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# **How Parcel (Package) Delivery Firms can Minimize the High Returns (send – agains) in the supply Chain Industry**

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## **Abstract**

Much of the research in the field of supply chain management specifically the parcel delivery industry has been focused on the development of the LAST MILE of a parcel delivery process. Little or no effort has been invested to research about the cause(s) of the huge returns of packages (send – agains) daily by parcel delivery drivers in the supply chain management industry. Even leading courier firms in the industry has paid lipped service to this problem but continued to focus their attention and resources on the minimization of operational cost and increased profit maximization. This research study ventures to delve into the reasons and causes to the aforementioned problem of how do parcel (package) delivery firms deal or can curtail the increasing volume of high send – agains (returns) daily in their respective hubs.. Data collected in the field from 10 different service providers (drivers) resulted in findings like, most customers are not at home during a delivery; delivery drivers not having access codes to residential (apartment) buildings and not having work telephone among other factors that have been unearth that cause's huge send –agains. The poor flow of communication (i.e. delivery date and time) between the courier companies and customers also have an adverse effect on parcel delivery. The causality of huge returns that affect and hinders a successful parcel delivery are discussed in-depth in this research. At the climax of the research, suggested remedies and recommendations are provided to ensure that customers receives their packages at the first delivery attempt and hence decreasing send –agains.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **1. Introduction**

With companies and consumers increasingly purchasing goods online, the demand for expressed delivery service grows (J. Aranko, 2013). The demand for express delivery services by consumers has grown rapidly as a result of e-commerce (ibid). Further, the growth of online retail sales has significantly influenced the Supply Chain (logistics) industry for the last decade and the trend will continued in similar paced for the next few years to come (Ibid.1).

The ever growing acceptance of e-commerce is clearly seen on the streets due to the increasing number of delivery vehicles in residential areas. As home deliveries become more and more common, the amount of failed delivery attempts arises. Courier (Express delivery) companies require consignee's signature in order to deliver the shipment, and often the consumer is not at home when the delivery attempt occurred. A failed delivery attempt leads to increased delivery costs as the shipment needs to be re-delivered or even returned to shipper (Weltevreden, 2008, 639).

The main objective of parcel delivery firms is to have those parcels (packages) that are sent out by their drivers, be delivered to achieve customer's satisfaction. The problem of high send agains (returns) could be made easier and cost effective by adopting functional and applicable measures to remedy the problems of high send –agains (returns). Maintaining cost efficiency and a high level of service in the distribution industry [system] is crucial for the express delivery companies to remain competitive in the e-commerce business. As a consequence, the competition becomes tighter and all of the main service providers in the express delivery industry are targeting to minimize send agains (returns) and to meet the new requirements of consumers (Lim & Shiode 2011, 732-733). The direction of this paper is to collate data relating to the Service Providers (Drivers) and their relationship in “delivering good service” to customers from an operational perspective. “Delivering good service” implies that express packages are delivered within the specific timeframe, customers are able to receive their parcels when the parcels leaves the delivery firm warehouse center and the minimization of send agains (returns) thereby leading to increase consumers' confidence. The driving force behind this study emanates from my many years as a sorter and Service Provider (Driver) with UPS. The findings from this research will provide important insights for parcel delivery firms and customers that will lead to reduced operational costs, reduced send – agains (returns) and heighten customer's satisfaction.

## **1.1 Problem Discussion**

The high volume of send agains (returns) creates an overflow of stocks (packages) in the hubs of courier companies globally. These overflows cause logistical problems, human capital as well as financial costs to the company. Esper et al (2003) stressed the importance of on time delivery in order to reduce overflow as the growth of e-commerce increases. My motivation for choosing such a topic stems from the apparent fact that I work in the Supply Chain Industry as a parcel delivery driver. The ever- increasing problem of high send- agains (returns) daily in the hub as I observed seems to be a headache for management. My observation of the company's Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) with regards to the high send agains (i.e. returned parcels by the drivers on a daily basis) motivates me to do this research. My supervisors and managers frequently cautioned us (drivers) about the volume of returned parcels during the regular morning briefings. The nightmare of any courier company in the supply chain industry is to see packages returned to their respective hubs.

What are Send Agains (Returns) in the Supply Chain Industry? Send Agains (Returns) are package(s) that leaves the hub (warehouse) of a courier company for delivery on a specific day and are not delivered to the designated or assigned addressed and or individual recipient, and are returned to the hub by the service provider due to reasons and circumstances beyond his or her control. An example is, when a courier (delivery) driver tried to deliver or come to the address that is on the parcel which should be delivered, and the consignee (recipient) is not home, the courier (delivery) driver scanned the package as not in (home). He then carries the parcel back to the courier hub to be process for another delivery attempt. This is term and regarded as returns (send-agains). There are numbers of different attributes that could lead a courier (delivery) driver to return with designated parcels back to the couriers' hub after his day's duties. Such attributes as not having access to the consignee premises or payment of cash on delivery (COD) for customs duties etc., can lead to send agains (returns). In essence, every failed delivery attempt on daily bases regardless of the cause(s) creates returns (send-agains).

The paramount effects emanating from these problems are financial cost and human capital cost to the company. The logistical costs and human capital costs will be the focal points in this research paper. Why financial costs? When there is a constant overflow of packages in the hub or

warehouse, the firm has to employ the services of sub-contractors to help meet customers' demands. From empirical evidences, most of the packages that are sub-contracted end up in the regular UPS drivers' vehicle the next day. These actions lead to additional financial costs, decreasing customer confidence as well as strains on the already overstretched human capital. The human capital cost to the delivery company is that it leads to drivers frequently being exhausted because they have to deliver parcels or packages over their maximum daily allotments. From empirical evidences gathered from the responses from the service providers in this study, as a result of the overworked load, drivers are physically stressed out and worn. Thereby leading them not to exert more efforts to deliver packages to customers, hence leading to high send -agains (returns). Many service companies are struggling with declining profits and traditionally this problem has been solved by focusing on reducing internal costs rather than increasing the value created for the end consumer (J. Beilinson, 2013). Such value created for the end consumer is a one time delivery attempt in which the consumer receives his parcel. From a firm's perspective, the cardinal problems are related to unnecessary work and extra costs in terms of finance and human capital. Similarly, the same can be attributed to the customers because a failed delivery attempt can be costly. Costly simply because the customers have to contact the customer service department of the delivery company, and this the customer regards as completely an unnecessary work for them. This action is additionally causing the customer small amount of extra costs both financial and time wise (Appel 2013).

This research seeks to explore plausible avenues by which parcel (package) delivery firms, can minimize the huge returns or send agains on a daily basis by their respective drivers. The reasons or cause and effect of the high send -agains will be looked into.

## **1.2 Research Question/ Main Topic**

**“How parcel (Package) delivery firms can minimize the HIGH RETURNS (send agains) in the supply chain industry?”**



### **1.3 Thesis Structure**

This study is structured as followed: chapter 1 consists of the introduction and problem discussion which give an overview of the genesis of the reasons, motives and problems that led the author to delve into this study.

Chapter 2 describes the methodology of this study which was conducted as a case study.

Chapter 3 consists of the literature review / theoretical framework which revolve around related literatures on the research topic that has been published such as journals, research papers and academic books. This section sets the basis for the hypothesis.

Chapter 4 is where the empirical results are presented and sifted. Chapter 5 gives the analyses from the empirical findings and summarized it as well. Finally, chapter 6 consists of the overall summary of the study, the conclusion and recommendations.

#### **1.3.1 Delimitation**

The delimitation of this thesis is the scope and breadth of this study to the larger Stockholm area. As mentioned earlier in the introduction, my role as a service provider (parcel delivery driver) motivates me to do this research on the causality of high send-agains (returns) in the parcel delivery industry and not about the cost and pricing structure of shipping a package. Those service providers that responded to the research questions are largely working within the Stockholm municipality and hence due to time and scarce resources, the author couldn't have covered other major cities in Sweden. Although there are many small delivery firms operating in the larger Stockholm area, the author chose the four (4) major delivery firms (UPS, FedEx, DHL and PostNord) that operates in Stockholm to respond to the questions.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **2.0 Research Methodology**

This Master thesis is conducted and researched as a Case Study.

#### **Why a Case Study approach as a methodology in this research?**

According to Yin (2003) a case study design should be considered when: (a) the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions; (b) you cannot manipulate the behavior of those involved in the study; (c) you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context. Bryman and Bell (2007), suggested that a case study entails the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case. Yin (1993) has identified some specific types of case studies: *Exploratory, Explanatory, and Descriptive*. Exploratory cases are sometimes considered as a prelude to social research. Explanatory case studies may be used for doing causal investigations, as this research method is concomitant with my research been undertaken. This approach is clearly related as seen from my research question “How can parcel delivery firms minimize high send – agains”? Descriptive cases require a descriptive theory to be developed before starting the project. As Stake (1995) observes, case study research is concerned with the complexity and particular nature of the case in question. The usage and purpose of such research method is its effectiveness and easiness to use in this particular study. Research studies in business and management are usually based on this kind of research design. The author has chosen this research methodology (Case study) because it provides an objective and unbiased response (s) to the Research Question, “How can parcel delivery firms minimize the high send – again (returns)” and hence leading to results that gives a deeper insight on the subject. It is to also ensure that the quality of the data is good and sufficient. Since the interviews are going to be done by service providers in that have multiple years of experience working in the parcel delivery industry, it’s important for this research to adapt a case study methodology as stated by Yin (1994) “to explain the complex causal links in real-life interventions”. Yin (1994) also suggested using multiple sources of evidence as the way to ensure construct validity. This research uses multiple sources of evidence; interviews and theories. The research questions framed as “who”, “what”, “where”, “how” and “why” determine the relevant strategy to be used (Yin, 1994).

Knight and McCabe (1997) suggest that the case study provides a vehicle through which several qualitative methods can be combined, thereby avoiding too great a reliance on one single approach. According to Gerring, J. (2007) in his book “Case Study Research”, he vividly stated that to refer to a work as a “case study” might mean: (a) that its method is qualitative, small N, (b) that the research is holistic, thick ( a more or less comprehensive examination of a phenomenon, (c) that it utilizes a particular type of evidence (e.g., ethnographic, clinical, non-experimental, non-survey- based, participant - observation, process tracing, historical, textual, or field research), (d) that its method of evidence gathering is naturalistic (a real-life context), (e) that the topic is diffuse (case or context are difficult to distinguish), (f) that it employs triangulation (“ multiple sources of evidence”), (g) that the research investigates the properties of a single observation, or (h) That the research investigates the properties of a phenomenon, instance or example. However, a case study design is not necessarily associated with an inductive approach. Thus case studies can be associated with both theory generation and theory testing (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

The chosen methods are designed to work well together and also enable repetition during this research.

## **2.1 Qualitative Methodology Approach**

The qualitative method is the opposite of the quantitative method since it argues that everything is not measurable. The qualitative methods commonly include collecting data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue that is being studied (Creswell 2013, 185). This method is focused on words instead of numbers. Intercessors for this method are mainly found in the social science area and they argue that there is a fundamental difference in what the two different methods are studying, and therefore both methods can't be used in the same research. The qualitative method is considered to create a more comprehensive view of the situation and it has a two-way communication in contrast to the quantitative method (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

This research/study is characterized by the deductive approach which implies that I will strive to draw logical conclusions from the collection of data relative to the interviews (survey) conducted and the questionnaires, after which I will make some inferences that will be drawn from consumer behavior and preference.

## **2.2 Sources of Primary Data**

Primary data is the collation of information that is collected by the researcher with limited intermediaries as possible between him/her and the data source (Vogt, 2005). Yin (1994) listed some sources for data collection in the protocol: documentation, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, etc.

The interviews with service providers (parcel delivery drivers) and consignees as well as questionnaires in the form of a survey, is the prime focus of acquiring data for this master's thesis. The primary sources of data collections for this research were personal interviews with colleagues from UPS and other service providers (drivers) within the industry. Specifically, there were ten (10) service providers (drivers) from UPS, three (3) service providers (drivers) from DHL, three (3) service providers from FedEx and two (2) drivers from the Swedish Postal Service. The depth of the interviews has a cumulative 6 hours and lasted between 10-20 minutes each. The author and each service provider met to verbally discuss the questions to maintain a balance account with written responses.

## **2.3 Sources of Secondary Data**

Secondary data can be both qualitative and quantitative data. Additionally, these data can be raw data or published summaries. Furthermore, the secondary data can be categorized as documentary, multiple sources and survey (Saunders et al., 2009)

The secondary source was attained through the internet, books, literatures and periodicals.

## **2.4 Data collection and analysis**

The usage of multiple sources in this case study is further compounded by Yin (1994), when he suggested three principles of data collections for case studies:

1. Use multiple sources of data
2. Create a case study database
3. Maintain a chain of evidence

Williamson (2002) argued also that there are four different research techniques: sampling, questionnaires, interviews and focus groups.

*Sampling* constitutes the selection of real data sources from a greater set of possibilities. It involves two interconnected components: (a) defining the full set of possible data sources which is generally termed the population, and (b) choosing a particular sample of data sources from that population (Given, 2008).

*Questionnaires/ survey* are used in cases when there is the need for many respondents, when the nature of the data that is sought is known, when the data needed is explicit, and when the respondents are literate persons who can understand the questions and give written answers (Laws, Harper & Marcus, 2003). The usage of questionnaires in this research/ study is intended to maintain a clear focus on the research question and avoid open-ended responses from targeted participants. The simple nature and clarity of the research questions helped to provide some level of heightened confidence and easy comprehension for the respondents to participate, thereby giving room for candid and objective responses. This approach creates a balance of personal experience gained from the field and formal education received by the respondents. The drafting of unopened-ended questions will also minimize subjectivity from respondents. Yin (1984), in one of his three conditions for the design of case studies, mentioned “the type of research question posed” as the “extend of control an investigator has over actual behavioral events. Levy (1988), in his study discussed about “what” questions and stated that this type of research question justifies an exploratory study. And Yin (1994) also discussed about the existence of a “how” question in the questionnaire makes the study explanatory, which is not uncommon.

What are the author’s rational for drafting only two questions to be used as a guide for this study? The two questions are seen below as well as the answers to the author’s decision.

\*What are the reasons / causes of send-agains (returns)?

\*How can it be minimized?

The answers to that question is predicated upon the guidelines for formulating Research Questions culled from [www.socscidiss.bham.ac.uk/research-questions.html](http://www.socscidiss.bham.ac.uk/research-questions.html). According to the authors of this web article, factors that go into formulating *good research questions* are as follows:

- Relevant.
- Manageable in terms of research and in terms of your own academic abilities.

- Substantial and with original dimensions.
- Consistent with the requirements of the assessment.
- Clear and simple.
- Interesting

Relevant - in the sense that the question will be of academic and intellectual interest to people in the field you have chosen to study. The question arises from issues raised in the literature or in *practice*.

Manageable – you need to be realistic about the scope and scale of the project. The question you ask must be within your ability to tackle. You must be able access your sources of data (be they documents or people), and to give a full and nuanced answer to your question.

Substantial and (within reason) original- the question should not simply copy questions asked in other final year modules, or modules previously undertaken. It shows your own imagination and your ability to construct and develop research issues. And it needs to give scope to develop into a dissertation.

Consistent with the requirements of the assessment – the question must allow you the scope to satisfy the learning outcomes of the course.

Clear and simple – the complexity of a question can frequently hide unclear thoughts and lead to confused research process.

Interesting – this is essential. The question needs to intrigue you and maintain your interest throughout the project. Make sure that you have real, grounded interest in your research question, and you can explore this and back it up by academic and intellectual debate. It is your interest that will motivate you to keep working and to produce a good dissertation.

*Interviews* are a method of gathering information or opinions by asking a sequence of questions that can be either of pre-defined order (structured), unstructured, or semi- structured. The traditional interview is a personal discussion between the interviewer and the interviewee. However, it can also be done through telephone calls or even via internet (Jupp, 2006). However, the conduction of semi- structure interviews with the UPS Service Providers (Drivers) and other service providers from DHL, FedEx, etc. This will hopefully lead to some insights and the

collection of needed data to the answers of the main research question/problem(s). The guide used was broad in scope such as exploring the trends of the deliveries of packages. The interviewees were allowed the opportunity to speak openly and freely without limits in order to make the interview more creditable and efficient as well as to stick to the specific research theme. The interviews in this research will be conducted at UPS's headquarters in Stockholm and at the various points of deliveries. Coding of the interview is non-applicable in respect to the scope of this research and due to the number of interviewees. The interview will be semi-structure and in a sense 'open'. The development of interview questions emanated from the advantages of the research focus. In order to maintain objectivity and balance, the author choose to draft two broad questions which have led to getting more unbiased responses from the respondents.

*Note that interviews should be preferred when there are clear objectives for the research, when time is limited, when there are many experiences from different people to be studied (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984).*

By selecting service providers (parcel delivery drivers) who have similar occupational tasks and who encountered similar setbacks daily as a result of send agains (returns) in their scope of work, can be considered and regarded as a *focus group* as defined. *Focus groups* are group interviews of 7 – 12 people and concern a sort of organized discussion that is designed and planned by the interviewer. The main aim of this method is to investigate people's views in depth and in combination with other opinions. (Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook, 2007)

## **2.5 Reliability, Replicability and Validity**

To ensure a balance between reliability, replicability and validity, firstly I drafted the case study questionnaire and subsequently distributed out the questionnaires to random service providers. Additionally, some colleagues at UPS were asked verbally about their opinion as to why they have returns. Some respondents took about 2 days to answer the questionnaire while most of the respondents took at least 2 weeks to give me back the questionnaires with their answers.

As stated, there were admixture of service providers which included two (2) from FedEx, two (2) from DHL, two (2) from the Swedish Postal Service (one (1) didn't answered), and eleven (11)

from UPS. Four (4) UPS service providers didn't respond. Reasons were they forgot despite my constant reminders. A colleague at UPS out rightly refused to participate!

The most important phase was compiling all the responses and looked for similar answers. According to Bryman and Bell (2007), a case study should have principles of reliability, replicability and validity.

Reliability refers to the consistency of a measure of a concept. The following are two prominent factors involved when considering whether a measure is reliable.

- Stability- this is the test-retest method. It entails asking whether or not a measure is stable over time, so that we can be confident that the results relating to that measure for a sample of respondents do not fluctuate.
- Internal reliability- is when you have a multiple-term measure in which each respondents' answers to each question are aggregated to form an overall score, the possibility is raised that the indicators do not relate to the same thing; in other words, they are not, they lack coherence.
- Replicability- refers to when a piece of work, research or case can be reproduced by other researchers.
- Validity- refers to the issue of whether or not an indicator (or set of indicators) that is devised to gauge a concept really measures that concept.

To ensure reliability, replicability and validity in this research, one of the most common phenomenon that is associated with failed delivery (send agains/returns) attempts as responded by the various service providers (drivers) was consignees not been at home during the time of the delivery. To ensure this common cause is valid, the author has been on the field dozens of times to ensure that this hypothesis was true and thereby validating the empirical findings. The author was also concerned about the stability of the data so that the responses do not fluctuate to ensure reliability and validity. Therefore the author grouped, counted and wrote down each response three (3) different times based on the questions asked to ensure that they fall in the same category and do not fluctuate. To further ensure reliability and validity, the author often had impromptu discussions about the questions with most of the service providers (drivers) that responded to the questions during lunch breaks, chance encounters or after work in the UPS Järfälla, Stockholm



center. This course of action was employed to ensure that what was written by these service providers was not different from what they experienced on a daily basis.

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **3.0 Literature review /Theoretical Framework**

Under this section of the research, the author was keen on finding published related academic materials in the field of supply chain management industry that has specific references on parcel delivery. The data mining search for these published materials included the internet, academic books and literatures, journals, theses and articles written by scholars and academics with interest in the field of parcel delivery. Through these collections of published materials, the author believes a hypothesis could be drawn on the research.

#### **3.1 What is a parcel delivery?**

Given the rise of e-commerce, e-retailing and the ever increasing nature of consumerism by consumers, there has been the need for these items order to reach the intended recipients. From a practical perspective, the medium by which these ordered products or parcels reach its intended destination is commonly referred to as a delivery. The most widely known parcel couriers in Europe are DHL Express, United Parcel Service (UPS), FedEx, and TNT Express (Li 2002).

A “Parcel Delivery” is the paid service of carrying an item, commodity of high or low value from a person or company to a specified location or destination.

Current literatures do not provide a uniformly used definition of parcel delivery service. There is, however, a clear understanding of its meaning because many companies are considered as being parcel carriers, and their service offerings are different from other transportation providers. Based on a widely used description, a typical parcel carrier transports shipments that are sufficiently small to be handled by one person without aid, but which are often larger than a normal letter (J. Aranko, 2013). Delivery is most commonly same-day, next-day or one-to-three-day due to the time-sensitive nature and content of the shipments, such as biological substances, spare parts or medical supplies (First Research 2013, 2.).

### **3.2 Drivers of parcel delivery in the Supply Chain (Logistics) Industry**

The targeted objective of this research is customer oriented and ensuring that both courier companies and consignees experience maximum utility devoid of extra cost. Parcel delivery has been in existence for over hundred years, but has gain occupational permanence just two decades ago. The catalyst for such permanence is the dot.com boost in the late eighties, which gave rise to internet trade and commerce. With the increasing numbers of online retailers, parcel delivery plays an integral role in the supply chain. Whatever is the nature of your product order, be it e-commerce or normal transaction of any product, parcel or letter as a result of a trade, purchase, and order or exchanges; the final journey lands in the hands of a courier or a logistic company. According to Brynjolfsson and Smith (2000), “the first wave of e-commerce was based largely on selling commodities over the internet, using advertising to gain transactions and counting on operational efficiencies to reduce costs of selling and managing supply chain. However, many forgot that after the product is sold, it still has to be delivered to the customer”.

Michel Heikamp (2013) also observed that “operational peaks occur mostly on Mondays, because relatively a lot is ordered during the weekend in combination with web shops offering 24-hour delivery. This obligates the web shops to process all the weekend orders to be deliver the next business day. Furthermore, these goods need to be delivered, which increases transport movements. Factors increasing this problem are failure of delivery due to unattended homes and due to return of goods.”

Xing et al (2011, 351) furthered asserted that, there were several factors that could improve in order to increase the success margin during first delivery attempts. Their ideas are linked to both the logistics service providers and the retailers;

- Logistics service providers should use emails, phone calls or texts to advise the delivery date and time to customers, including sending a few reminders. Additionally, they should ask customers about alternative options if nobody is at home before the delivery, and give customers more choices about how much and when to receive orders.
- Retailers should package small items such as books, beauty products or gifts in such a way that they can be delivered through the letterbox. Additionally, they should involve logistics service providers to communicate with customers as much as possible or develop a link to logistics service providers’ web pages.

Since this research is concerning a subject in the Supply Chain Management (SCM) industry, it is prudent for the readers to know what a supply chain management entails.” *Supply chain management represents the third phase of an evolution that started in the 1960’s with the development of the physical distribution concept that focused on the outbound side of a firm’s logistics system”* (Langley, Cole, Gibson, Novack & Bardi, 2009, p. 14). The concept of supply chain is not new and organizations have been moving from physical distribution management to logistics management to supply chain management. Supply chains are therefore mainly about managing three flows: production, information and financial, and these flows must work together. Information is power, and tight internal and external collaborative relationships within the supply chain are keys to success (Ibid)/ (Panagiotis & Piia, 2013).

Logistics play an important role in companies’ supply chain, because logistics networks have consequences handling and transportation policies. Handling and transportation are coping with differences in infrastructure, while needing to realize delivery within the time- to- market (Harrison & Van Hoek, 2011). Only during the 1980’s it became a broader business term (Lovelock, 1996, 270).

Logistic service quality is defined as a function of the gap between expected service and perceived service and has received considerable attention industry wide (R. Mohammed & H.S. Jaafar, 2007). The most important elements of customer service are products delivery time, and the time which is needed to deal with customer queries, estimates and complaints. Increase responsiveness to customer needs drive organizations to invest in time-based approaches to perform enhancement. High level of responsiveness strengthens customer loyalty (Angelopoulos & Leivo, 2013).

The geographical location of the parcel delivery firm is an important factor in the supply chain management industry, because it has an effect on its ability to serve the customers efficiently and avoiding the risk of inconveniencing customers (Slack, Brandson – Jones, Johnston & Betts, 2012). Weltevreden (2008, 640) in turn has researched collection-and-delivery points as a possible solution for the increasing amount of failed delivery attempts. Logistics service providers who deliver a shipment to a collection-and-delivery point after a delivery failure may save both time and fuel, as they do not need to visit a home for a second or a third time in order to get the shipment delivered (Aranko, J. 2013). When located conveniently (for example at areas that already create consumer trips) the additional effort to collect the shipment is relatively small for

the consumer, thus the amount of product losses or insurance claims will be reduced as there will not be need for unsecured deliveries. (Weltevreden 2008, 639.) Moreover, logistics excellence has clearly been recognized as an area in which firms can create a competitive advantage, in part because of its visible service impact on customers (R. Mohammed & H.S. Jaafar, 2007). Mentzer, Gomes, and Krapfel (1989), argued that two elements exist in service delivery: marketing customer service and physical distribution service (PDS). Here, PDS is composed of three crucial components: availability, timeliness and quality. Mentzer viewed PDS as a component of logistic service quality (LSQ) (Panagiotis & Piia, 2013). Bienstocka *et al* (2008) discussed and identified about five attributes that major areas of logistics service that are consistently ranked as very important by customers, but the author find only three that were relevant to this research. They are efficient logistics service communications, availability of items and delivery time. Further, Croucher *et al.* (2006, 6) describes logistics as “the efficient transfer of goods from the source of supply through the place of manufacture to the point of consumption in a cost-effective way whilst providing an acceptable service to the customer”.

It's also important for the readers to understand the different types of Service and delivery modes. The term “express delivery” can be defined as the rapid delivery of goods and documents using the fastest modes of transport. This concept varies from country to country and from one operator to another. It is a door – to – door delivery operation from the point of collection to the point of delivery. It is usually the most expensive and fastest possible type of delivery and it can identify at any point of the delivery chain by using identification systems. There are basically three conceptual modes that comprise express delivery referred to as “CEP service”, namely; Courier service, express delivery services and parcel delivery services (Brewer *et al*, 2001). The principle task of physical distribution is to ensure that ordered goods or products are available at the right places at the right time in the right quantities to satisfy customer demand (Gurau, Ranchhod and Hackney, p.34, 2001). Customers generally define “availability in terms of the speed with which they can physically obtain supplies (Ibid). Christopher *et al.* (1991) contend that: “Availability should be viewed as the output of the physical distribution system”. In the parcel delivery field of work, the delivery of packages to a customer begins with physically assembling the packages in the various hubs and then transporting the goods to the customers as the end of the supply chain. Several authors (Perreault and Russ, 1976; La Londe and Zinszer, 1976) have defined physical distribution service more broadly to include other factors such as the following:

- Convenience of the ordering process.
- Provision of information about the status of an order (progress information).
- Adherence to a delivery timetable at the customer's premises.
- Compatibility of handling equipment and packaging.
- Condition of the goods on arrival.
- Order accuracy (the extent to which the items received corresponds to the order specification).
- Policy on retired goods.
- Complaints and claims procedure.

According to Consumer Focus (February, 2013., p 4), “different consumer groups are likely to have different needs from a parcel delivery service, but the evidence shows that any review of the [industry] cannot be complete without considering the impact of a parcel delivery factors on consumers' behavior.” The **Consumer Focus response to the European Commission's Green Paper consultation on An integrated parcel delivery market for the growth of [e-commerce] in the EU (February 2013)** found that:

- Failed delivery attempts are inconvenient and costly to the consumer (and the delivery operator).
- The timeframe of the delivery: this is the most basic information about the delivery service that allows them to plan for the delivery of their items.

### **3.3 What is “Service” in the Parcel Delivery process?**

According to Edvardsson and Olsson (1996, 155), a service [process] is a chain of activities that must be performed simultaneously in order for the service to be produced. These activities occur both in the service provider's premises as well as in their partners' and customers' premises. Services are very different than products, resulting in dramatic managerial implication (Bitran et al., 1993; Nambisan, 2001).

Service as an intangible action has a huge impact or influence in the parcel delivery industry. Perhaps due to the inability of customers to “experience” a service prior to its consumption, reputation is a prominent element of any service business model (Mansharamani, R. 2005). A

“service” can either ruined the reputation of company or embellishes its reputation. Since the last two decades, parcel delivery firms have navigated towards a more service oriented approach towards its customers. The best service companies understand that how well they manage the details of every stage of their operations determines the success of their business (Chase & Jacobs, p.254, 2011, 13<sup>th</sup> Ed.).

The huge send – agains (returns) as a focal study for this research, can be regarded as a barometer of a service, when bad or simply a bad service is rendered as measure by the huge send – agains by delivery drivers. Customers are the core and center of attention in all service oriented businesses whether a hotel, a restaurant, bank or a parcel delivery firm in the supply chain industry. Some academics suggest that the service organization also exists to serve the workforce because they generally determine how the service is perceived by the customers (ibid.1). A parcel delivery (service) can go bad due to bad weather, psychological and mental state of the delivery driver, among many other reasons. A reason common for the cause of a bad service has to do with the psychological and mental state of mind of the delivery driver which is occasioned by the actions and policies of his management. The customer gets the kind of service that management deserves: in other words, how management treats the worker is how the worker will treat the public. If the workforce is well trained and well-motivated by management, they will do good jobs for their customers (ibid.2). Hence, the latter scenario will provide more impetus for service providers in the parcel delivery industry to do extra delivery attempts at previously visited residences, engage neighbors more actively thereby leading to a reduction in high send – agains. Services are, however, very different compared to manufacturing when we consider the high degree of personalization often require, the speed of delivery needed, the direct customer contact and the inherent variability of the service encounter. Services generally require much higher levels of capacity relative to demand (ibid.3).

According to Chase & Jacobs (2011), service constitutes five (5) characteristics:

- The first is that a service is an *intangible process* that cannot be weighed or measured; service intangibility also presents a problem for customers since, unlike with a physical product, they cannot try it out and test it before purchase.
- A service requires some degree of *interaction with the customer* for it to be a service. The interaction may be brief, but it must exist for the service to be complete.

- Service, with the big exception of hard technologies such as ATMs and information technologies such as answering machines and automated Internet exchanges, are inherently *heterogeneous*-they vary from day to day and even hour by hour as a function of the attitudes of the customer and the servers.
- The fourth is that services as a process are *perishable and time dependent*, and unlike goods, they can't be stored. You cannot "come back last week" for an air flight or a day on campus.
- And the fifth, the specifications of a service are defined and evaluated as a package of features that affect the five senses. These features may be explicit services (training of service personnel, consistency of service performance, availability and access to the service, and comprehensiveness of the service) and implicit services (attitude of the servers, atmosphere, waiting time, status, privacy and security, and convenience).

### **3.4 What is a Courier service?**

Courier service is designed especially for the transport of goods and services such as documents, small samples, patterns or important spare parts up to 5kg in weight. The items or goods are carried personally during all stages of the transportation from the sender to the final destination, without been re-routed. These services are considered the fastest type of express delivery and also the most expensive way to carry goods (McKinnon, A. 2001). This kind of express services (delivery) are mainly found in inner cities and they use cars, motorcycles or bicycles as mode of transport. Courier services play a minor role in international deliveries, basically due to the high cost associated with transportation. The personal accompaniment of the goods or packages by the courier service is its important characteristics (Gile & Oyden-Grable, 2010).

### **3.5 Express delivery services**

Express delivery service entails the carriage of goods from the sender to the final destination by bundling or grouping together large numbers of units and distributing them internally with a flexible transportation program. Express delivery service has a guaranteed delivery time frame such as same day delivery, next day delivery within 24 hours (Panagiotis & Piia, 2013). It is also possible in this type of service to negotiate the specific delivery time and that is why the main feature is the guaranteed delivery time. Specific forms of express delivery services are the express freight systems, which specialize in the express delivery of large amount of goods for industry.

Long - term contracts exist and deliveries are undertaken for a few main clients. Express services are often tailored for specific industries (e.g. pharmaceutical sector) or are the result of the outsourcing of transportation from industry to logistics service providers (McKinnon, A. (2001).

### **3.6 Parcel delivery services**

Primarily, these services convey parcels and documents in accordance with a fixed, defined transportation program, using logistical networks with fixed running times for the specific goods. Parcels services are the most standardized and automated of the express delivery services, with the fast delivery times and low price. The transported goods have to be standardized to allow automated transportation and re-routing in order to meet the requirements of the standardized transportation program of a parcel service. Parcels have to fit into specific requirements (maximum weight and length). The requirements differ between companies and countries. Automated transportation programs all delivery times, which are close to the express delivery services or even meet them, but exclude guaranteed times and agreements on specific delivery time. No guarantees are given, but the transportation process with fixed running times allows fairly reliable expected delivery times for parcels to a given destination (McKinnon, A. 2001). On the other hand, integrated /courier/express delivery services operators move consignments from door –to-door with time –definite delivery services in order to meet customer demand. However, those integrated service operators also offer a variety of products or services depending on the weight of the consignment and the speed of delivery required by the customer (Ibid).

The delivery of packages / parcels has different service categories that depict the speed at which they are delivered. They're delivered primarily based upon the “service level” paid for by the customer or shipper. For example, UPS which the author is employed has the following:

Express Plus + - with this service level, the consignee/ recipient will/must receive the deliverable item on the next day before 9:00 a.m.

Express Plus – with this service level, the ordering customer will/ must receive his or her parcel before 10:30 a.m.

Express – with this service level, the customer must receive the delivery before 12:00 noon the day after the order had been process by UPS.

Express Saver, Expedited, Standard and Saturday delivery are mostly limited to 17:00 p.m. daily. Delivery is most commonly same-day, next-day or one-to-three-day due to the time-sensitive



nature and content of the shipments, such as biological substances, spare parts or medical supplies (First Research 2013, 2.).

These drivers of parcel delivery draws the analogy that whatever is produce, what is order and what consumers desire ends with a delivery by a courier or a logistics company in the supply chain industry. These drivers further bound the consumers, the supplying firms and the courier firms. Findings from *CONSUMERS FOCUS, February 2013*, further explains the dependence of residential consumers on parcel delivery firms , *as they found that these residential consumers are sending and receiving far more parcel and packages as online shopping and trade grows. Looking ahead, the majority of residential consumers felt that their online shopping activity will increase, leading to an increased reliance on packet and parcel delivery firms.*

### **3.7 Service as an important component and “new” concept in the parcel delivery industry.**

Service has sprung up as a new concept in the parcel delivery industry since a decade ago. The parcel (package) “delivery man” was merely tasked with the responsibility to take a parcel from point A to point B without the expectations of many formalities such as over exaggerated courtesy to the customer, longer time with the customer and knowledge of the origin of the parcel. Simply put, shipments (packages) are no longer just loaded onto a van and carry from one location to another, but provide an array of transport and related services that are designed to enhance their customers’ products...goods as well as services (Morlok, Nitzberg and Balasubramiam, 2000).

### **3.8 Illustration of a parcel delivery process**

Below is a diagram figure 1, illustrating a normal parcel delivery process by any parcel delivery firm in the supply chain industry. This illustration figure 1 depicts the flow process from an order delivery and finally to the customer. From the onset, a customer has to make a purchase whether online or by local supplier, the purchase/ order has to be verified and then process for shipment. When the verification process is done, the second aspect to be done by the shipper is to contact a courier company to pick up the goods for shipment. The customer is then notified that the order is been shipped and is filled out with the parcel details such as tracking number, expected date of delivery etc. The parcel is then collected from the shipper and shipped by the courier company to its destination where it is sorted out in the hub (warehouse) and then send out for delivery to the customer. Most parcel delivery firms usually allow any changes to the delivery address after the first attempted delivery. When the customer is not at home, the package is returned to the courier

firms' hub. When the package is returned to the hub (warehouse), the staff concern with working with returned packages try to contact the customer through search engine application that reveal some minor details such as telephone number and street address. If the delivery driver had access to the customer residence or apartment building, then an attempted delivery notice (slip) will be left at the customer's front door or in the mailbox informing the customer how to go about contacting the courier firm about their packages and options for future delivery. The entire theoretical narrative provides a descriptive process, which will give the customer an in-depth knowledge of the procedures of their shipment order and courier companies' delivery pattern. Hence when follow keenly by readers (customers), this will provide an insight about how most parcel delivery firms operates and will lead to customers making informed and better decisions in terms of their delivery status. It will help prepare the customers exactly what to expect when they order parcels and thereby help both the customer and the courier companies minimize the high send – agains (returns).

Table 1 Illustration of a parcel delivery process

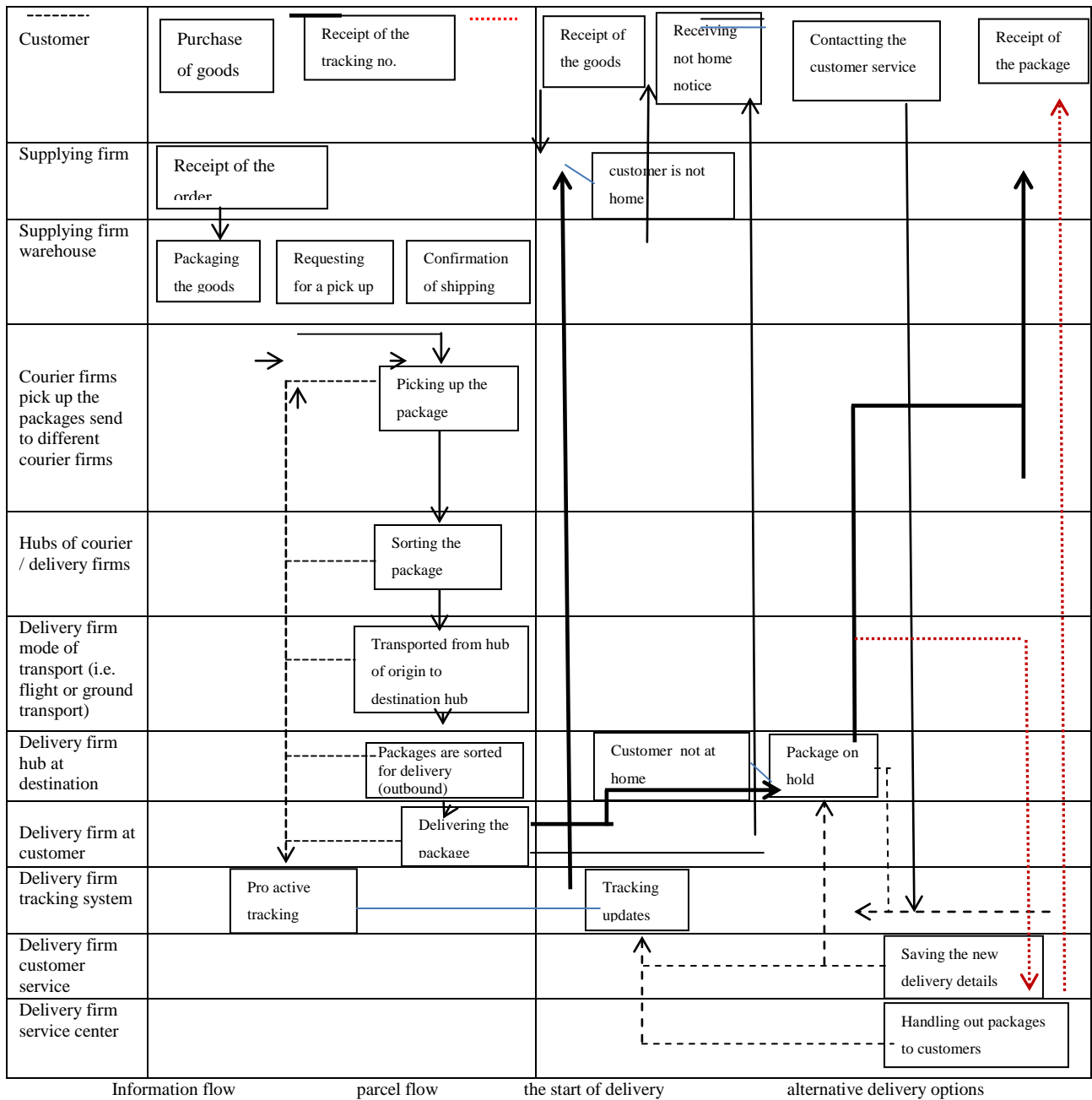


Table 1: Illustration of a parcel delivery process// (J. Aranko, 2013).

### 3.9 Summary of theoretical Framework

In sum, the theories collated for this study has shed some lead ways regarding clues as it relates to answering the research question “*how can parcel delivery firms minimize high returns.*”

Heikamp, M. (2013) noted that due to the overflow of orders taken by web shops specifically during the weekend, these shops become overwhelmed because they have to deliver the orders the next business day, and honor their commitments to customers. Many customer are not informed about their pending order delivery during this tense short period. Hence, these goods must be delivered, and thereby creating increased and heighten logistical flows. Heikamp (2013), mentioned that the reciprocal effect are *delivery failure due to unattended homes and goods have to be returned*. This assertion clearly provides one of many answers from theoretical perspective to the research question of this master’s thesis.

The poor information flow between online retailers, courier firms and consumers have hugely given rise to high send –agains (returns) in the supply chain industry. Poor information and communication flow in the sense that customers’ needs to be updated on every phase of delivery process. Consumer Focus (February 2013) also weighed in on this issue by suggesting the timeframe of the delivery. This is the most basic information about the delivery that allows them [consumers] to plan for their delivery. Inadequate information and communication exchange between the major parties involved in the parcel order and delivery process provide another answer from the theoretical prospective to the research question of this study.

The burden is not entirely on the online retailers and parcel delivery firms alone, it is also shouldered by the consumers as well. Most consumer’s get the information about their delivery order but are either too engaged in other priorities and don’t care about reading nor tracking their orders.

Established theories on the research topic are very important and useful tools as they serve as a guide in the entire research process. These theories help me maintained my research focus and stay within the limited scope of the research as provided from the theories collected. These theories also help me target specific entities for information gathering and research method in analyzing data accrued relative to this study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **4.0 Empirical Findings**

In this phase of the research, all the responses received from the different Service Providers (Drivers) that participated in the research will be catalogued and transcribed. The author is of the conviction that these responses are the core for which this research was conducted. There were several factors that were jotted down by the respondents that are the causalities and attributes for which parcel delivery firms experienced high send agains (Returns) in the supply chain industry. The empirical findings from the Service Providers (Drivers) are catalogued individually to provide more validity to this research. The responses are transcribed below based on the questions asked. Note that some of the responses were written in Swedish and were translated into English.

#### **Service provider nr.1 from UPS**

What are the reasons/ causes of send- agains (returns)?

- Because that the recipients were not present at home during the time of the delivery.

How parcel (package) delivery firms can minimize high send agains (returns) in the supply chain industry?

- By calling the customer before leaving from the courier firms' center (hub), so that an agreement could be made as to what to do with the package. The respondent also added that sending an SMS to all the customers to remind them about their packages and when it should be delivered.

#### **Service provider nr. 2 from UPS**

What are the reasons/ causes of send- agains (returns)?

- Some customers deliberately refused to answer their mobile phones because they do not recognize the number.
- Most often customers are not aware that many delivery firms ONLY deliver door to door and the customers have to be at home to receive his package/ parcel or leave an authorization notice granting the service provider the right to leave the package at his/her front door.
- Most delivery drivers do not have enough time to contact neighbors or simply just do not care to contact the customer when there is a situation of NO ACCESS to the building.

How parcel (package) delivery firms can minimize high send agains (returns) in the supply chain industry?

- Provide working telephones to service providers should minimize the volume of send-agains (returns).
- Delivery drivers should take their time and write down and saved the different door codes written on the packages.
- Alert customers in advance that their packages / parcels are going to be delivered on a certain day and at their residence, places of work or an alternative address could be arranged.

### **Service provider nr. 3 from UPS**

What are the reasons/ causes of send-agains (returns)?

- Some companies are closed on a non-public holiday or have moved from their original premises and their mailing addresses are still not change / updated with the supplier.
- Regarding private deliveries, customers are not at home during certain times of the day.
- Some customers may be required to pay Cash on Delivery (COD) while they have no clues about such payments.
- Door codes are a major factor/ problem.

How parcel (package) delivery firms can minimize high send agains (returns) in the supply chain industry?

- Improve communication between customers and the parcel delivery company.
- All drivers should have job telephones.
- Automatic SMS/ text messages should be send out to customers with the direct delivery date.
- Customers would prefer to receive their packages at their places of work the day after their delivery date.
- With COD packages, there should be better rather improve communication between the delivery company and the customer. Packages should remain in the warehouse until they are paid.

### **Service provider nr. 4 from UPS**

What are the reasons/ causes of send-agains (returns)?

- Service providers do not have door codes to some of the customer's premises.
- Some packages have no further information on them besides the customer's name. Important details like telephone numbers and door codes are not available.
- Delivery drivers do not have work telephones.
- Delivery drivers are often overloaded above their maximum capacity and as a result, they do not have enough time to meet up with a customer when he or she suggests an alternative route which is within close proximity.

How parcel (package) delivery firms can minimize high send agains (returns) in the supply chain industry?

- The provision of work telephones to all service providers (drivers) will help alleviate the high send – agains (returns).
- Service providers (drivers) have reasonable daily amount of deliveries to enable them do second trips and more contacting with customers as well as neighbors.
- Customers should ensure that all their contact details are correct and current when they order goods online.
- Service (delivery) companies should have places centrally located in several delivery districts where the drivers can drop packages, so when a customer is contacted and not at home could easily get his or her package.

### **Service provider nr. 5 from UPS**

What are the reasons/ causes of send-agains (returns)?

- The customer is not home (available) during the time of delivery.
- Cash on Delivery (COD): the customer was not aware of the import duties while placing an order. In most cases, the drivers are left with the responsibility to explain and clarify to the customers why they have to pay such levies. Even at that, most customers are still suspicious and think that the driver is making these charges up. Most often the customer has to pay in cash before receiving the package and not so many people in this modern

“credit card” would keep a lot of cash money at home. If there’s no cash at home, the driver has to place a call to his dispatch and the customer debit card will then be debited and this process takes about 25 minutes to be sorted out. This eventually takes the allotted time on the other deliveries.

- The customer was not aware that the package will be delivered at his residential address.

How parcel (package) delivery firms can minimize high send agains (returns) in the supply chain industry?

- By informing the customer in advance on the pending delivery date. Plan with the customer IF possible.
- The company in which the customer has placed an order (sender) should inform the customer on the planned date of delivery and which courier (delivery) company will perform the duty.
- Customers should also be informed in advance about the import duties and if possible be charged when placing an order.
- Courier firms should have several service points (places where customers can pick up packages) and this option should be made available to customers.
- Major package delivery firms like UPS, FedEx, TNT and DHL should have late evening’s deliveries not only at peak seasons but as a standard service. This would also reduce the send agains. Most customers are at home after 4 p.m. and deliveries made at these times, would significantly reduce send agains (returns).

#### **Service provider nr.6 from PostNord (Swedish Post)**

What are the reasons/ causes of send-agains (returns)?

- The one reason is that customers are not at home despite us having an electronic devise that we use as access key to most residences. Most packages have to be signed by the consignee.
- A customer resides in a building where his/her name is not listed among the names of those that reside in that particular apartment building.
- Despite pre-alerts via SMS from post, customers are still unaware that they are about to received their packages.



- Customers refusing packages because the custom duties cost more than what the customer actually paid for the goods purchased.

How parcel (package) delivery firms can minimize high send agains (returns) in the supply chain industry?

- Parcel delivery firms should improve their information flow on precisely when and where deliveries are to occur via more pre- alert SMS's to customers' mobile phones and in the form of post cards to their home addresses before the first delivery attempt.

**Service provider nr.7 from FedEx.**

What are the reasons/ causes of send-agains (returns)?

- Private customers sometimes do not know that their package is out for delivery.
- Sometimes due to wrong address.
- Sometimes the sender shipped a package to an old address and the recipient is no longer at that address.

How parcel (package) delivery firms can minimize high send agains (returns) in the supply chain industry?

- By contacting the customer first by e-mail, SMS or by ringing their phones before leaving the delivery firms' warehouse with the package.
- Making sure that the address on the package is the right address. Hence, the customer service has to do more by contacting the customer on time before the package is out for delivery. Knowing the best time the customer wants the package to be delivered.

**Service provider nr. 8 from FedEx.**

What are the reasons/ causes of send-agains (returns)?

- Customers' habits of not answering unfamiliar and unrecognizable numbers when they are called to inform them about their delivery.
- Poor flow of information and communication mainly from the courier company and also from the customers themselves. This entails that the courier company has to notify the

customer via telephone calls, email, and SMS' to update the customer on the precise time and date of delivery.

- Consignees just order a package and don't bother tracking or tracing their shipments order.
- No access to the building and door codes.

How parcel (package) delivery firms can minimize high send agains (returns) in the supply chain industry?

- Courier (delivery) firms should call up the customer at least an hour before delivery.
- Delivery firms should send out pre- alert post cards informing the customer about their pending delivery and not after the first delivery attempt.

**Service provider nr. 9 from DHL.**

What are the reasons/ causes of send-agains (returns)?

- The lack of adequate information on a package to be delivered such as no telephone number and door code.
- When the customer is not at home because he or she didn't know that the package was been delivered.

How parcel (package) delivery firms can minimize high send agains (returns) in the supply chain industry?

- Delivery firms should not accept package which don't have a door code or a phone number.
- The customer has to be contacted a day before delivery.
- Delivery (courier) firms must contact the customer; make it mandatory for door codes and telephone numbers.
- Private customer's packages must be left at the terminal so that they can be informed that the parcel is in Sweden and then they can choose a day for delivery.

**Service provider nr. 10 from UPS.**

What are the reasons/ causes of send-agains (returns)?

- No access (door code) to apartment buildings.
- Private customers are not at home under work hours.
- Wrong addresses or incomplete addresses (i.e. box numbers)
- Customers are not aware of Cash on Delivery (CoD) demands.

How parcel (package) delivery firms can minimize high send agains (returns) in the supply chain industry?

- All drivers should be equipped with company telephones.
- For all private customers especially those making online purchase or booking, there should a window on the order form for obligatory door code and telephone number that must be filled in to proceed with order.
- All CoDs MUST be forwarded to customers when customs and excise duties are made out via email or telephone earlier before the delivery and clarifications made about the duties to customers.
- Parcel delivery firms should draw down on the amount of deliveries allotted to drivers daily so that the drivers can have enough time to solve any delivery related problem when one evolves.

In this section of the study, the data collected were presented as *factors* that *affect* and *influence* parcel deliveries, and results to send –agains (returns) across the parcel delivery (Supply Chain) industry. The data collected from the responses were analyzed diagnostically and were presented as *remedy* under the analyses.

Under the question, what are the reasons/ causes of send – agains (returns)? There were 15 different factors as responses from the 10 different service providers (courier drivers). The factors are documented in an ascending order based on the highest common factor.

FACTOR 1.

- a) Customer was not at home during the time of the delivery (UPS).
- b) Customer was not at home during the time of the delivery (UPS).
- c) Customer was not at home during the time of the delivery (UPS).
- d) Customer was not at home during the time of the delivery (PostNord).
- e) Customer was not at home during the time of the delivery (DHL).

- f) Customer was not at home during the time of the delivery (UPS).
- g) Customer was not at home during the time of the delivery (UPS).
- h) Customer was not at home during the time of the delivery (FedEx).
- i) Regarding private deliveries, customers are not home during certain time of the day (UPS).
- j) Private customers are not at home under work hours (DHL).

FACTOR 2.

- a) No access (door code) to the apartment building (UPS).
- b) No access (door code) to the apartment building (UPS)
- c) No access (door code) to the apartment building (UPS)
- d) No access (door code) to the apartment building (UPS)
- e) No access (door code) to the apartment building (FedEx)
- f) No access (door code) to the apartment building (FedEx)
- g) No access (door code) to the apartment building (DHL)
- h) No access (door code) to the apartment building (DHL)
- i) No access (door code) to the apartment building (UPS)

FACTOR 3. (LACK OF INFORMATION)

- a) Poor flow of information and communication mainly from the courier company and also from the customers themselves. This entails that the courier company has to notify the customer via telephone calls, email, and SMS' to update the customer on the precise time and date of delivery (FedEx)
- b) Some packages have no further information on them besides the customer's name. Important details like telephone numbers and door codes are not available (UPS).
- c) A customer resides in a building where his/her name is not listed among the names of those that reside in that particular apartment building (PostNord).
- d) The lack of adequate information on a package to be delivered such as no telephone number and door code (DHL).
- e) Some companies are closed on a non-public holiday or have moved from their original premises, and their mailing are still not change/updated with the supplier (UPS).
- f) Sometimes the sender shipped a package to an old address (FedEx).

- g) Sometimes due to wrong address on the package (FedEx).
- h) Wrong addresses or incomplete addresses i.e. box numbers (UPS).

FACTOR 4.

- a) Some customers may be required to pay cash on delivery (CoD) while they have no clues about such payments (UPS).
- b) Regarding Cash on Delivery (CoD), the customer was not aware of the import duties while placing an order. In most case, the drivers are left with the responsibility to explain and clarify to the customers why they have to pay such levies. Even at that, most customers are still suspicious and think that the driver is making these charges up. Most often the customer has to pay cash before receiving the package and not so many people in this modern “credit card” world keep lot of cash money at home. If there’s no cash at home, the driver has to place a call to his dispatch and the customer debit card will then be debited and this process takes about 25 minutes to be sorted out. This eventually takes the allotted time on the other deliveries (UPS).
- c) Customers are not aware of cash on delivery (CoD) demands (UPS).

FACTOR 5.

- a) Some customers deliberately refused to answer their mobile phones because they do not recognize the number (UPS).
- b) Customers’ habits of not answering unfamiliar and unrecognizable numbers when they are called to inform them about their delivery (FedEx).

FACTOR 6.

- a) Most often customers are not aware that many delivery firms ONLY deliver packages door to door, and the customers have to be at home to receive his or her package/parcel or leave an authorization notice granting the service provider the right to leave the package at his or her front door (UPS).
- b) The customer was not aware that the package will be delivered at his residential address (UPS)

FACTOR 7.

- a) Most delivery drivers do not have enough time to contact neighbors or simply just do not care to contact the customer when there is a situation of NO ACCESS to the building (UPS)

FACTOR 8.

- a) Most delivery drivers do not have work telephones to call up customers (UPS).

FACTOR 9.

- a) Delivery drivers are often overloaded above their maximum capacity and as a result, they do not have enough time to meet up with a customer when he or she suggests an alternative route which is within close proximity (UPS).

FACTOR 10.

- a) Despite pre-alerts via SMS from Post Nord (the Swedish postal service), customers are still unaware that they are about to received their packages (PostNord)

FACTOR 11.

- a) Customers refusing packages because the custom duties cost more than what the customer actually paid for the goods purchased (PostNord).

FACTOR 12.

- a) Customers just order a package and don't bother tracking or tracing their shipments order online (FedEx).

The second phase of the data analyses has to do with the sub question, “How can parcel (package) delivery firms minimize high send – agains (returns) in the Supply Chain industry?” Under this section of the study, the responses from the 10 different service providers as to how to curbed send – agains were termed as *remedy* by the author. As documented in the preceding analyses, the *remedy* is chronicled in ascending order based on the highest most common answers. Highest most common answers meaning, that similar responses were catalogued.

#### REMEDY 1.

- a) Send an SMS to all the customers to remind them about their packages and when it should be delivered (UPS).
- b) Automatic SMS/text messages should be sent out to customers with the direct delivery date (UPS).
- c) Parcel delivery firms should improve their information flow on precisely when and where deliveries are to occur via more pre- alert SMS's to customers' mobile phones and in the form of post cards to their home addresses before the first delivery attempt (PostNord).
- d) By contacting the customer first by e-mail, SMS or by ringing their phones before leaving the delivery firms' warehouse with the package (FedEx).
- e) Making sure that the address on the package is the right address. Hence, the customer service has to do more by contacting the customer on time before the package is out for delivery. Knowing the best time the customer wants the package to be delivered (FedEx).
- f) By informing the customer in advance on the pending delivery date. Plan with the customer IF possible (UPS).
- g) The customer has to be contacted a day before delivery (UPS).
- h) Alert customers in advance (i.e. at least 2 hours) that their packages/ parcels are going to be delivered on a certain day at their residences, places of work or an alternative address could be arranged (UPS).
- i) By calling the customer before leaving from the courier firms' center (hub), so that an agreement could be made as to what to do with the package (UPS).
- j) Improve communication between customers and the parcel delivery company (UPS).

#### REMEDY 2.

- a) Customers should ensure that all their contact details are correct and current when they order goods online (UPS).
- b) Delivery firms should not accept package which do not have a door code or a phone number (DHL).
- c) Delivery (courier) firms must contact the customer: make it mandatory for door codes and telephone numbers (DHL).

- d) For all private customers especially those making online purchase or booking, there should be a window on the order form for obligatory door code and telephone number that must be filled in to proceed with the order (UPS).

REMEDY 3.

- a) By provide working telephones to service providers should minimize the volume of send-again (returns) (UPS).
- b) All drivers should have job telephones (UPS).
- c) The provision of work telephones to all service providers (drivers) (UPS)
- d) All drivers should be equipped with company telephones (UPS).

REMEDY 4.

- a) With COD packages, there should be better rather improve communication between the delivery company and the customer. Packages should remain in the warehouse until they are paid (UPS).
- b) The company in which the customer has placed an order (sender) should inform the customer on the planned date of delivery and which courier (delivery) company will perform the duty (UPS).
- c) Customers should also be informed in advance about the import duties and if possible be charged when placing an order (UPS).
- d) All CoD's MUST be forwarded to customers when customs and excise duties are made out via email or telephone earlier before the delivery and clarifications made about the duties to customers (UPS).

REMEDY 5.

- a) Service providers (drivers) have reasonable daily amount of deliveries to enable them do second trips and more contacting with customers as well as neighbors (UPS).
- b) Parcel delivery firms should draw down on the amount of deliveries allotted to drivers daily so that the drivers can have enough time to solve any delivery related problem when one evolves.



REMEDY 6.

- a) Service (delivery) companies should have places centrally located in several delivery districts where the drivers can drop packages, so when a customer is contacted and not at home could easily get his or her package (UPS).
- b) Courier firms should have several service points (places where customers can pick up packages) and this option should be made available to customers.

REMEDY 7.

- a) The company in which the customer has placed an order (sender) should inform the customer on the planned date of delivery and which courier (delivery) company will carry out the delivery.

REMEDY 8.

- a) Major package delivery firms like UPS, FedEx, DHL and TNT should have late evening's deliveries not only at peak seasons but as a standard service. This would also reduce the send- agains (returns). Most customers are at home after 4 p.m. and deliveries made at these times, would significantly reduce send-agains (returns (UPS).

REMEDY 9.

- a) Private customer's packages must be left at the terminal so that they can be informed that the parcel is in the designated country (Sweden) and then they can choose a day for delivery (DHL).

REMEDY 10.

- a) Customers would prefer to receive their packages at their places of work, the day after the first delivery attempt (UPS).

REMEDY 11.

- b) Delivery drivers should take their time and write down and saved the different door codes written on the packages (UPS).

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **5. Analysis**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This phase of the research has to do with the compilation of all the data obtained from the different service providers (drivers) that responded to the research questions and connecting those empirical findings to the theory. The author draws up a summary from the empirical data collected from the 10 service providers that participated from the major courier companies in Stockholm and aligned them to the theory. All responses were read through in order to revise the validity of the data, as suggested by Hirsjärvi et al (2009, 221-222). These respondents work with the major parcel delivery (courier) companies in Stockholm, Sweden such as UPS, FedEx, DHL and The Swedish Postal Service. Their written responses to the questions asked were collated, the responses were compared and the differences and similarities investigated. From these responses, the author was able to draw comprehensible analyses from the data collected. The summary of the analyses summarize in segments under the research questions and responses collected are reviewed based on their “uniqueness”. Uniqueness in the sense that the most common responses serves as *factor(s) and remedy*, from the two questions poised seems to answer those questions.

#### **5.2 Problems (Factors)**

The first phase of the analysis is conducted in a table format (see table 2 below) to connect the theories and empirical findings to the analysis. The “factors” that contribute or cause the high returns, as stated by the 10 service providers (drivers), are attempted in this table to link those factors to the theories via the empirical findings. The author chose to present the factors in a table format in order of relevance to the responses to the research question from the different service providers.

*Table 2 Factors that cause high send-agains!*

	Problems (Factor)	Theory	Empirical findings
1.	Customer was not at home	Mentioned by J. Aranko, 2013; M. Heikamp, 2013	Mentioned by all 10 service providers.
2.	No access (Door code) to apt. complex	Mentioned by J. Aranko, 2013.	Mentioned by 9 of 10 of the service providers.

3.	Lack of information (on parcel; between courier company & customer etc.)	Consumer Focus (February, 2013, p4).	Mentioned by 8 of 10 of the service providers in different contexts.
4.	Payment of cash on delivery (COD)	Not mentioned in theory.	Mentioned by 3 of 10 of the service providers.
5.	Customer's refusal to answer calls	Not mentioned in theory.	Mentioned by 2 of 10 of the service providers.
6.	Customer's not aware of the delivery	Not mentioned in theory.	Mentioned by 2 of 10 of the service providers.
7.	Most delivery drivers do not have enough time per package delivery	Not mentioned in theory.	Mentioned by 1 of 10 of the service providers.
8.	Most delivery drivers lacks work telephones	Not mentioned in theory.	Mentioned by 1 of 10 of the service providers.
9.	Delivery drivers are often overloaded above their maximum capacity	Not mentioned in theory.	Mentioned by 1 of 10 of the service providers.
10.	Despite pre-alerts via SMS, some customers are still unaware of delivery	Not mentioned in theory.	Mentioned by 1 of 10 of the service providers.
11.	Customers refusal of packages due to high customs duties	Not mentioned in theory.	Mentioned by 1 of 10 of the service providers.
12.	Customers not interested in tracing their order online.	Not mentioned in theory.	Mentioned by 1 of 10 of the service providers.

Note: The two major obvious problems affecting a parcel delivery as mentioned in both the theory and empirical findings are customers are not at home and delivery drivers not having access (door codes) to apartment buildings. This situation is obvious because of the research study limitations to the inner Stockholm vicinity. However, there are some factors that are mentioned in the empirical findings and are not mentioned in the theories read. One of those problems are customer's refusal of packages due to the high customs duties and the payment of Cash on delivery (COD). Most often this incident occurred when the customer has to pay higher amount of duties charges than what the actual package cost. Customs duties are levied on imports or purchases from outside the European Union. Gifts are sometimes exempted. Customers are often

ill-informed about these levies. Other factors that contributed to the high send – agains experienced by parcel delivery firms in the supply chain management industry and not mentioned in the theories, but were found out to be factors that contributed to high send- agains as mentioned in the empirical findings by some of the service providers are: customers are not interested in tracing their online purchases or orders; despite pre-alerts by some courier firm via text messages, some customers are still unaware of the pending delivery; some logistics service providers are overstretched and overwhelmed due to the constant overloading above their maximum capacity such as their daily parcel delivery allotment among other factors mentioned in the table. Also note that “Not mentioned in theory” is strictly limited to the theories that the author read through in respect to this study. These factors *might* be mentioned in other literatures, journal publications etc.

Contrarily, there was one obvious point made in the theory by Xing et al (2011, p. 351) not mentioned in the empirical findings by any of the 10 service providers was “retailers should package small items such as books, beauty products or gifts in such a way that they can be delivered through the letterbox. Certainly, this development will hugely affect a delivery process positively. This will lead to the reduction in high send – agains and increase efficiency as well heighten consumer satisfaction with the parcel delivery firm.

### **5.2.1 Summary of the Problems (Factors)**

This section of the research also seeks to describe and summed the responses from the 10 different service providers. The three (3) most common factors are described briefly that cause high send – agains (returns) according to empirical results from this study. It can be noted that 10 out of 10 of the service providers (courier drivers) responded that “the customer was at home to receive the delivery”. Most parcel delivery firms require a mandatory signing for the parcel by the customer even if the service provider (driver”) has access to the flat. It can be noted that from the responses to the question what are the reasons/ causes of send – agains (returns), 9 out of 10 of the service providers (courier drivers) responded that “No access (door code) to apartment buildings” is the second most common factor that cause high send – agains (returns), except PostNord (Swedish Postal) that do not have problems with access to apartments buildings because they have a special access code or electronic device that give them access to apartment buildings.

The third most common factor that causes high send- agains (returns) in the Supply Chain Industry is the lack of information or communication between the delivery firm and the customer. From empirical data collected from the different service providers, it can be noted that 8 out of 10 wrote that poor communication was a negative factor.

### 5.3 Remedy

This phase of the analysis of the empirical findings has to do with the remedy as seen by the 10 different parcel delivery drivers as a solution to the problems of high send – agains (returns) experienced by many courier firms. The “remedies” that were provided as the solutions as stated by the 10 service providers (drivers), are attempted in this table to link those remedies to the theories via the empirical findings. The author chose to present the remedies in a table format in order of relevance to the responses to the research question from the different service providers.

What is done here is to connect these remedies to the theories and empirical findings through a table format.

*Table 3 Remedies for high send-agains!*

	Remedy	Theory	Empirical findings
1.	Improvement of communication and information flow by courier firms.	Mentioned by J. Aranko, 2013. P.25/ Xing et al, 2011. P, 351.	Mentioned by all 10 of the service providers.
2.	Customers must ensure that mailing/contact details are available	Not mentioned in theory.	Mentioned by 4 of 10 of the service providers.
3.	Parcel delivery firms should provide work telephones to their drivers.	Not mentioned in theory.	Mentioned by 4 of 10 of the service providers.
4.	COD information should be provided to the customer in good time ahead of the delivery.	Not mentioned in theory.	Mentioned by 4 of 10 of the service providers.
5.	That service providers (drivers) have reasonable daily amount of deliveries.	Not mentioned in theory.	Mentioned by 2 of 10 of the service providers.
6.	Courier firms should establish several service points.	Mentioned by J. Aranko, 2013, p.25	Mentioned by 2 of 10 of the service providers.

7.	Customer must be inform on the plan date of delivery by the online retailer and the courier firm.	Mentioned by J. Aranko, 2013. P.25/ Xing et al, 2011. P, 351.	Mentioned by 1 of 10 of the service providers.
8.	Major courier firms like UPS should have late evening's delivery.	Not mentioned in theory.	Mentioned by 1 of 10 of the service providers.
9.	Private customers packages must be kept in the hub until they're inform.	Not mentioned in theory.	Mentioned by 1 of 10 of the service providers.
10.	Customers prefer to receive single packages at their work places.	Not mentioned in theory.	Mentioned by 1 of 10 of the service providers.
11.	Delivery drivers saving door codes for future use.	Not mentioned in theory.	Mentioned by 1 of 10 of the service providers.

As seen above in the table, there were 3 remedies that were mentioned in the theory that can be related to the empirical findings. The improvement of communication and information flow by courier firms were mentioned by all 10 service providers as was mentioned in the theory. The other two (2) remedies that are mentioned in theory with connection with the empirical findings are courier firms should establish several service points and customer must be inform on the plan delivery date by the online retailer and the courier firm. From a connectivity prospect to theory, there were several remedies mentioned in the empirical findings that were not mentioned in the theory. In order to avoid repetition, the 8 remedies (2-5 and 8-11) as seen above in the table were not mentioned in theory but were provided as solutions to the high send-agains by the different service providers.

There was an assertion made in the theory by Xing et al (2011, 351) which was not mentioned by the service providers in the empirical finding. Xing et al further added that “they should involve logistics service providers to communicate with customers as much as possible or develop a link to the logistics service providers, web pages. There’s a clear problem with that assertion, specifically logistics service providers getting involve communicating directly with customers. It is evident by it not been mentioned by any of the 10 service providers in the empirical findings. The imminent problem is when service providers (drivers) are involve in communicating with customers as much as possible, this slows the logistics service provider down with his delivery

process. Stopping the delivery van to answer phone calls, distraction by a phone call while delivering a parcel or having to give account of a customer's package not in your delivery van are counter-productive to the time sensitive nature of a parcel delivery job. Courier firms allot 5-10 minutes per package delivery. If a service provider has 65 or more delivery stops and is allotted 5–10 minutes per stop, constant involvement in communicating with customers will lead to unfinished deliveries, thereby resulting to the problem of high send- agains (returns) which parcel delivery firms are trying to avoid.

### **5.3.1 Summary of Remedy**

The three (3) most common remedies to the solution of the high send – agains are briefly described and summed as seen from the data collected, 10 out of 10 of the service providers (drivers) stated that the *most common remedy* for parcel delivery firms to minimize the problem of high returns is through the improvement of communication and information flow by using emails, text messages and telephone calls as many times to get the attention of the customer so that they can be aware and prepare themselves for a delivery.

The second *common remedy* on scale as stated by 4 out of 10 of the service providers is that, customers that are ordering or booking service (goods) online must have all their details rightly fill out including door codes, telephone numbers, current address, etc.

The third most common remedy to the minimization of high send – agains (returns) established by 4 out of 10 of the different service providers is the parcel delivery firms should provide all their drivers with work telephones to enable the drivers contact the customer direct instead of going through the central dispatcher or customer service.

### **5.4 SWOT Analysis**

From the analysis, the author established that certain common *factors* and *remedy* were frequently pointed out by the 10 different service providers that responded to the questions. Those common factors and remedy were then characterized with a SWOT analysis as follow: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as seen in figure 2. The configuration of the factors into SWOT analyses draws a connection and correlation from the theories and the empirical findings. These analyses present an insight to the degree of the cause(s) and remedy to the high send-agains by parcel delivery drivers in the supply chain industry. Depending on the occurrence of the

responses by the different service providers, the author further identified which of the responses are perceived strongly by the different service providers and its influence and impact on parcel delivery firms.

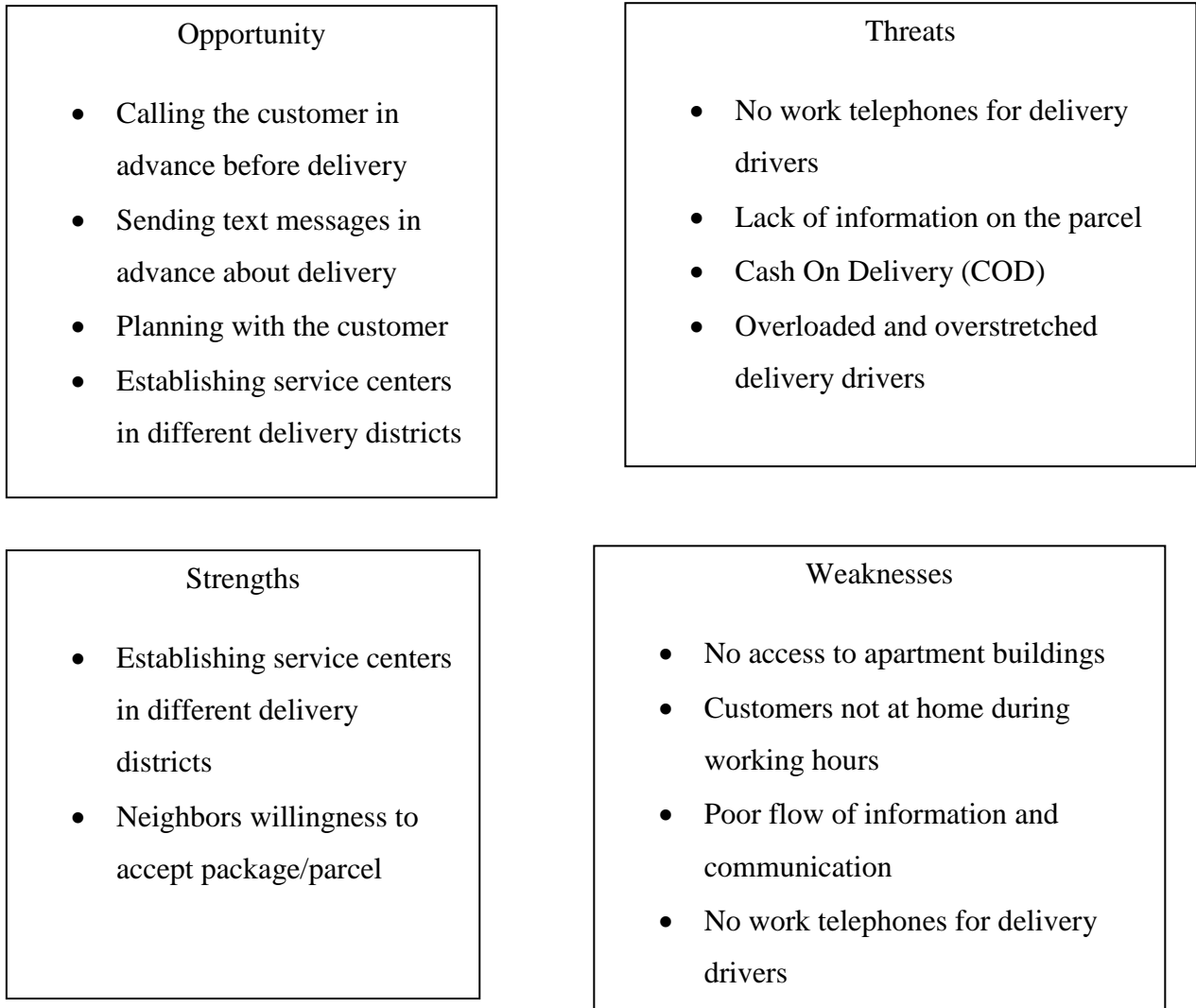


Figure 1: SWOT analysis of a parcel delivery firms in Stockholm, Sweden

The SWOT analysis uncovered that establishing a service center in different districts as was referred to in the theory by J. Aranko (2013, p. 25) where service providers (parcel delivery drivers) can leave a customer package upon the customer’s request after the first delivery attempt, and the customers can pick up his or her parcel from there is characterized as a position of *strength*. The respondents are of the assertion that this will largely help minimize the high send-agains (returns) by parcel delivery firms. From the *weakness characteristics*, no access to



apartment buildings, poor flow of information and communication, and customers not at home during working hours as was mentioned in theories by M. Heikamp (2013), J. Aranko (2013), Consumer Focus (February, 2013. P.4) and the service providers are considered the weaknesses by the virtue of their impact on deliveries. Calling and texting the customer in advance before delivery as well as establishing service centers in different delivery districts as was mentioned in the theory by Xing et al (2011, P.351), J. Aranko (2013) and the service providers are considered the opportunity aspect in this SWOT analysis simply because this will help remedied the high send –agains. The most threats were regarded as no work phones provided to service providers and the lack of information on the parcel mentioned by the service providers, as the result of the details provided by the online store’s representatives which were inaccurate and ambiguous.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **6. Conclusion**

The driving force behind this research with the theme “How parcel (package) delivery firms can minimize high send-agains (returns) in the supply chain industry?” stems from my vested interest in the topic because I work in the parcel delivery sector as a parcel delivery driver with UPS. The issues of investigation in this research were to find the causes/ reasons as to why parcel delivery firms in the supply chain industry experienced high send- agains and how can those parcel delivery firms take relevant and strategic actions to minimize high send – agains (returns). The problems of high send – agains in the supply chain industry is a serious issue and cost intensive. What I intend to achieve from this study, is to find a clear way out in tackling and solving this *logistic pandemic* of how send - agains can be minimized thereby leading to the research question How can parcel (package) delivery firms minimize high send –agains in the supply chain industry?

The overall findings from this study has hypothesized the various conditions experienced by service providers (delivery drivers) that breeds the stockpile of high send –agains (returns) in the warehouses and hubs of parcel delivery firms in the supply chain industry. It can be theorized that the absence of customers from their residences when service providers are out delivering the parcels, service providers not having access codes to apartment buildings that are lock around the clock and the lack of working telephone has attributed considerably to high send –agains. The

lack of adequate information dissemination about customers' packages which includes timely texts messages from the courier firm about pending delivery, specific delivery information from the shippers and specific delivery date has also gravely aided the monster of high send-agains. With the increasing number of online retailers as well as consumers insatiable desire to possess material wealth and the demand for home (door to door) delivery by these consumers, has increase the competition amongst parcel delivery firms in the supply chain industry to offer better service. The hallmark of a "better service" is that customers want their parcels at the first delivery attempt. The author can safely say from many years of experience in the field, that if a customer is not at home, the customer can leave a written and signed authorization requesting the delivery driver to leave the parcel at the customer's apartment door.

Finally, with the increase in e-commerce via online trade and shopping, residential customers are a prized component of the courier business. However, the bulk of send-agains are from these residential customers who are not at home during the time of delivery. Unlike businesses with a reception and a central goods department, the receptionist and the staff at the central warehouse are supposedly to receive parcels; the residential addresses may well be unoccupied for most of the day.

## **6.1 Research Question and Answers**

The research question of this study is "how can parcel (package) delivery firms minimize the high send – agains in the supply chain industry?" The answers to this question can be clearly seen from the findings of the data collected on the field from the different service providers (drivers), it can be established that there were several factors that cause or lead to parcel delivery firms experiencing high send –agains. Notably, was the customer *not been at home* during the time of the delivery. Most people (customer) work between the hours of 9.00 a.m. – 17.00 p.m., Mondays to Fridays which makes it difficult for them to be at home. In order for a customer to receive his or her parcel (package), they must forego work which most often customer prioritizes work than sitting home waiting for a package. Another grave factor was that most service providers (drivers) don't have access (door codes) to apartment buildings. The locked main entrance doors causes problems for the service providers. Unlike the regular postman who happens to have codes and electronic devices to gain access into apartment buildings and can leave packages outside the customer's door, that privilege does not extend to courier firms. Most courier firms required that

the customer sign for the parcel upon receipt or the customer leaves a written and signed authorization to leave the parcel outside his door. According to the empirical findings, there were 12 factors that contributed to the cause of high send –agains (returns). The third most causality of high send –agains (returns) was the lack of information flow between the customers, the parcel delivery (courier) firms and the online retail store representatives. This relates to informing and alerting the customer in good time about the precise and exact time of the pending delivery by the courier firm; ensuring that the relevant contact details such as door codes and telephone numbers are available as well as the current address of the customers.

Another answer to the research question of this study of “how parcel delivery firms can minimize the high send –agains (returns)?” is coined as the “remedy” and had eleven (11) salient points. For parcel delivery firms to minimize the high send –agains, they must improve their present information flow and communication between them and the customers. Customers should be alerted at least 24 hours before the due delivery date and plan with the customer in order to have a successful first delivery attempt. The provision of working telephones to the service providers could prove crucial in minimizing high send-agains (returns). With working phones, the service providers can contact and inform customers before delivery. Also courier firms must make it obligatory and mandatory that those making online purchases, sending orders or sending a simple letter must have the customer’s telephone number, door codes and current address.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

From my many years of work experience in the logistics industry as a parcel delivery driver, coupled with the empirical data assembled from the 10 different service providers representing the four major courier firms (UPS, DHL, FedEx and Post Nord) in the greater Stockholm area, the following can be considered by courier firms in the supply chain management industry as measures in minimizing the high send – agains (returns):

- Service providers should call and inform the customer(s) at least 1 hour before delivery.
- Customers that make orders or purchase online should demand from the online retailers which courier firm will be doing the delivery of their order and be active in tracking and tracing their orders on the various courier firm’s websites. On these sites, there are information available surrounding customers’ delivery.

- Customers, who manage to track his or her delivery online prior to the delivery, can contact the courier firm's customer service and request an appropriate delivery date and time.
- Service centers (i.e. Pick up Centers) should be established across the deliveries districts. This can be done by either creating one as the courier firm own or by cooperation with local supermarkets and stores. The reason for such is that most customers are not at home during the day and they frequently asked if their deliveries can be left at a pick up center or the nearest supermarket in their community.
- Service providers should be given reasonable amount of deliveries (stops) so that they can work efficiently and meet customers' expectations.
- Courier firms should revisit their "old" service policy model and update them with today's reality. I say this to specifically pinpoint the policy of *first delivery attempt* before changes can be made to another delivery address. Some of the customers that are contacted via telephone before a delivery, states that they had contacted UPS for a change of delivery address but were denied that change because of a regimented company policy. The service provider is left with that "non- essential" package for the rest of the day and adding up to the count of send –agains (returns).

(Note: UPS was aforementioned above because the author works as a service provider (driver) with UPS Stockholm).

### **6.3 Future research**

The issue concerning high send-agains (returns) has continue to be pervasive and plague the courier sector. The factors and remedies unearthed in this study concerns both courier firms and customers. A lot of studies focused on Courier firms to do a lot to combat the high send – agains and nothing has been research about the customer. In order to minimize the high send – agains the following issues should be consider for future research:

- *Customer's behavior in regards to the parcel delivery process.* This could be an investigation into how/ why many customers don't easily answer their telephones (mobile, cell or home) from unrecognizable number. From personal experiences, many consignees develop interest after a voice message is left on their phones after several attempts. By

then the delivery driver in on his way to his next planned stop (delivery) and can't not return to this customer on the same day.

- *Further research into how parcel delivery firms can minimize the high send – agains.*  
This can be done by doing more interviews with service providers and with customers as well. Interviewing customers will provide further insights into the dilemma and plausible solutions in minimizing the high send – agains (returns).
- *How can parcel delivery drivers cope with the transition from being just an ordinary delivery driver to a “service” provider? What it entails?* This is an important issue to be research. Experience has shown that many parcel delivery firms has included *service* in their business portfolios. Many if not all parcel delivery drivers get the rudimentary 3-5 days training of road safety (targeted towards protecting the firm's vehicles primarily), scanning a package and a guarded tour around your would be delivery district. After these “training” the delivery driver is thrown into the field and is expected and required to provide service with NO know-how of a service training.

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#### Internet Source

Consumer Focus response to the European Commission's Green Paper Consultation on An integrated parcel delivery market for the growth of e-commerce in the EU February 2013.

[www.socscidiss.bham.ac.uk/research-questions.html](http://www.socscidiss.bham.ac.uk/research-questions.html)

**i. Appendix**

Questionnaire:

What are the reasons/causes of send- agains (returns)?

How can parcel (package) delivery firms minimize high send agains (returns) in the supply chain industry?