

Collect parcels 24/7 at SingPost lockers

Free service available at five locations currently

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FRUSTRATED with having the postman deliver parcels when no one is at home? That may soon be a thing of the past, with Singapore Post (SingPost) set to launch an automated delivery locker system that lets customers receive their parcels round the clock.

Dubbed PopStation (Pick Own Parcel Station), the free service has been available since last month to select users of its vPost service, which helps online shoppers buy items from overseas.

Measuring 7m by 2m – or about the size of a utility room – each PopStation comes with about 80 lockers of various sizes.

There are currently five PopStations. They are located at the Paya Lebar, Bishan, Sengkang and Tanglin post offices, and at the National University of Singapore.

When a parcel is ready for collection, customers will get an e-mail or text message with a code. Users just need to go to the PopStation they had selected, scan the code and a locker containing their package will pop open.

The trial also involved select bulky mail customers such as blogshop owners. Customers who buy from these blogshop owners get a delivery advisory in their mailbox telling them which PopStation has their parcel.

SingPost had plans to roll out up to 100 of the locker systems, which are built by Australian company TZ Limited, across the island by next year. It has invited the public's feedback on where they would like additional PopStations to be located.

Even before the official announcement of the service next Tuesday, frequent online shoppers are excited about the new delivery option.

Finance manager Serene Lee, 38, said she ships online purchases to her mother's home as no one is at her own home to receive the goods. Besides providing her an alternative shipping address, the lockers will provide "some privacy" from other family members, she said.

Pre-school teacher Jasmine Kaur, 28, said she does not have to observe the opening hours of the post office any more.

"Being able to collect my parcels 24/7 is good," she added. She hopes that SingPost will extend the service to popular e-retail sites such as South Korea's Qoo10 and Britain's Asos.

Mr Seshan Ramaswami, associate professor of marketing at the Singapore Management University, believes the new service will have "a ready set of consumers" as it meets a pressing need of many Singaporeans.

"As with any retail service, a critical factor is the location of the PopStations. If they are easily

accessible to most consumers, then the service will do very well," he said.

Parcels that exceed the maximum size of the locker – 42cm by 50.5cm by 61cm – will be redirected to a designated post office. Parcels that are not collected within five days will also be sent there, with customers notified via an e-mail message.

In 2011, SingPost delivered an average of 3.7 million parcels a month, up from 3.3 million in 2010 and 2.4 million in 2009 – a trend it attributed to the popularity of blogshops and online shopping.

Delivery lockers like the PopStation are already available in Europe.

E-retailer Amazon.com is rolling out its own delivery lockers in some of the biggest cities in the United States, as well as in London.

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The PopStations – or Pick Own Parcel Stations – come with about 80 lockers of various sizes each. They are located at the Paya Lebar, Bishan, Sengkang and Tanglin post offices, and at the National University of Singapore. ST PHOTO: CHEW SENG KIM