

New UK technology aims to solve problems of lost and damaged parcels

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Parcel carriers can now better understand not only the exact location of parcels, but also how the parcel is handled in transit, its condition and even whether it has been opened, with the launch of ParceLive, the latest technology from Hanhaa.

Last year saw a 15.7% rise in the volume of online retail parcels, with the e-logistics sector dispatching a record 1.065bn, and the total number of UK parcels sent is expected to reach 2.3bn by 2023. Figures for lost parcels are less readily available, but complaints to the Royal Mail alone reached almost three quarters of a million (732,869) in 2014/15, of which more than a third (251,892) were as a result of loss or damage .

ParceLive is set to change this, by revolutionising how parcels are monitored from pick-up through to delivery, and allowing carriers to see exactly where parcels are, what's happened to them and the external conditions, for example levels of humidity, through the use of the latest sensors.

Should carriers wish to, ParceLive can also allow customers to track the exact location and condition of their parcel anywhere in the world. It works via a device that is scanned and inserted into the parcel at its point of distribution by the sender.

ParceLive will then report back if the parcel containing the device has been dropped, opened, got wet, been tilted too much or remained in one place for too long.

In early trials, Hanhaa found that its ParceLive location data was much more accurate and detailed than that of the carriers it had used to send its packages. So much so that, in several cases, parcels were actually in an entirely different country to the location reported by the carrier's tracking website.

Azhar Hussain, founder and CEO of Hanhaa, said: "We all know that there's a risk items may get lost or broken in transit. ParceLive doesn't stop that, but it does make dealing with the issue far easier by providing transparency and accountability. We call this clarity, 'truth at scale' and it means that companies using our service will have a major head-start over competitors in three key areas: customer service, dispute resolution and network optimization."

Improvements in customer service will be driven by the fact that carriers have a closer relationship with the parcel, and can offer customers access to more accurate data. Where there is a dispute, rather than relying on hearsay, often resulting in companies simply swallowing the costs, these can now be resolved based upon real data.

Underpinning this, company networks can now be vastly improved because weak points or points at which damage or losses are occurring can be easily identified and improved.

In addition, as a parcel tracking service, rather than a product, the devices are simply "rented" and returned by users once the parcel is received, enabling costs to be kept low.

ParceLive technology is currently available with further upgrades to the functionality planned for release in the autumn.