



THE POSTAL MARKET WITHIN THE NEW ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

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Abstract

The development of postal services and, implicitly, of the postal market, represents a great challenge within the markets, as well as within goods and assets trading. Postal services appeared due to the need to communicate, that intensified by the increase of the population number, as well as due to the multiplication of the needs determined by the evolution of the society. Initially, the postal services satisfied the human need for communication; subsequently, the postal services also satisfy the commercial need in the sales relation and in the buying relation. This change led to a new postal strategy of the mail marketing and development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

Keyword: postal services, globalization, monopoly, liberalization, postal market.

JEL Classification: M2

I. Introduction

Postal services appeared due to the need to communicate, which increased and amplified along with the evolution of the humanity; men wanted that this need was assured and to be able to communicate as quickly as possible, instantaneously if possible, and to a distance as great as possible. In order to satisfy this need, the involvement of the State was necessary, for guaranteeing the communication by creating specialized bodies

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and specific regulations. But, as the need to communicate crosses the borders of a State, its organization at an international level is necessary, by creating international bodies to supervise and assure the communication at a global level. National and international bodies supervise the continuity of the circulation of information for the transported messages, as well as for the sent messages. The communication means, respectively the messages transport or sending means, gave to the postal services the economic function in addition to the communication function.

Postal services represent the transport and/or sending the messages; three subunits take part in these operations: presentation of postal dispatches, processing-transport and distribution; theoretically, this characteristic make them close to the production of goods, where it is known that more unit take part in the manufacturing of a good.

Postal services appeared due to the man's need to communicate, representing the first communication channel, but, as the communication routes and means, postal services become more and more important, not only for communication, but starting to receive an economic and social importance. "*Should we take this service from trade, industry and people, all shall be dead and people shall regress by falling in the primitive life,*" (Minescu, 1916).

Two social environments are defined in any form of social organization, urban areas and rural areas, due to the discrepancies between them. The rural area includes the country's entire rural region, starting with the peri-urban areas and ending in the more remote rural areas. For a long time, this was poorly developed compared with the urban area, due to the fact that the economic activities were limited to agriculture; the vegetal and animal products were transported in the cities in order to be industrialized. The new national and international economic and political concepts, by specific sectoral policies, try to decrease, and even to eliminate these discrepancies. Communication, post and telecommunication infrastructure plays an important role in the development of the rural area. The terrestrial (by road and rail), maritime and air communication means represent the basic infrastructure assuring the economic development and the development of a quicker connection between the two social environments or of the connection within the same environment. The postal services and telecommunication sector is similar, as it contributes to and complements very well the dispatch and/or the transport of messages, but they are different from the point of view of the infrastructure. Telecommunication developed and is developing its own infrastructure: telecommunication cables, relays, transceivers, satellites, Internet etc. Postal services develop based on the communication



infrastructure, motor, ships and airplane manufacture, and on the industry specialized in postal technology, and on the Internet. Following the communication means and industries development, postal services were quickly to develop. The development of Internet industry, as well as of the postal devices industry allowed a development so great, as we may currently speak of a postal industry and service packages.

The current postal technologies allow the automation of the work phases; initially the processing phase by means of correspondence sorting machines was automated and then the presentation phase, which is very important as it assures the presentation of sent messages with continuous working hours, 24 hours/day, and it can replace the employee.

This development of postal industry enables the development of other economic sectors: postal commerce, development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). In order to assure the development of other economic sectors, the provision of postal service must be even at a national level; this economic requirement was taken also by the political environment at a national, regional and international level. The Postal Services Directive no. 97/67/EC of 15 December 1997 – Article 6 provides: “rural postal networks, in, inter alia, mountain and island regions, play an important role in integrating businesses into the national/global economy and in maintaining cohesion in social and employment terms. Furthermore, rural postal points in remote regions can provide an important infrastructure network for access to new electronic communications services;”

In order to assure the continuity of the circulation of postal dispatches, their organization was needed as to assure the circulation of postal dispatches at a national, as well as at a global level, being known that the postal services provider is the largest daily postal services exporter and importer.

II. Postal services at a national and international level

II. 1. Organization of postal services at a national level

The operation of organized postal services was historically attested since the ancient times, during the great empires: Roman Persian, Arab or Chinese empires. Their development was depended on: national and international legislation, development of terrestrial, maritime or air communication routes, on the development of travel means and on the development of communication means. The fact that the postal services provision



depended on the communication routes and means that enforced costs led to the fact that no State organizational for could assure their provision free of charge.

The organization of postal services in the public sector depended most of their existence on the communities' administrative organization and the transport means used; the postal network must cover all localities on the national territory, and the territorial postal entities were organized in post offices at the commune and city level.

II.2. Organization of postal services at an international level

The emergence of writing and of the human migration from rural to urban areas in the beginning of the industrialization era, followed by the invention of postage stamps led to a sudden increase of the volume of letters. The evolution of the society is more and more rapid, the communications beyond borders expand more and more, and solutions are sought for solving these problems. In order to assure the provision of postal services at an international level, without existing any conditions between States, a specialized international body, the Universal Postal Union, was established on 9 October 1874, that became a specialized agency within the UN on 1 July 1948; this body operates according to specific own rules, set out by all members of the Union. This international organization, with its head office in Bern, is the regulator of postal services at a global level, its role being the assurance of postal dispatches at an international level.

The establishment of U.P.U. meant, in current terms, the globalization of the postal services from the public services, as it regulated, at an international level, the work instructions on the provision of postal services and the settlement system between the Member States for the services rendered. The provision of postal services, in postal terms, or the marketing of postal services, in economic terms, operated as a monopoly, each country having its own national postal system, named universal service provider, being part of the category of public services. By the national postal system, the States have the obligation to assure the services within the category of public services at affordable prices, so that the poor segment of population has access to these services; they also have the obligation to assure the access to postal and telecommunication services 24 hours a day, by phone booths and street mailboxes.

The creation of the European Union led to the creation of the common European postal area, consisting of national territories of the Member States. The increase of the speed of postal dispatches circulation, by eliminating the border effect was very important



for the postal services within the common European area, but its creation led to significant problems, determining the European Commission to establish a gradual programme. The Programme should have aimed to standardize the postal services, to liberalize and to create the common postal market. Many steps were needed to be taken for attaining these objectives that were determined in time: the project of the Green Paper of postal services in 1989 – 11 June 1992, its debates 1992 -2007, the Postal Services Directive – Directive no. 97/67/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 1997 on common rules for the development of the internal market of Community postal services and the improvement of quality of service. The second European Directive, the Directive 2002/39/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 June 2002 amending Directive 97/67/EC with regard to the further opening to competition of Community postal services, and the third Postal Directive, the Directive 2008/6/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 February 2008 amending Directive 97/67/EC with regard to the full accomplishment of the internal market of Community postal services.

III. Case study

Postal services became more and more attractive also for other entrepreneurs becoming specialized courier services providers, and the liberalization of the postal services by creating the postal market facilitated their existence. The postal market, as the telecommunications market, records a quick development especially between 2008 and 2009; this development was marked by the removal of the obstacles for entering the market, and a special feature of this market was that, in that period, natural persons were also accredited and, in the following period, starting on 2010, the number of providers decreased by 45% due to the economic crisis (table 1, Figure 1)

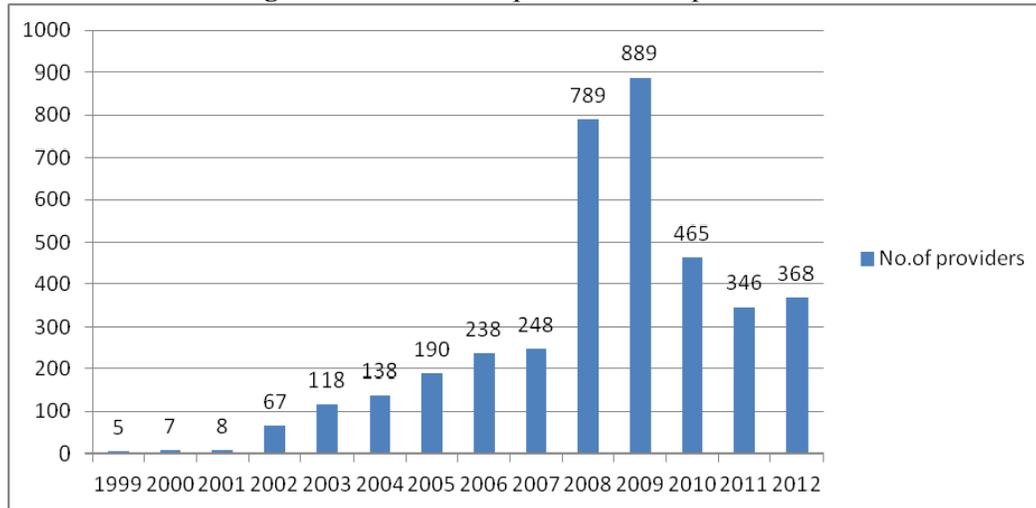
Table 1- Evolution of postal services providers on the Romanian postal market¹

Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
No. of providers	5	7	8	67	118	138	190	238	248	789	889	465	346	368

¹ ANCOM – Postal Services Statistics



Figure 1- Evolution of postal services providers



IV. Conclusion

Postal services can no longer be approached in the current traditional and simplistic way, due to the economic evolution and context. The change of the status from State's institution in business operator, the loss of monopoly over those services and the creation of the postal market on which the national public interest operator, named universal services provider and the private specialized operators, the evolution of communication means and of the new technologies lead to a new economic approach. Due to the importance and complexity of this sector, by the development of the range of postal services, from the simplest, correspondence, ones to the complex, highly-qualified, financial ones, we propose that this sector also stay permanently under the scrutiny of the educational institutions in order to train specialists.

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