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Keeping Portugal connected

How CTT has supported citizens and businesses during COVID-19

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As Portugal emerges from the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, the country has earned international respect for the way in which it has managed the emergency. The Portuguese Post (CTT) has played an important role in the national response throughout the crisis, and has been central in keeping citizens and businesses connected.

As soon as the crisis struck, CTT set about implementing a series of initiatives essential to the sustainability of the economy and everyday life. The safety of customers and staff was a priority at all times.

These crisis-adapted solutions were based either on existing services, which were adjusted to the emerging needs by CTT and its public and private sector partners, or on new services.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

During the COVID-19 pandemic, CTT has been pulling out all the stops to fully accomplish its mission of keeping citizens and businesses connected in response to the enormous challenges posed by the crisis.

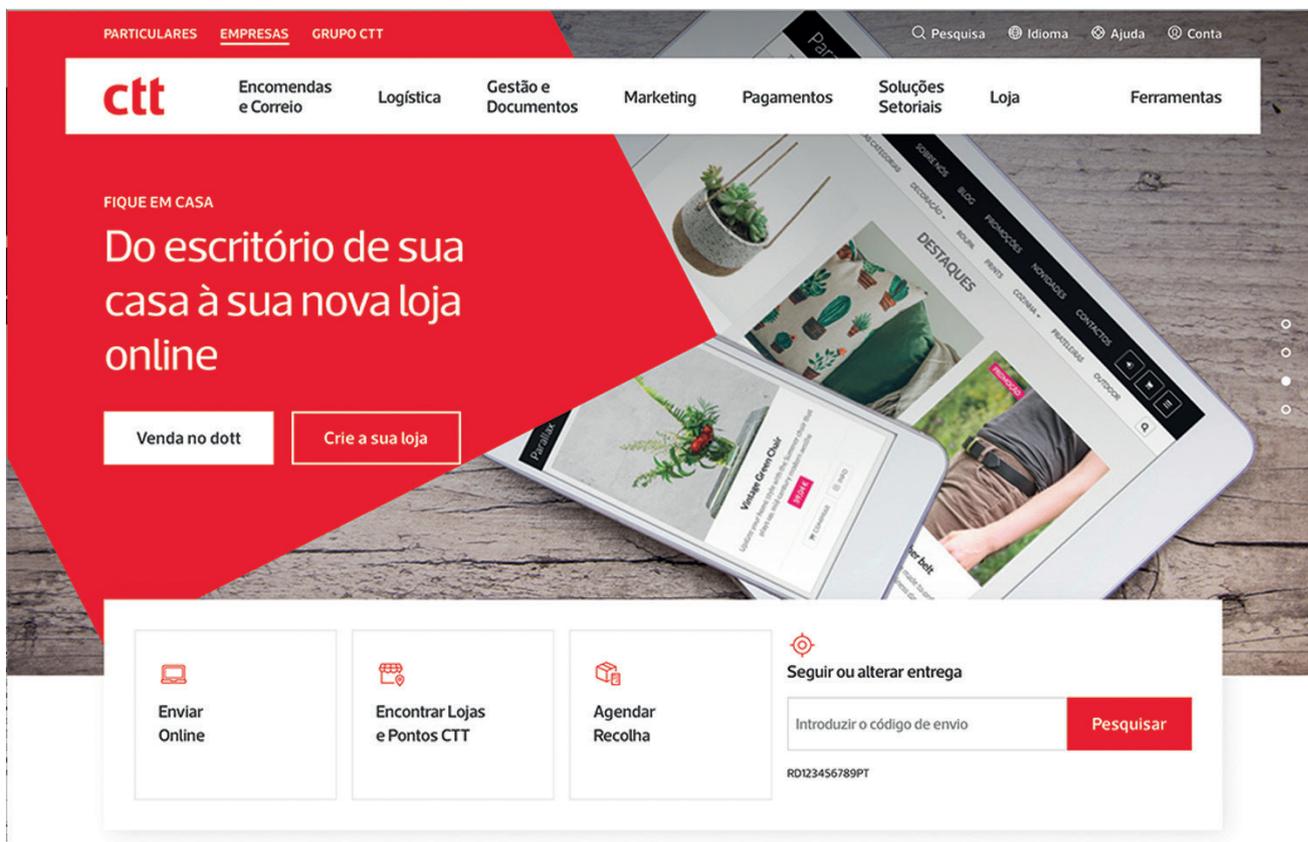
Since the beginning of the pandemic, while endeavoring to ensure the security of its customers and staff, CTT has been implementing a series of initiatives that contribute to the sustainability of the Portuguese economy and society.

From the start of the crisis, CTT strictly observed and implemented all government instructions and recommendations, in particular those issued by the Direção Geral de Saúde (Health Department of the Ministry of Health). Additionally, it created teams reporting directly to management, namely the crisis and communications management offices centralizing all crisis-related activities. It should be emphasized that the communications activities were essential.

From the outset of COVID-19, in an effort to ensure the security and well-being of Portuguese pensioners,

who constitute one of the highest risk segments of the population, CTT reorganized its operations in close cooperation with the public pension payment institution, the entity for which CTT distributes and pays pensions, and the Health Department. To avoid this high-risk population needing to leave home, the issue and delivery of payment orders was carefully planned with deliveries being rescheduled to certain days and payments extended over several days. Post office opening hours were also extended to facilitate the payment of pension money orders. The service for the payment of money orders at home by postal delivery staff was promoted among the pensioner population. For this service, based on the information provided by its delivery staff and post offices, CTT selected certain high-risk pensioners for doorstep delivery of pensions at no extra cost.

In addition, to enable Portuguese citizens to continue to have access to services offered by CTT without needing to displace themselves to a post office, CTT introduced an option for customers to call or write (by e-mail or letter) to their nearest post office for insurance or treasury bond subscriptions.



In the interest of the security and well-being of its customers, CTT and its postal bank (Banco CTT) launched “Sem Filas” (“No Queue”) on 7 May 2020, a mobile app allowing users to avoid unnecessary contact with the outside world during the COVID-19 pandemic. Sem Filas provides users with access to real-time information on current waiting times at CTT’s post offices and its postal bank. It does so by sharing information about other users in a given queue, thereby allowing people to avoid contact with too many other people and reducing exposure to COVID-19. Thus far, this app has allowed 80,000 users to choose the best time to use post office services or do their shopping, and has provided 10,000 queue reports via its connection with over 20,000 outlets.

Businesses have been able to continue to operate by using various existing CTT digital services allowing them to benefit from a series of discounts and special conditions put in place since the start of the pandemic. These services include logistics and advertising solutions, changes to postal addresses (redirecting mail), round-the-clock lockers (point of delivery and collection), same-day express service (delivery within two hours in Lisbon, Oporto, Braga, Aveiro, Coimbra, towns and cities of the Algarve, and Funchal), online mail production (printing of envelopes for letter post), ViaCTT (management of digital mail, sending of electronic invoices and receipt of payments); creation of online shops (sale of products), and Marketplace Dott (online marketplace).

Private customers have also been able to adopt digital services at a lower cost during the crisis, allowing them to send and receive letter post and parcels from their own homes – online mail service (Iberian peninsula and

international, with home collection), same-day express service (delivery within two hours in Lisbon, Oporto, Braga, Aveiro, Coimbra, towns and cities of the Algarve, and Funchal), changes to postal addresses (redirecting of domestic mail), changes to deliveries (formerly SIGA), round-the-clock lockers (point of collection and delivery), and CTT online shop.

DIGITAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES

CTT has established new partnerships with various entities, such as CCP (the Portuguese Confederation of Commerce and Services) and CEVAL (the Alto Minho Business Confederation), to support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in their efforts to access CTT’s digital solutions, particularly its Criar Lojas Online (Creating Online Shops) service, which has allowed SMEs to speed up their digitalization processes.

CTT and OLX (online exchange), a global online marketplace, strengthened their partnership by launching “Envios Online”, an online service for door-to-door delivery of products (OLX categories of articles and subcategory of parts and accessories, weighing up to 10 kilogrammes) was launched on 7 May 2020. Envios Online provides customers of the classified advertising platform with faster, smoother and more secure transactions at a special price. The collection and delivery of the items transacted is done without the seller or purchaser needing to leave their home, and the platform allows for next-day delivery.

In addition, CTT and Marketplace Dott have joined forces with Edubox to support pupils with their home learning, through a service offering computers and educational materials. Marketplace Dott makes two models of computers, educational books and other

home study materials (complementing remote schooling) available for sale in “Educação Virtual” (Virtual Education), which was created especially for this purpose, while CTT acts as an intermediary, provides the logistics, and delivers the materials to Portuguese households.

The first online “DOP (protected designation of origin) Cheese Fair” was organized in partnership with Marketplace Dott and the Inter-municipal Community of the Region of Coimbra, as public gatherings were banned, which constitutes another example of the support that CTT is providing to the economy and functioning of society. Combining tradition with technology, small cheese manufacturers were able to utilize this digital platform to showcase and sell their products. CTT contributed to the effort by providing the logistics as well as home delivery for the products purchased.

Another partnership, to support the Portuguese health department, was the one established with Hovione, which enabled the production and free delivery of SABA, an antiseptic alcohol-based solution provided to fire brigades, retirement homes, IPSS (social welfare organizations) and other institutions. The disinfectant was manufactured by Hovione and packaged by CTT, which also delivered it to the various entities.

A partnership was established with the ANF (National Association of Pharmacies) for the launch of a new service allowing citizens to have medicine delivered to their home, also under the auspices of the Portuguese Health Department. CTT collected and transported some 500 cubic meters of medical protective equipment (masks, gloves and overalls) originating from China (People’s Rep.). The load, which was transported in eight TIR trucks, was delivered to the appropriate authorities and hospitals in response to the national emergency.

CTT shops are also selling ASM-level-2-certified surgical masks, as well as 70% alcohol disinfectant gel, in order to minimize the need for citizens to leave their homes to purchase these essential goods. For business customers, CTT is facilitating the purchase of various items of protective equipment, such as surgical masks, protective goggles and face shields, acrylic protections for service counters, and fixed and portable temperature measurement systems.

The above are all examples of the unstinting effort put in by CTT in the face of adversity, and CTT is proud to say that it provides full-on delivery in every sense of the word!

CONCLUSIONS

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, CTT reacted quickly to the emerging needs of the Portuguese population, which faced a new situation of restricted movement and a shortage of daily commodities. CTT supported the public in withdrawing cash and making purchases, and businesses in continuing to supplying customers, regardless of the closure of their physical shops.

The following factors appear to have been important to the apparent success of these initiatives:

- CTT’s active and strict collaboration with partners and government entities such as the Portuguese Health Department, which was charged by the government with leading the crisis management;
- Knowledge of its customers and their needs; CTT already had a close and valued relationship with Portuguese citizens through the distribution of pension payments, etc. Here a good example was to rely on the citizen knowledge of delivery staff and post offices to pre-select certain high-risk pensioners for the home delivery of pensions;
- CTT’s good overall organization and ability to organize and leverage its teams and expert knowledge;
- Capacity to innovate but also to leverage existing products and services – from pension payments and digital services, such as Dott, to social support in the areas of health and education;
- CTT’s capacity to make best use of the available tools (e.g. use of e-mail, letter or telephone for insurance and treasury bond subscriptions), as apps were not accessible to all. By doing so, CTT enabled citizens to access these services from home without exposing themselves to potential contamination, but also helped to keep businesses running by ensuring the sale of their products and services. This last example could also be useful in a non-crisis situation, in which DFS solutions are not in place, and/or to reach the mobile phone-excluded population with a vast variety of products and services – simple solutions with significant impact;
- Good communications and a strong marketing team; and
- Trust of customers and partners, both private and public/government entities.