

## CUSTOMER SERVICE IN THE COURIER SERVICES INDUSTRY - RESEARCH RESULTS

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**Purpose:** The aim of the article is to learn the research results regarding respondents' opinions on logistic customer service in the courier industry in its various aspects.

**Design/methodology/approach:** One of the quantitative methods was used, which is a diagnostic test. As a technique, a survey was used and the responses were surveys with open and closed questions.

**Findings:** The courier services market is well established, with few new entrants and frequent mergers through takeovers or consolidations. Most often, strong organizations on the market are absorbed by larger entities. The market movement in this area is very noticeable. The number of customers shapes the existence and functioning of this type of enterprise. The article is of a research nature. The study analyzed respondents' opinions related to logistic customer service in a selected courier company.

**Research limitations/implications:** There were no solutions or doubts in the research. A study may be conducted in the future for comparative analysis.

**Practical implications:** The purpose of the research was to assess the reliability of the services provided at the company under review, which received high ratings from customers. Positive evaluations were expressed towards the flexibility of services and availability of products, while communication and staff competence were considered adequate. Some respondents expressed concerns about prices. Although the vast majority expressed a desire to use the services again. Logistical customer service plays an important role in strengthening an organization's market position, due to the increasing awareness of today's consumers about their needs.

**Social implications:** The conducted research will allow us to notice what important aspects customers pay attention to when using courier services. There is no problem with the availability of data and information regarding handling specific matters and solving problems. The market is saturated with entities providing various services. The TSL industry, along with the KEP market, are particularly developing. Customers can choose from offers from parcel delivery companies. There may be various factors that determine the choice of this or that company.

**Originality/value:** The article is of a research nature, individual cases of individual clients and corporate clients.

**Keywords:** management, customer service, courier services, respondents, logistics.

## 1. Introduction

The subject of the research is logistic customer service in the courier services industry on the example of the management of courier company. In the case of the implemented issue, research problems take the form of questions addressed to customers using the services of a courier company. Therefore, the following research problems were adopted:

Main research problem:

- Do customers of the surveyed company from the KEP industry (Kurier, Ekspres, Paczka) rate the logistic customer service at a satisfactory level? Was the order fulfilled at the appropriate level (in the customer's eyes)?

Detailed research problems:

- What is the assessment of the reliability of the service provided in the surveyed company in the opinion of customers?
- Has the flexibility of service been defined by users at the appropriate level?
- How do customers evaluate product availability?
- Are the communication and competences of the service staff at an appropriate level in the opinion of the company's customers, in line with their expectations?

The study used one of the quantitative methods, which is a diagnostic survey. The technique used was a survey, and the tool was a survey questionnaire with open and closed questions.

## 2. Research group and course of study

The courier industry is constantly developing. He has great prospects ahead of him. The study attempted to assess the level of logistic evaluation of customer service in the courier services industry. A cooperating company has been selected with many business entities, and at the same time delivers to individual customers. It was therefore assumed that the data to be obtained would have different sources. And so it happened. The surveys were completed by individual customers and representatives of business entities. The research was carried out in February and March 2021.

148 people returned the correctly completed survey questionnaire. Answers were provided by individual clients and people employed by specific entities, as well as the owners of the companies themselves. The distribution of survey participants is presented in figure 1. The first criterion is the gender of the respondents.

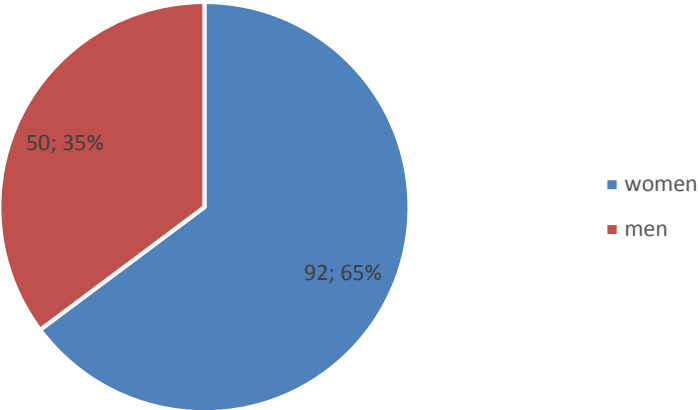


Figure 1. Division of respondents by gender.

Source: Own study based on conducted research.

Women showed greater interest in the online survey questionnaire, 65% of whom responded to the request to complete the survey. Women are usually more willing to participate in various types of survey research. Too in the case of the study carried out for the purposes of this work, this relationship was confirmed. The survey respondents were asked about their subjective sense of their financial status. Respondents were asked to rate their wealth on a ten-point scale. The results are presented in the figure below.

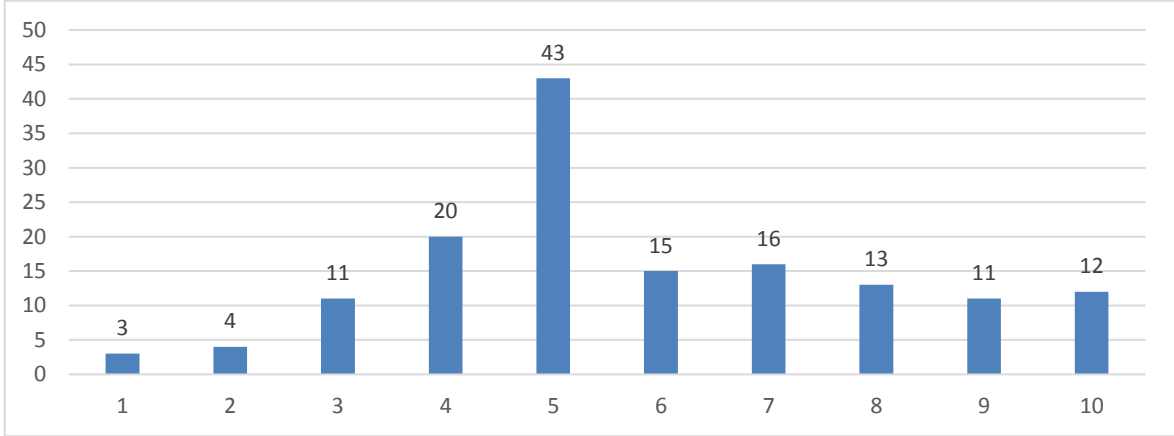


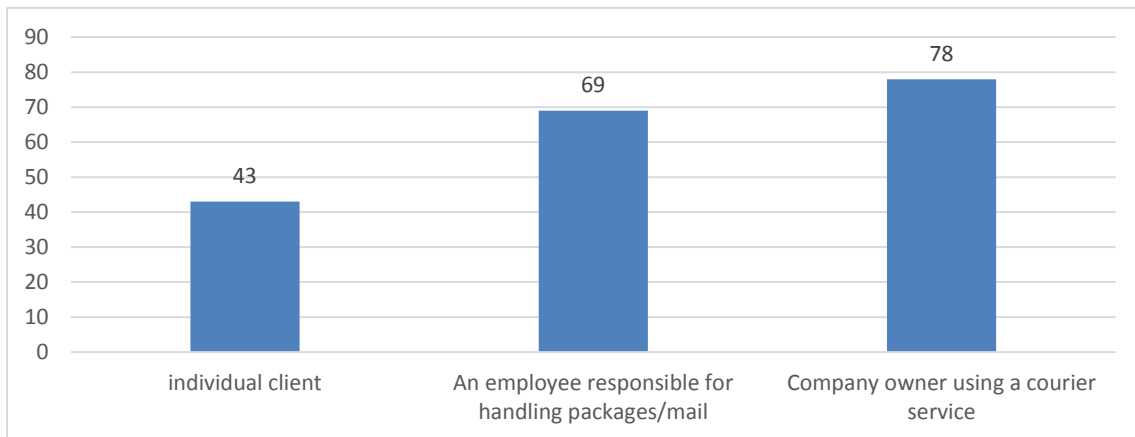
Figure 2. Subjective assessment of the level of wealth of the respondents.

Source: Own study based on conducted research.

The respondents assessed their financial situation as relatively good. No differentiating factors were introduced, and it is noted that 43 respondents consider their financial situation to be relatively good, giving it a score of 5. 28 people assessed their financial situation below this value, while the remaining respondents considered their situation better than 5.

The last question from the area of questions characterizing the research group concerns the type of client. The services of the courier company are used by both individual and commercial customers and business entities. A very attractive offer was created especially for the latter.

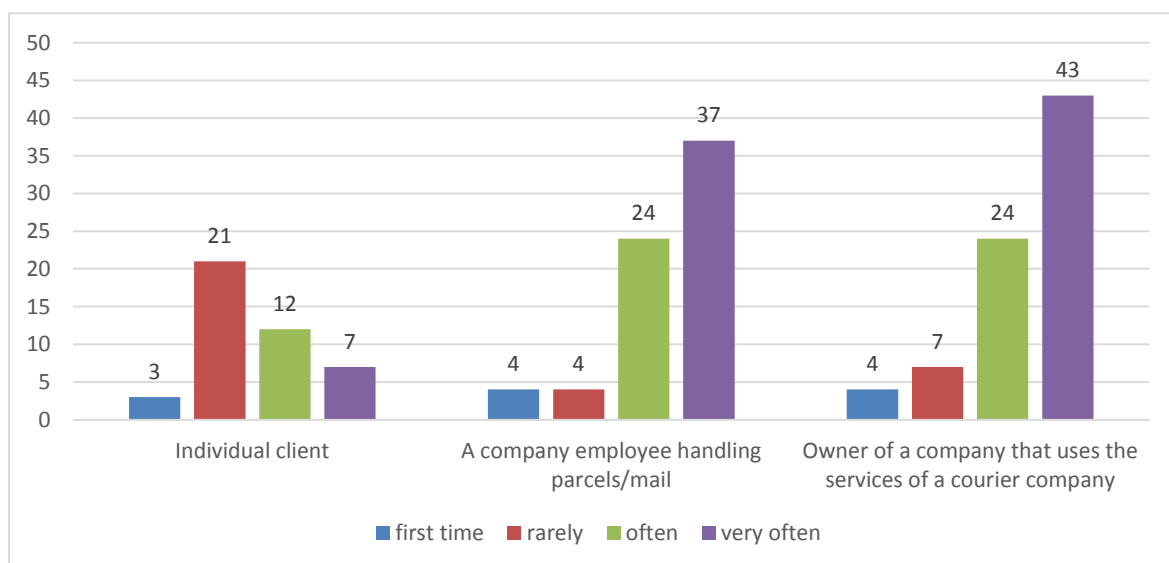
The company provides a wide range of TSL (transport-forwarding-logistics) services. Figure 3 contains answers regarding the type of client participating in the study.



**Figure 3.** Characteristics of the customers of the tested courier company.

Source: Own study based on conducted research.

Respondents were asked about the frequency of using the services of the tested courier company. The answers are presented in figure 4. The differentiating factor will be the type of customer.

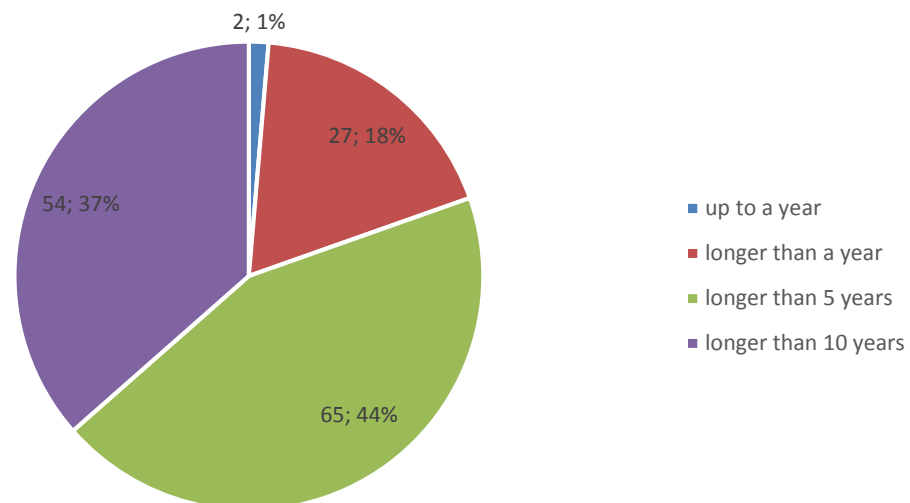


**Figure 4.** Frequency of using the services of the examined entity.

Source: Own study based on conducted research.

It is not possible to present the data as a percentage due to the fact that two answers are often marked in the survey forms. For example, the respondent used the services of a courier company as a private person and as a company employee. However, figure 4 undoubtedly shows that the company's offer is most often used by other business entities, whether they run their own business or are employed in companies and deal with order fulfillment. This is an important element of research. It can therefore be concluded that the largest group of study participants are business entities. They benefit too from the company's offer most often.

Individual customers use the services of courier companies less often compared to other respondents who declare frequent or very frequent use from the offer of the examined company. Respondents were also asked about the time they worked with her. When did the collaboration first begin? The results are presented in figure 5.

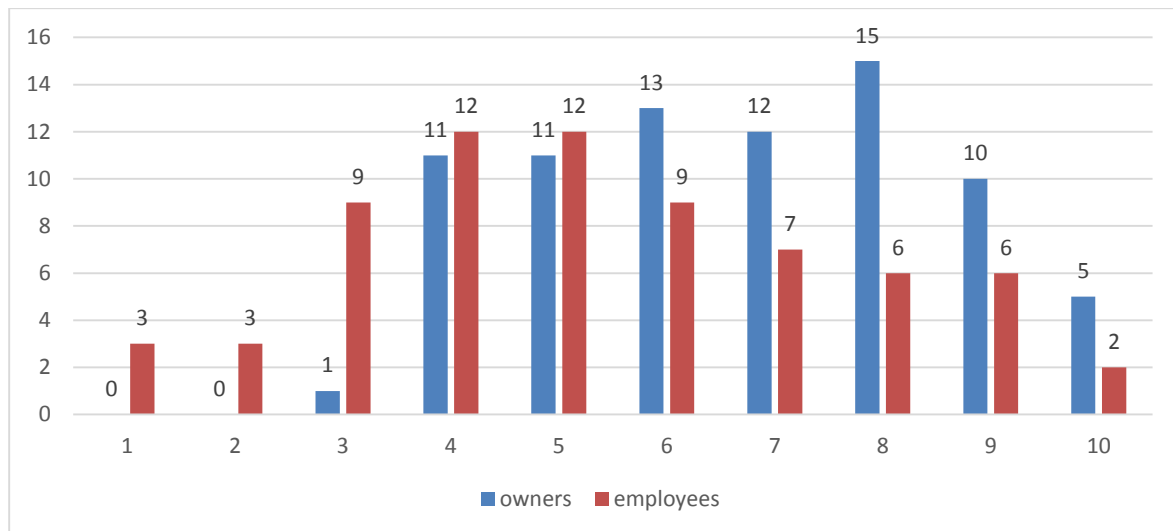


**Figure 5.** The period during which the respondent cooperates with the courier company.

Source: Own study based on conducted research.

The largest group of respondents are people who have been cooperating with the courier company for 5 to 10 years. The next group are people who have been cooperating with the courier company for more than 10 years. 18% of respondents cooperate for a shorter time and the remaining 1% are people who use the company's offer for less than a year.

The next question (figure 6) concerned the reasons why respondents choose this particular company. The question was semi-open. In addition to specific indications, respondents could also provide their answers. A separate question was addressed to individual customers and members/owners of a business organization. Employees and owners were asked to gradate the factors that determine the choice of an enterprise with which to cooperate. The next figures will concern specific factors that entrepreneurs pay attention to. There are 9 possible answers (closed directory) and one open answer. Each respondent could award from 1 to 10 points.

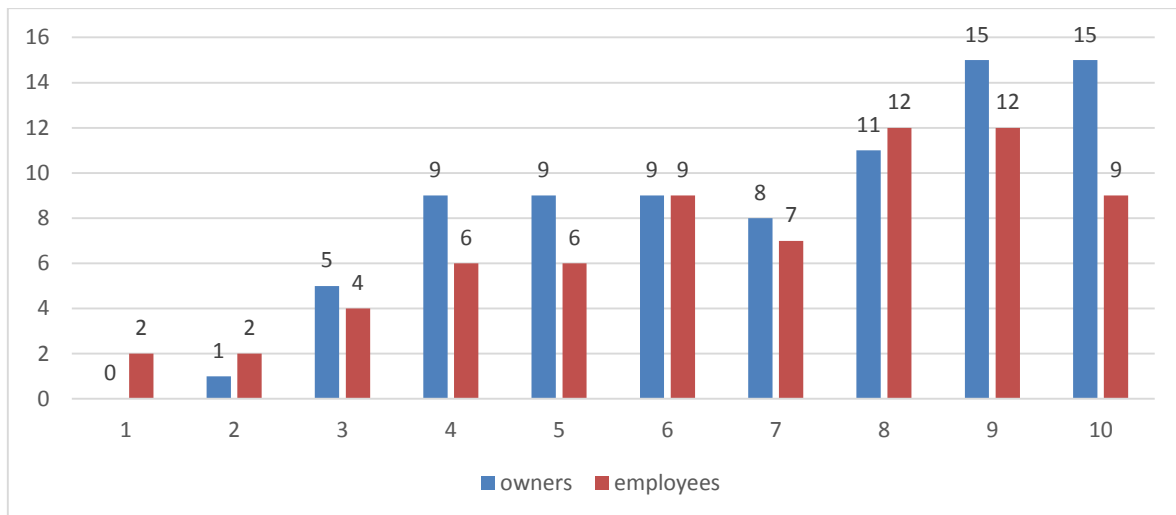


**Figure 6.** Assessment of order execution flexibility in the opinion of company owners and employees.

Source: Own study based on conducted research.

Flexibility in the implementation of the offer is more important for business owners. It can be assumed that many respondents run small organizations and have to provide materials, raw materials or production inputs themselves. There are the most small and medium-sized enterprises on the polish market, hence this assumption. In the case of employees of other entities who organize deliveries, order and send goods, flexibility places them in lower positions. Most indications were obtained at levels 3-6. Flexibility, which is one of the elements of logistic customer service, is particularly important for business owners and it is due to this factor that they decide, among others, for cooperation with the tested courier company.

Another element of customer logistics service is the speed of response. In today's reality, time is of great importance. Very often it determines many solutions and decisions made. Time translates into financial resources. Company owners responsible for their profitability must maintain continuity of production and systematically implement orders. This is possible by providing the means for this production. Therefore, respondents involved in cooperation with a courier company in the organization and company owners were asked about their opinion on the importance of the speed of orders (figure 7).

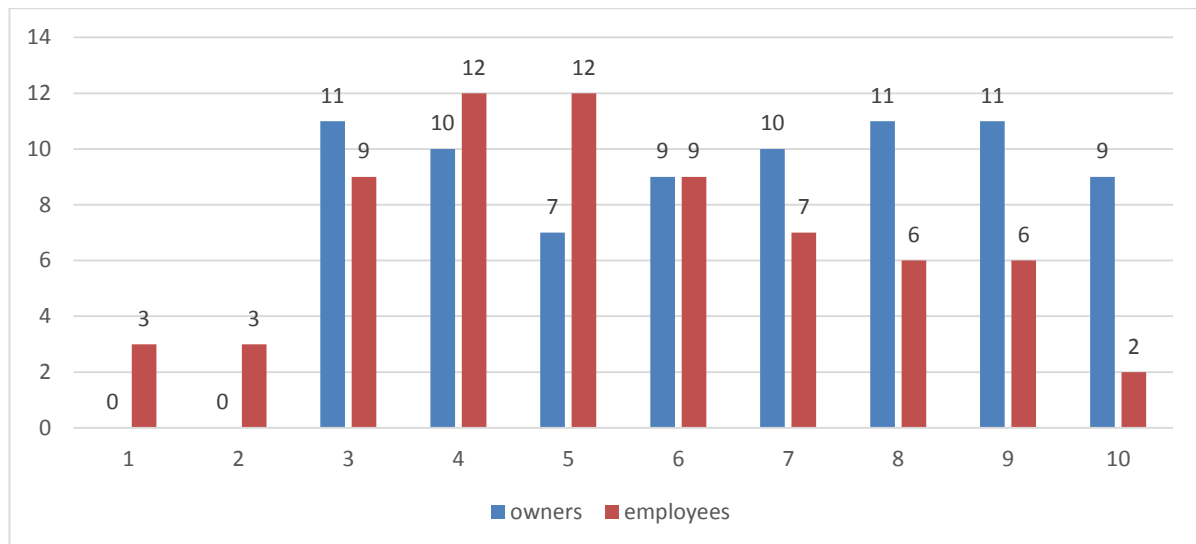


**Figure 7.** Assessment of order fulfillment speed in the opinions of company owners and employees.

Source: Own study based on conducted research.

Analyzing figure 7, it can be concluded that the speed of order fulfillment is particularly important for business owners. At these lowest levels, they did not provide many answers. From 4 and up, the number of responses from owners for whom time is a very important factor is constantly growing. The speed of response to an order is slightly less important for company employees. Perhaps this is related to the need to ensure minimum inventories in the company. Many entities do not use the Just in Time method and have stocks. The speed of order fulfillment is very important for business owners and people handling orders in companies. This factor determines the interest in the company among the survey participants.

Another component of logistic customer service is the level of communication. Contrary to appearances, this is a very important element of the transaction phase. Respondents were asked about the importance of communication with the company as a factor determining cooperation with the organization (figure 8).

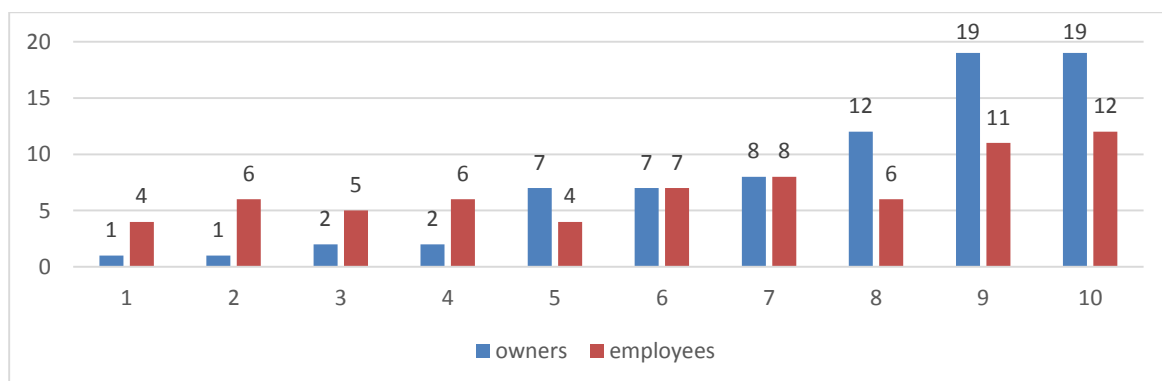


**Figure 8.** Assessment of communication with the courier company in the opinion of company owners and employees.

Source: Own study based on conducted research.

Business owners rank the importance of communication with customers at a higher level. They certainly have to deal directly with many issues related to order processing. In the case of larger business entities, it seems that cooperation is based on precise arrangements, agreements and principles that are established when establishing cooperation. If it lasts a long time, certain standards are developed. However, the knowledge that the shipment is under appropriate supervision in appropriate conditions and that the carrier is within reach of communication possibilities always reassures the customer.

Another factor that is taken into account in virtually all transactions is the price. Consumers, contractors and final customers are guided by it in their choices. However, price is usually not the only criterion. It is worth checking the respondents' answers regarding price as a factor determining the choice of a given courier company (figure 9).



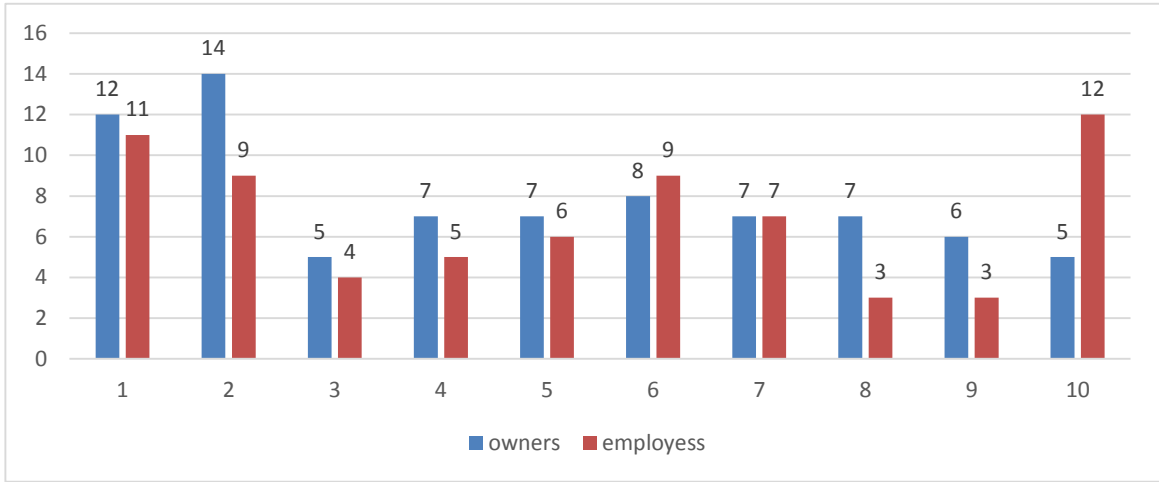
**Figure 9.** Assessment of the order price in the opinions of company owners and employees.

Source: Own study based on conducted research.



According to the analysis of the collected material, price is more important for business owners and they have to take it into account more carefully. Company employees are certainly not interested in financial issues if they are not directly obliged to look for company offers, taking into account only the price.

An important element in every business is the ability to discuss, establish certain common goals and negotiate terms. Each party should decide on the terms of cooperation through negotiations, compromises and arrangements. It will be different in the case of small businesses when sporadic orders are carried out. It is different when companies cooperate longer and more intensively (figure 10).

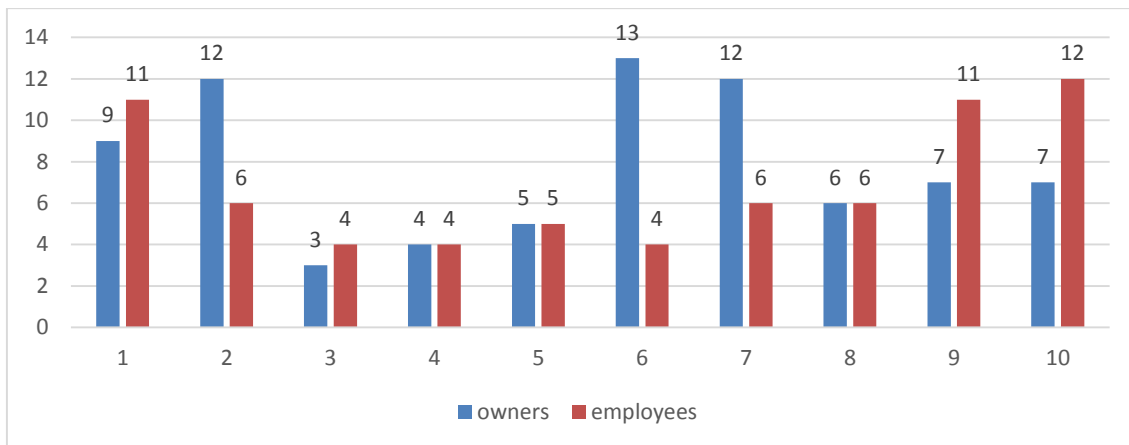


**Figure 10.** Assessment of the possibility of conducting negotiations with the company in the opinion of company owners and employees.

Source: Own study based on conducted research.

The ability to negotiate is more important for larger business entities. Employees of companies who are responsible for contacts with the courier company emphasize the importance of conducting negotiations or, as in the case of 11 other employees, they place this possibility at level 1, and 9 others at level 2.

Not all entities from the TSL industry offer the possibility of managing the company's supply chain. This is a modern solution that guarantees the company the consistency of orders, quality assurance and all other aspects related to order processing and transport (figure 11).

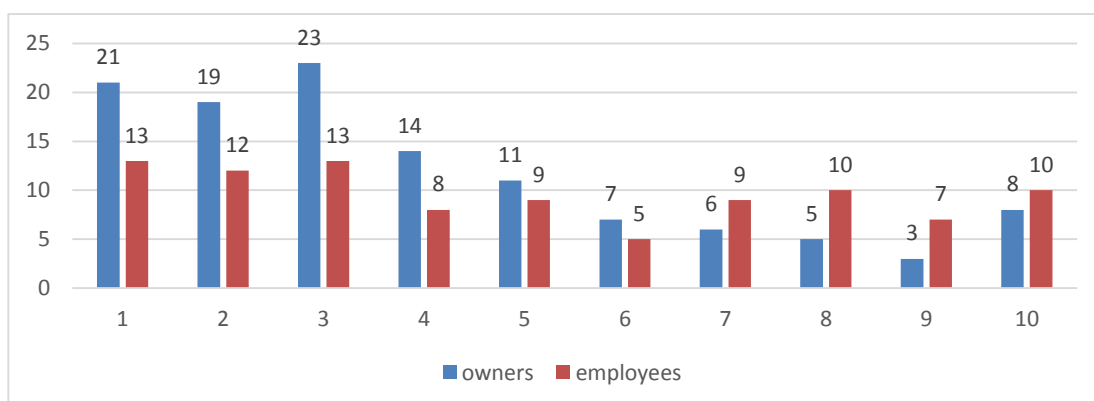


**Figure 11.** Assessment of supply chain management opportunities offered by the company in the opinion of company owners and employees.

Source: Own study based on conducted research.

The opportunity offered by the courier company under study, i.e. the implementation of the supply chain, is largely appreciated primarily by the company's employees. These are probably people professionally involved in logistics organization. There are also business owners who are not particularly interested in organizing the supply chain and for this reason they have certainly not decided to cooperate with the surveyed company. This factor determined the cooperation between company representatives.

The examined courier company is an organization operating all over the world. Provides services worldwide. It has all the solutions in terms of organizing transport, forwarding and logistics. There are no places that would be unavailable to the company that received the order from the client (figure 12).

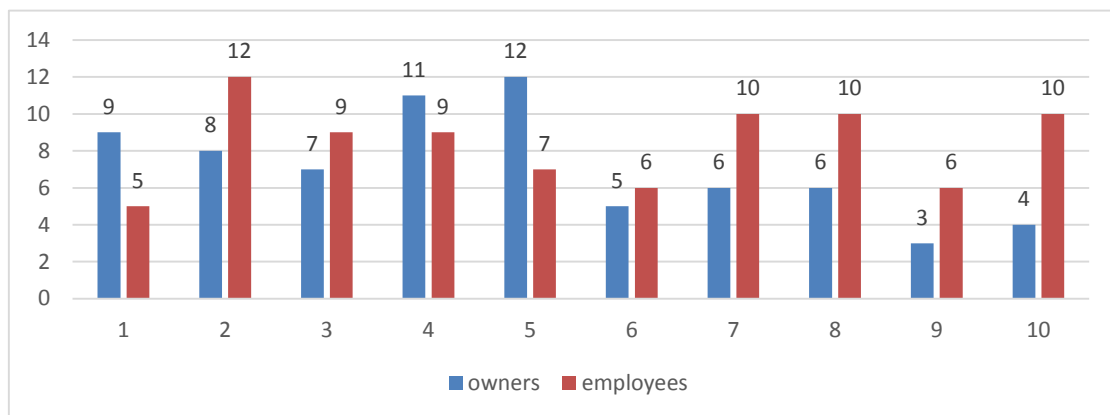


**Figure 12.** Assessing the importance of the global nature of the brand and the ability to complete orders regardless of location.

Source: Own study based on conducted research.

The fact that the examined courier company is an entity that can reach many places around the world and is an international company is important for a relatively small number of respondents. It seems that today it is standard that the shipment should reach the place he planned.

An important element of running a business is the issue of formal aspects of its operation. Formal issues are often problems that can be eliminated by outsourcing accounting and documentation to external entities (figure 13).



**Figure 13.** Assessment of the implementation of all formal aspects of order organization.

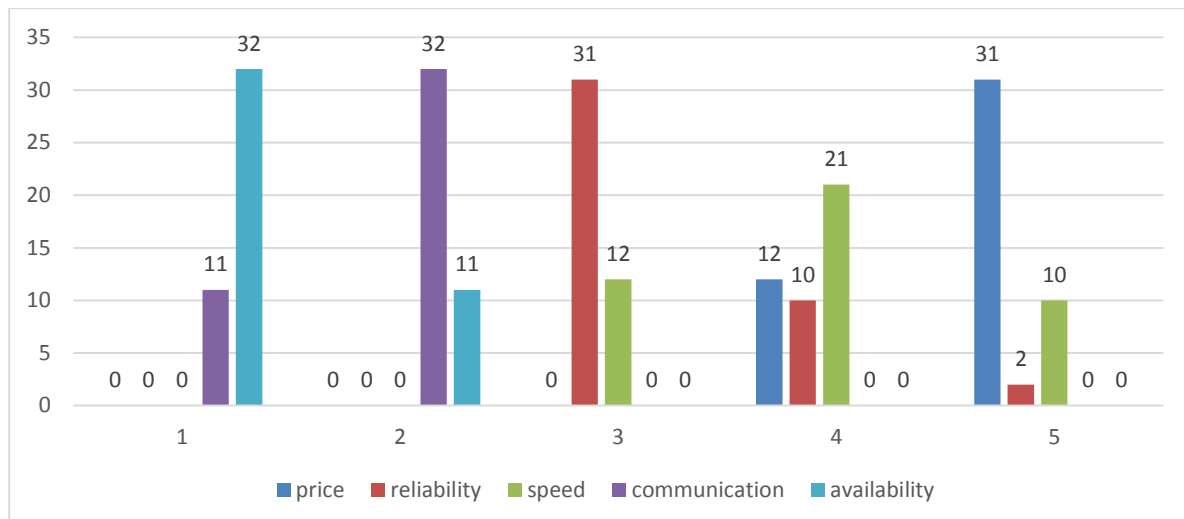
Source: Own study based on conducted research.

For 14 respondents, the ability of the surveyed unit to handle all administrative procedures was the most important factor. These are mainly employees of companies who, when deciding to cooperate with a network operator, expect a complete and comprehensive offer.

It is also worth mentioning that respondents had the opportunity to add a comment to the question. Three surveyed company employees wrote that the fact that they cooperate with the surveyed company results from a previously signed contract and was not influenced by the survey participant.

According to the respondents, the most valued features of the surveyed company are: price, speed of order fulfillment, and then the ability to manage the supply chain, the company's reach, and the ability to negotiate. The possibility of using solutions dedicated to the company, and right behind this indication there is the possibility of implementing formal aspects. The fewest answers were given to communication and flexibility. The indications with the lowest value for the survey participants were also summarized - 1. These factors do not influence the decisions made regarding the selection of a transport organizer. The answer with the lowest number of responses was that the surveyed company offers solutions dedicated strictly to companies. The company's global response also received few responses. As already mentioned, it seems that this is rather a standard in today's reality. The ability to negotiate and manage the supply chain was rated at the lowest level by 43 study participants. The lowest responses were given to price, communication, speed and flexibility.

The next question that will be analyzed was asked to individual customers who were asked to answer the factors determining the choice of the examined company as a courier company. The answers provided by individual customers are included in figure 14.

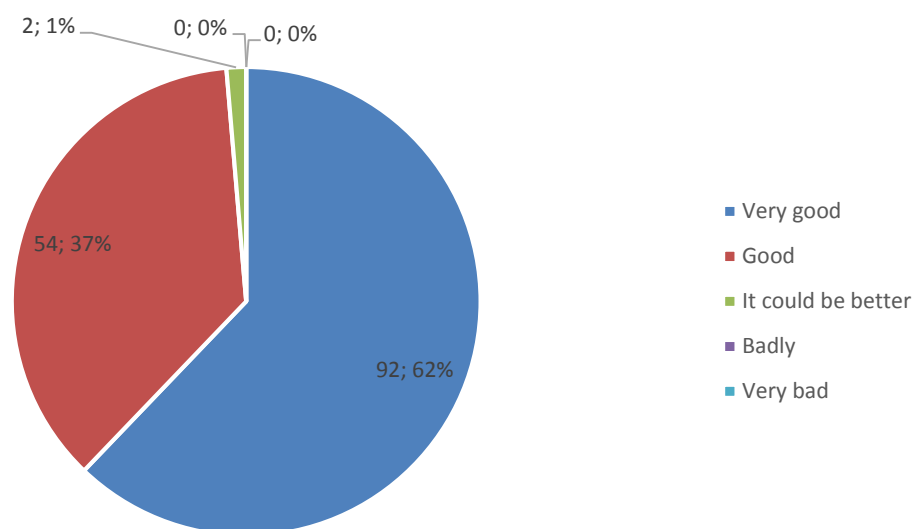


**Figure 14.** Factors determining the choice of a courier company for individual customers.

Source: Own study based on conducted research.

The respondents' answers are quite clear. They show that for individual customers, the most important thing is the price, followed by the speed of order fulfillment and reliability. The least important factor is availability, followed by communication.

One of the questions attempted to find out what subjective feelings accompany the process of order fulfillment by the courier company. A Likert scale was used in the study. The respondents had the opportunity to choose one of the indications. The course of the transaction itself is assessed. The answers are presented in figure 15.



**Figure 15.** Subjective assessment of the order execution proces.

Source: Own study based on conducted research.

The study results are quite clear. 62% of survey participants believe that the order was completed at the highest level. Another 37% of survey participants gave the correct answer. 1% of the respondents (two people) thought that the order fulfillment could be better.

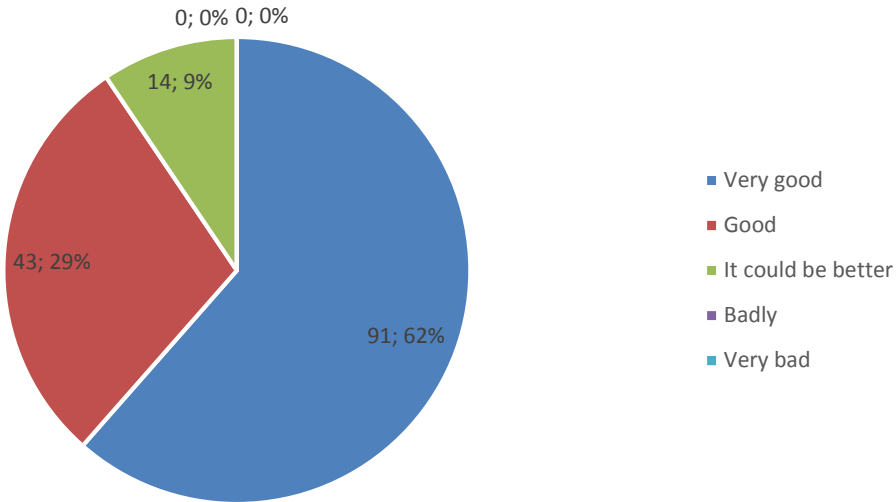


Figure 16. Assessment of the timeliness of order execution.

Source: Own study based on conducted research.

Time is an important factor not only for entrepreneurs, but also for every person. In today's reality, time determines many activities. It is a valuable good for probably every person living in the 21st century. The respondents also value their time 62% of survey participants rate the timeliness of the delivery by the surveyed company as being at the highest level 29% of survey participants rate the timely delivery as good. The remaining 9% of respondents believe that the timeliness of deliveries could be better.

Another factor examined are the costs of delivery by the surveyed company. The question about costs was asked to all respondents, which means that it was answered by both company employees, business owners and individual customers. The results are presented in figure 17.

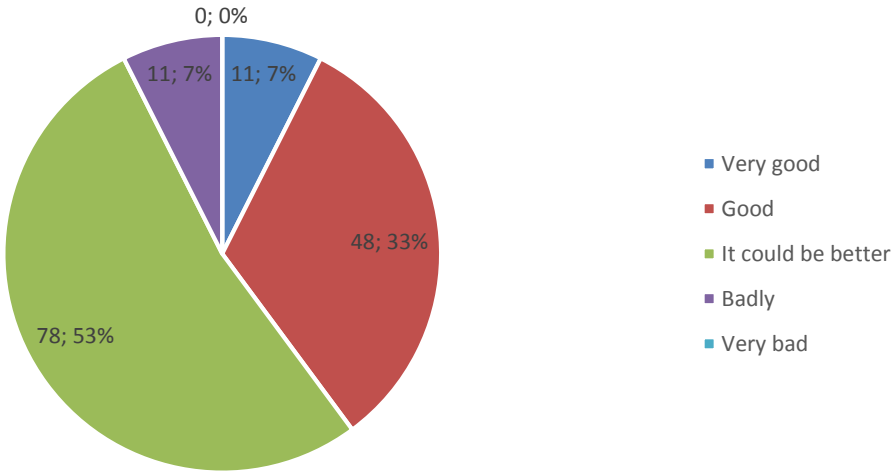
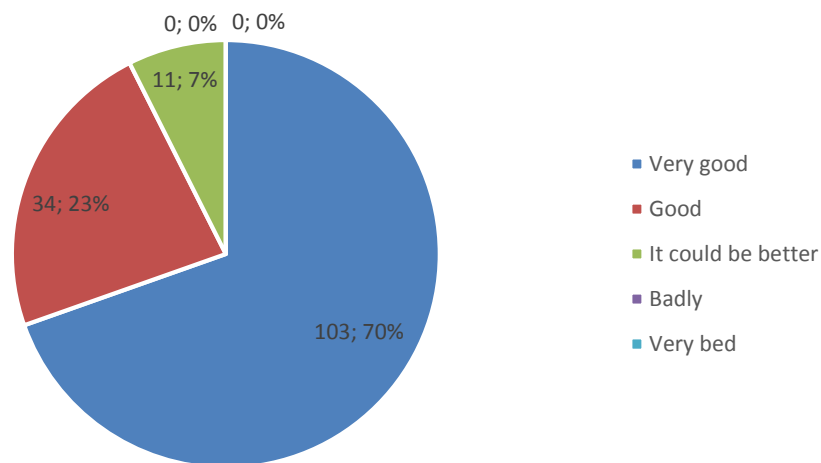


Figure 17. Assessment of the costs incurred in providing the service by the surveyed organization.

Source: Own study based on conducted research.

The issue of costs generated by order fulfillment no longer looks so optimistic in customer opinions. 53% of respondents, i.e. more than half, indicated the answer - it could be better 33% believe that the costs associated with order processing are good. The same number, i.e. 7% of the answers, indicated – bad and very good. Therefore, it seems that in terms of costs, the examined organization is not the cheapest entity. Therefore, non-financial factors must play a role.

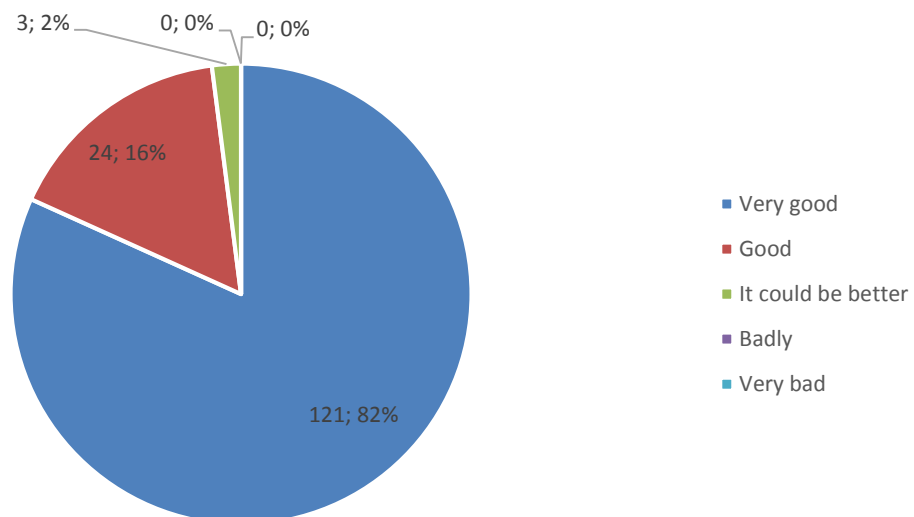
Another element asked in the survey is the assessment of the level of transaction reliability. The results of the survey participants are presented in figure 18.



**Figure 18.** Assessment of the level of reliability of the company in the opinion of respondents.

Source: Own study based on conducted research.

The company's assessment in terms of service prices was, to say the least, surprising. When assessing the level of reliability of a company, as many as 70% of respondents believe it is very good. 23% said it was very good, and the remaining 7% of respondents thought it could be better. Therefore, this is definitely a strong point of the organization.



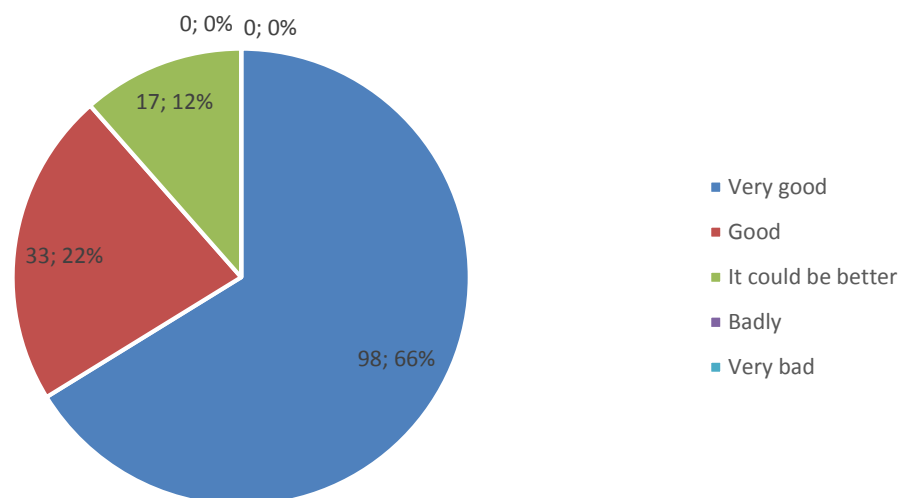
**Figure 19.** Assessment of service implementation in terms of flexibility.

Source: Own study based on conducted research.

The service was highly rated in terms of flexibility. 82% of respondents have no reservations regarding flexibility 16% think it is good, and 2% of respondents think it could be better.

The company therefore performs well in terms of flexibility in the opinion of customers or contractors (figure 19).

The quality of service also includes the so-called soft skills possessed by the company's staff. survey participants were asked about the level of communication and competences possessed by the organization's employees (figure 20).

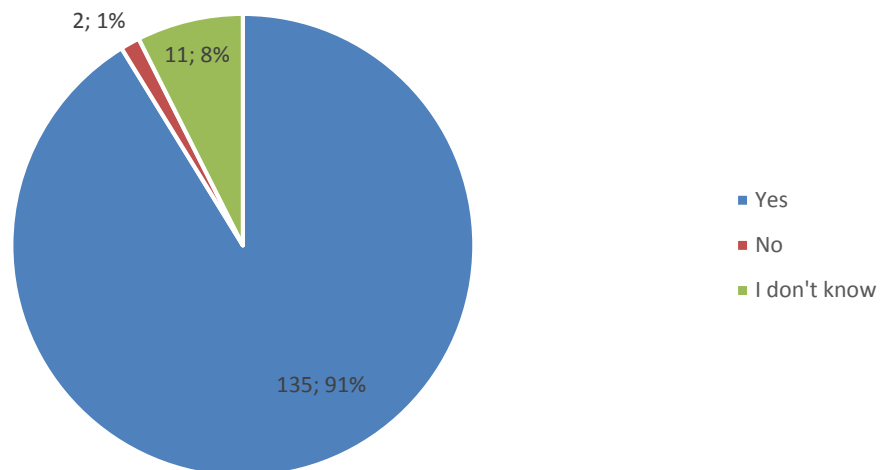


**Figure 20.** Assessment of the level of communication and competence of the organization's staff.

Source: Own study based on conducted research.

The analysis of the conducted research shows that the assessment of the level of communication and competences of the company's employees could be better. 66% believe that it is at the highest level, but 12% of respondents think that it could be better in terms of communication.

An important question was regarding the willingness to use the company's offer in the future, the results are included in figure 21.



**Figure 21.** Declaration of willingness to use the company's offer.

Source: Own study based on conducted research.

The vast majority, 91% of survey participants, declare their willingness to use the company's offer again. Two respondents deny this and 8% of others have not made a decision yet. The research produced interesting results that can be successfully used in the organization when designing further activities regarding management strategy and those factors that play a crucial role.

### 3. End

Logistics customer service is an element of an organization's activity that may determine the company's market position. Modern customers are people aware of their needs. There is no problem with data availability and information on dealing with specific matters and solving problems. The market is saturated with entities providing various services. The TSL industry, along with the KEP market, are particularly developing. Customers can choose from offers from parcel delivery companies. There may be various factors that determine the choice of this or that company.



In the conducted research, attempts were made to reach as wide a group of various types of customers as possible. A selected courier company was chosen, which has a very wide offer addressed to enterprises. At the same time, it provides parcel transport services for individual customers. It was therefore assumed that they would participate in the study both representatives of business entities and individual clients. Assumptions were achieved. The study participants were divided into individual business owners and employees of enterprises.

The aim of the study was achieved. The respondents' opinions on logistic customer service in the case of a specific business entity were determined. The level of logistic customer service was rated very high. The vast majority of customers stated that the execution of orders was satisfactory and at an appropriate level in their opinion.

The research problem posed in the study was the assessment of the reliability of the service provided in the examined enterprise. It was very satisfactory in the eyes of customers. A similarly good opinion about the company was expressed in terms of service flexibility. The level of product availability was also highly rated. According to the company's customers, the communication and competences of the service staff are at an appropriate level. Respondents had reservations about the prices offered by the company. However, when asked about their willingness to use its services in the future, a very large percentage of respondents declared. Interesting results were obtained by analyzing the opinions of the study participants, who were divided into three groups. Individual customers appreciated prices, delivery time and reliability the most. Communication and availability of the offer were less important to them. In the case of entrepreneurs running their own businesses, similar indications were the most important. If company employees were surveyed, it can be seen that solutions intended for companies are important to them, i.e. organizing the supply chain, dealing with formal issues or any other solutions dedicated to companies. Each of the surveyed groups has different priorities in this regard. However, the most important observation is the high assessment of logistic customer service in the surveyed company and the willingness of respondents to continue to use its offer.

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