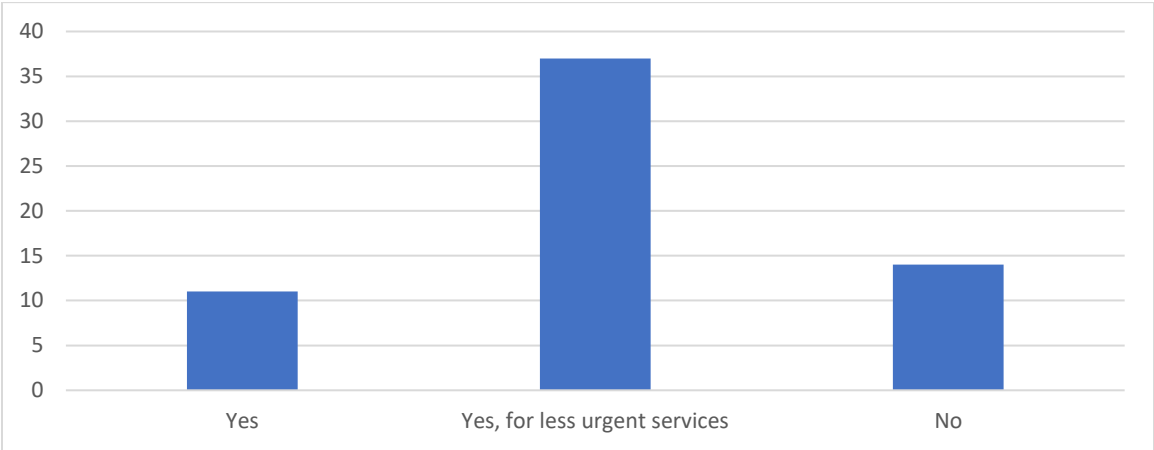
Fig. 11. Respondents' Willingness to Pay Extra for Sustainable Solutions



Source: Chart created based on the questionnaire responses. Own contribution.

However, when the trade-off between delivery time and environmental impact was presented, participants responded predominantly positively. In Question 13, which addressed the acceptance of a slower but more eco-friendly delivery, 59.7% of respondents stated they would choose this option for less urgent services, while 17.7% indicated they would prefer it regardless of context, and only 22.6% rejected the idea. These results suggest that the majority of respondents are open to contributing to environmental protection as long as they are informed about the environmental benefits associated with this choice and it does not involve additional costs.

Fig. 12. Distribution of Responses to the Time–Delivery Trade-off

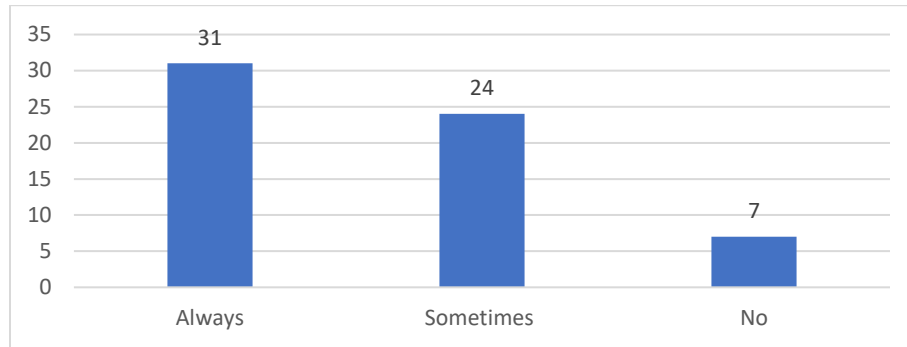


Source: Chart created based on the questionnaire responses. Own contribution.

Question 14 examined respondents’ willingness to reduce the amount of packaging used. The answers support the conclusions previously drawn — customers are more inclined to engage in environmentally friendly practices as long as no additional financial investment is required and they are properly informed. Out of all participants, 31 respondents stated that they would always choose the delivery option without additional packaging, 24 respondents said they would do so only occasionally, and 7 respondents declared they would not reduce the amount of packaging used.

These results indicate strong support for minimizing packaging waste and suggest an awareness of the negative environmental impact caused by excessive packaging, even if this concern is not directly associated with the logistics sector.

Fig. 13. Frequency of Using an Option to Reduce Additional Packaging

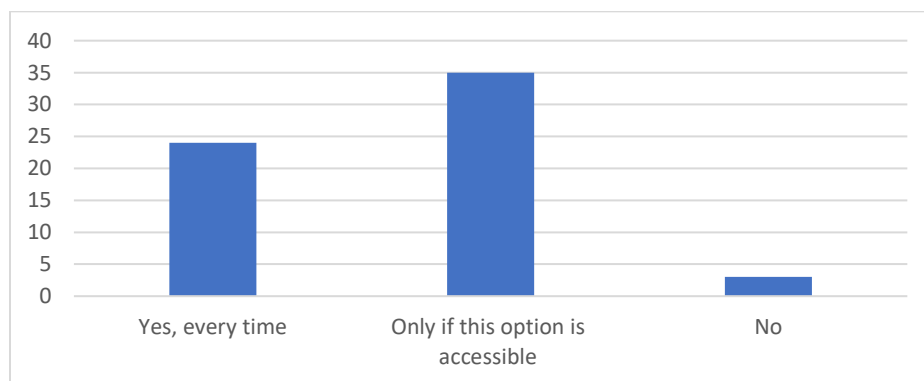


Source: Chart created based on the questionnaire responses. Own contribution.

Although delivery speed was identified as the main criterion in choosing courier companies (67.7%), respondents are willing to accept slower deliveries if they are informed about the positive environmental impact of their choice. At the same time, services such as locker deliveries (easybox), extended delivery time slots, and improved communication with delivery personnel are perceived as ways to better accommodate customer needs. Therefore, courier companies can benefit from implementing visible sustainable policies, provided these are accompanied by flexible options that maintain customer satisfaction.

According to Question 15, 56.5% of respondents stated they would choose to return packaging for recycling if such an initiative were made accessible, while 38.7% indicated they would choose to recycle every time.

Fig. 14. Level of Involvement in Packaging Reduction

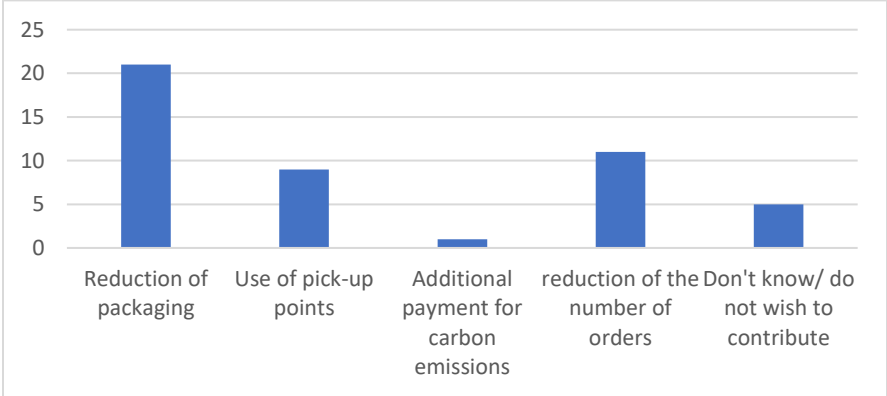


Source: Chart created based on the questionnaire responses. Own contribution.

Building upon the initiative of returning packaging used for deliveries, Question 16 — an open-ended and non-mandatory item — highlights respondents' growing awareness of how small,

individual efforts can contribute to environmental protection and the ways in which they actively support ecological practices. Out of the 62 participants, 43 provided answers, most frequently mentioning recycling, using designated parcel pick-up points, and reducing the number of parcels ordered as the main methods through which they contribute, or could contribute, to minimizing environmental impact.

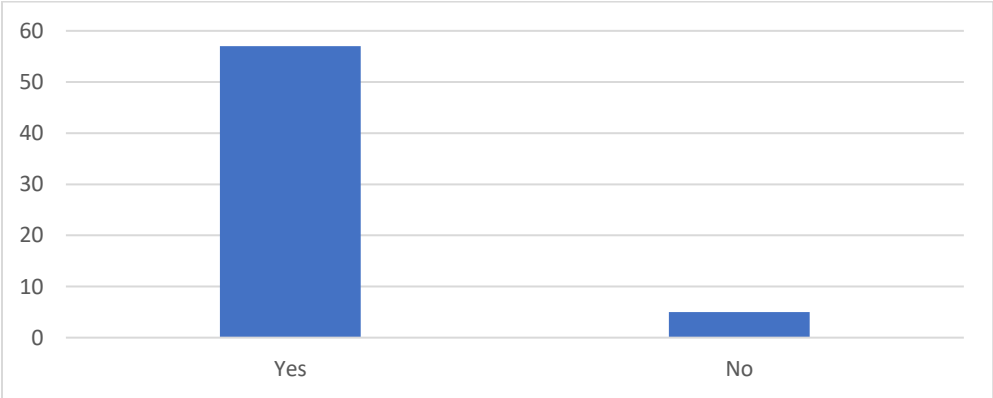
Fig. 15. Distribution of Environmentally Friendly Initiatives Practiced by Respondents



Source: Chart created based on the questionnaire responses. Own contribution.

Although only 43 respondents answered the question regarding their personal involvement in ecological actions — with 5 expressing a negative or indifferent attitude — opinions on the need for courier companies to take a more active role in sustainability were overwhelmingly positive. A total of 91.9% of participants supported the idea of increased investment in sustainability, while only 8.1% believed such investment to be unnecessary.

Fig. 16. Respondents’ Opinion on Logistics Companies’ Investments in Sustainability



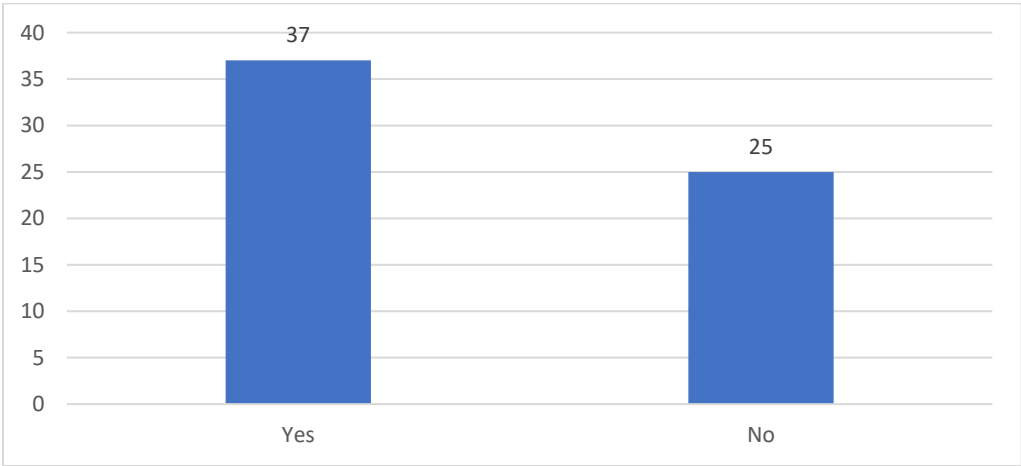
Source: Chart created based on the questionnaire responses. Own contribution.

The conclusions derived from the distribution of responses to Questions 16 and 17 reveal a significant yet complementary contrast between the perception of expectations regarding corporate involvement in ecological practices and that of individual responsibility. Consequently, the answers to Question 18, which addressed the influence of sustainability in choosing a courier company, serve as a reinforcement of this perspective.

On one hand, the responses to Question 16 demonstrate awareness of the importance of environmental protection, even though simple actions such as individual recycling or choosing sustainable packaging. On the other hand, more than 90% of respondents believe that courier companies' investments in sustainability are essential and necessary, although only 37 respondents stated that they would base their choice of courier company on this criterion. This discrepancy between corporate investments in sustainable practices and the actual decision-making behavior of consumers highlights a gap between expectations and actions, indicating the need for greater visibility and awareness efforts from companies.

In conclusion, while a portion of the population remains hesitant to engage personally in sustainability efforts, there is a clear expectation that companies should take an active role in reducing environmental impact — even if this does not directly translate into increased popularity for those companies.

Fig. 17. Relevance of Sustainability in Choosing a Courier Company

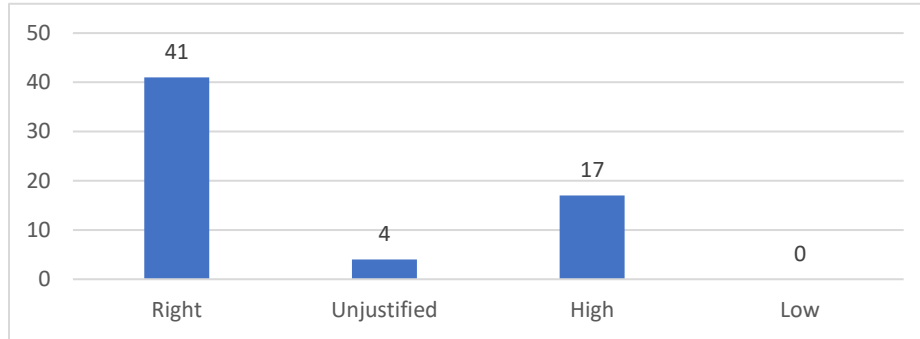


Source: Chart created based on the questionnaire responses. Own contribution.

The responses to Question 19, which focused on courier companies' pricing, indicate that 66.1% of participants are satisfied with the quality-to-price ratio. However, some customers

perceive prices as high (27.4%), while 6.5% consider them unjustified. This variation in opinions highlights existing gaps and suggests that there is room for improvement and price adjustments.

Fig. 18. Evaluation of Prices Charged by Courier Companies

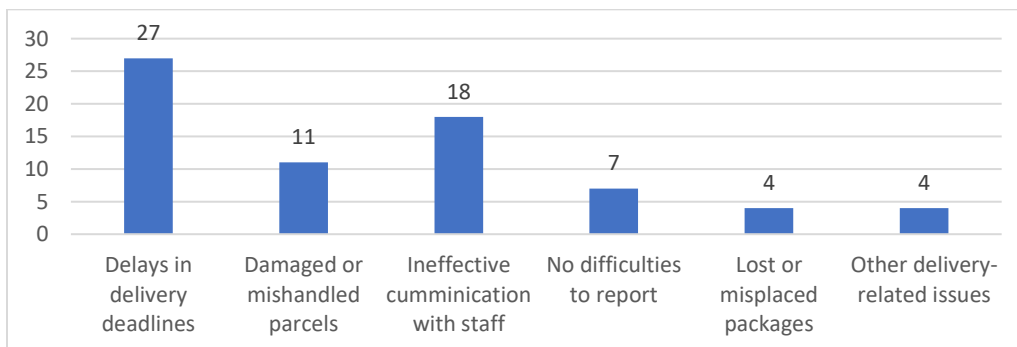


Source: Chart created based on the questionnaire responses. Own contribution.

To better understand the dissatisfaction among customers who considered courier company prices to be high or unjustified, Question 20, an open-ended item, aimed to identify the main challenges clients have encountered.

The most frequently mentioned issues include damaged products, delays in delivery, and poor communication with company employees. Damaged goods received by customers as a result of negligent handling indicate weaknesses in the logistics chain, particularly concerning compliance with safety and parcel-handling standards. Delivery delays — identified in Question 8 as one of the most important selection criteria—directly affect customer satisfaction. As for ineffective communication with delivery personnel, can undermine customers’ trust in the services provided, increased customer frustration, and ultimately, result in loss of clients.

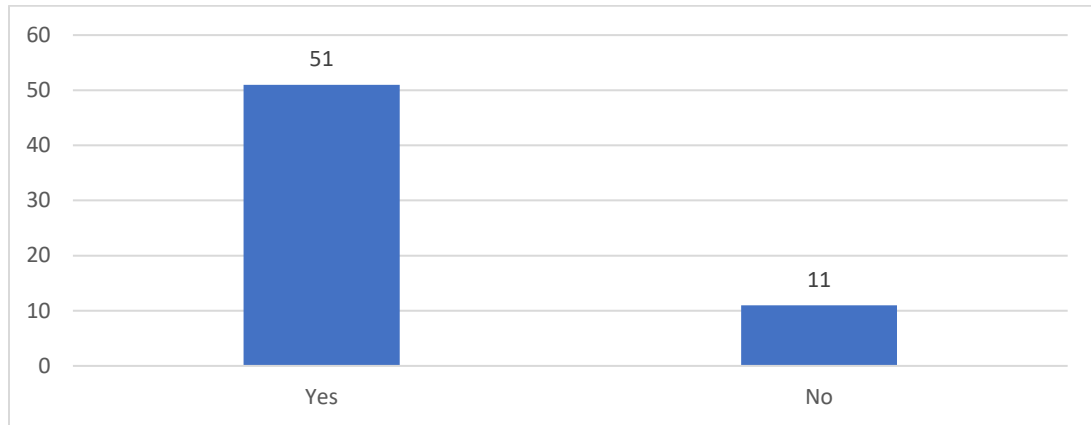
Fig. 19. Evaluation of problems encountered by respondents during deliveries



Source: Chart created based on the questionnaire responses. Own contribution.

Although, according to the responses to Question 21, just over 80% of customers received support from the company, there are still complaints regarding the way some courier companies conduct their operations.

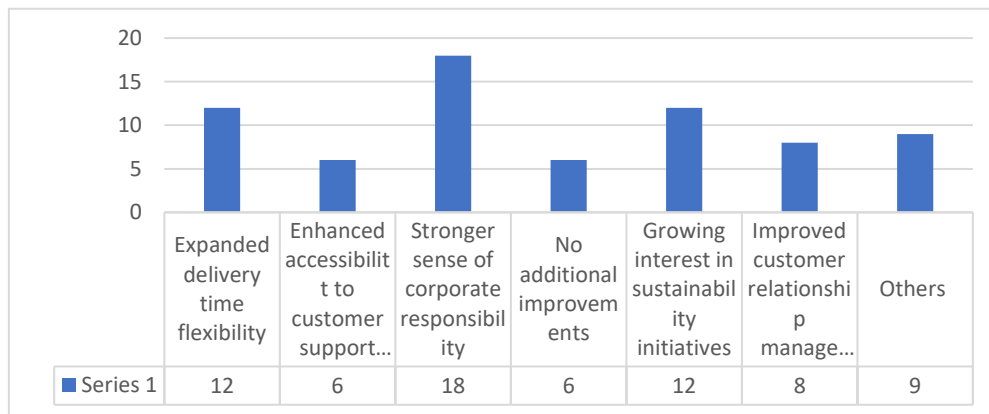
Fig. 20. Frequency of Providing Support When Needed



Source: Chart created based on the questionnaire responses. Own contribution.

Question 22 was intended to gather insights that could help shape conclusions about how courier services might be enhanced to ensure greater customer satisfaction.

Fig. 21. Improvements Proposed by Respondents to Meet Customer Needs

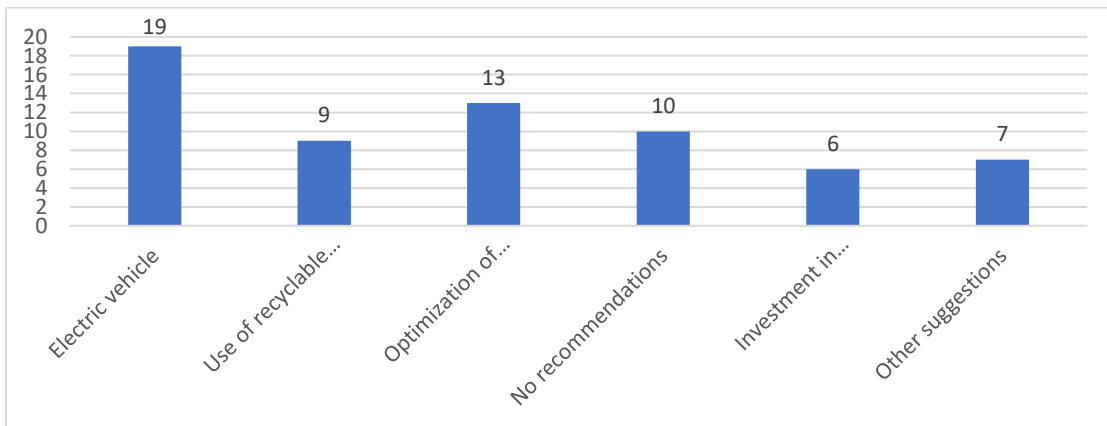


Source: Chart created based on the questionnaire responses. Own contribution.

Among the additional improvements suggested, respondents emphasized the implementation of pick-up point deliveries for larger parcels, upgrading online platforms, and aligning pricing with professionalism and punctuality. The frequently mentioned need for greater responsibility (reported 18 times) referred to the careful handling of parcels and adherence to shipping details, including both destination accuracy and delivery timing. When asked in

Question 23 for recommendations to help Romanian courier companies improve efficiency and sustainability, the majority of responses emphasized investing in electric vehicle fleets (19 mentions), optimizing delivery routes to avoid unnecessary travel and excessive pollution (13 mentions), and using recyclable packaging (9 mentions). These findings highlight a genuine concern among respondents for reducing the carbon footprint. Moreover, investing in additional parcel pick-up points demonstrates consumers' willingness to contribute to efficiency improvements and a more sustainable logistics system.

Fig. 22. Proposed Sustainable Initiatives and Improvements in Logistics Efficiency



Source: Chart created based on the questionnaire responses. Own contribution.

3. Conclusion

The overall conclusion of the questionnaire reflects a growing concern among Romanian consumers regarding both the efficiency of courier services and their environmental impact. Although delivery time remains the most important factor when choosing a service provider, a significant number of respondents expressed willingness to opt for a sustainable alternative—especially when their needs are met and the change does not involve substantial financial costs.

In general, digital interfaces are perceived as user-friendly and easily accessible, while the quality-to-price ratio is largely considered fair. Moreover, the responses reveal a clear expectation from customers for courier companies to participate actively in environmental programs, even though individual involvement remains relatively low.

Based on consumer preferences and values, a modern logistics approach should strive to balance performance with sustainability, while also ensuring that clients are informed and actively engaged in this transition. [6]

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