Simulation-Based Post Operation Distribution Optimization using AnyLogic

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Abstract: Efficient post-warehouse operations are crucial for timely mail distribution, especially in large-scale logistics networks. Inefficiencies in sorting and classification can cause delays, raise operational costs, and create downstream bottlenecks. This study presents an AnyLogic-based simulation model to optimize classification processes by improving sorting efficiency, queue management, and resource allocation. The model replicates real-world operations and evaluates different configurations, including manual, semi-automated, and fully automated systems. Key performance indicators—such as sorting time per parcel, queue length, and worker utilization—are analyzed to identify inefficiencies and recommend improvements. Results show that automation and dynamic workforce allocation significantly boost processing speed and efficiency. Furthermore, queue optimization methods like FIFO-based sorting and automated prioritization enhance throughput. The study demonstrates the value of simulation-based decision-making in warehouse logistics and offers practical strategies for optimizing operations, improving service reliability, and reducing costs.

Keywords: Post Automation, Post Simulation, AnyLogic, Material Handling Simulation

1. INTRODUCTION

Postal warehouse operations are a critical component of modern logistics, responsible for sorting and classifying incoming and outgoing parcels efficiently. The effectiveness of these operations directly impacts delivery times, operational costs, and overall service quality. In recent years, with the exponential growth of e-commerce and international trade, the volume of parcels processed in post warehouses has surged, necessitating advanced methods for optimizing warehouse workflows. However, despite technological advancements, many postal warehouses still suffer from inefficiencies due to outdated sorting systems, labor-intensive workflows, and static resource allocation.

A primary challenge in post warehouse operations is the sorting and classification process. This process involves receiving, scanning, categorizing, and dispatching parcels based on various parameters such as size, weight, destination, and priority level. In large-scale postal networks, inefficient sorting can lead to long queues, increased processing time, and unnecessary operational costs. Delays in this stage propagate throughout the entire logistics chain, affecting end customers and increasing financial strain on postal service providers. Additionally, unpredictable parcel arrival patterns, workforce limitations, and machine downtime further exacerbate these inefficiencies.

Traditionally, postal warehouses have relied on manual or semi-automated sorting systems. In these systems, workers handle parcel classification manually or with minimal

mechanical assistance, leading to inconsistent processing rates and human error. The reliance on static sorting stations and rigid workflow structures creates bottlenecks during peak periods, reducing overall system efficiency. Even in warehouses with automated sorting systems, the lack of dynamic optimization in resource allocation and queue management remains a significant issue.

Simulation modeling has emerged as a powerful tool for analyzing and optimizing warehouse operations without disrupting real-world processes. By developing a detailed simulation model in AnyLogic, we can replicate the real-world dynamics of a post warehouse, allowing us to test different strategies for improving classification efficiency. Unlike traditional spreadsheet-based analysis, simulation provides a dynamic and interactive representation of warehouse operations, enabling the identification of inefficiencies and the testing of alternative workflow designs under realistic conditions.

This research focuses on using AnyLogic to optimize the sorting and classification process within a post warehouse environment. The primary objective is to identify the key bottlenecks in the existing workflow and propose optimization strategies that enhance throughput, reduce queue lengths, and improve worker and machine utilization. The study will explore different configurations, including manual, semi-automated, and fully automated sorting systems, and evaluate their impact on overall efficiency. Additionally, the research will assess the effects of real-time adaptive decision-making in warehouse management, such as dynamic workforce allocation and queue optimization strategies.

By leveraging discrete-event simulation (DES) and agent-based modeling (ABM) in AnyLogic, we can develop a comprehensive model that captures both individual worker interactions and system-wide performance dynamics. This hybrid approach enables us to evaluate how different variables—such as parcel arrival rates, sorting speed, and worker shift patterns—interact to affect overall warehouse efficiency.

The findings of this study will provide valuable insights for postal service providers, logistics managers, and policymakers seeking to enhance warehouse operations. The results will demonstrate how simulation-based decision-making can lead to cost savings, faster processing times, and improved service reliability. Ultimately, the proposed optimization strategies could serve as a foundation for future advancements in automated post warehouse management.

In the subsequent sections, we will delve into existing literature on warehouse optimization, the development of the AnyLogic simulation model, experimental design, and performance evaluation metrics. Through simulation-based experimentation, we aim to provide actionable recommendations that can be implemented in real-world post warehouses to enhance operational efficiency and service quality.

1.1 Research Problem

Despite technological advancements, many postal warehouses still struggle with inefficiencies in sorting and classification. These inefficiencies stem from various operational challenges, including: Manual classification processes are time-consuming, especially when dealing with large parcel volumes; Unoptimized workflows lead to long queues at sorting stations, delaying mail processing; Suboptimal worker and machine utilization result in unnecessary operational costs; Manual processes introduce a risk of misclassification, leading to misplaced or delayed parcels; and Traditional warehouses follow rigid sorting patterns, making it difficult to adjust in response to fluctuating parcel volumes.

These challenges highlight the need for a systematic optimization approach that enhances sorting efficiency while ensuring scalability in high-demand environments.

1.2 Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to optimize post warehouse sorting and classification operations using simulation-based techniques in AnyLogic. Specifically, the research aims to:

- Develop an AnyLogic-based simulation model that replicates a post warehouse sorting facility.
- Identify key bottlenecks in the sorting and classification process.
- Analyze different workflow configurations, including manual, semi-automated, and fully automated sorting systems.
- Optimize queue management and resource allocation to reduce sorting time and improve throughput.
- Evaluate the impact of dynamic decision-making on warehouse efficiency, particularly in real-time workforce and machine allocation.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will be valuable for logistics managers, postal service providers, and policymakers seeking to improve warehouse operations. The study offers the following contributions:

- Improved Sorting Efficiency: By identifying optimal classification workflows, this research helps warehouses reduce processing time and increase throughput.
- Cost Reduction: Automation and dynamic resource allocation lower operational costs associated with labor-intensive sorting.
- Scalability and Adaptability: The research explores adaptive decision-making strategies that allow warehouses to adjust operations dynamically based on mail volume fluctuations.
- Evidence-Based Decision-Making: The use of simulation modeling enables decision-makers to test and validate optimization strategies before real-world implementation, minimizing risk and costly trial-and-error approaches.

With the continuous rise in e-commerce-driven parcel volumes, optimizing post warehouse classification has become a critical priority. The study's insights will support the transition towards intelligent, technology-driven warehouse operations, ensuring efficient, timely, and cost-effective mail distribution.

1.4 Literature Review and Research Gap

Recent studies have examined simulation-based optimization in warehouse logistics. For example, Sobottka et al. (2017) applied simulation and optimization in production planning, while Legato et al. (2022) modeled event-based order picking. Abideen and Mohamad (2021) integrated value stream mapping and simulation in supply chains. However, these studies often focus on general logistics or production rather than post-warehouse classification. Moreover, few studies simulate automated dynamic queue management in a postal context using AnyLogic. This research fills that gap by evaluating automation-supported sorting strategies under real-world assumptions.

Table 1. Comparative Literature Review

Study	Domain	Method	Contribution
Sobottka et al.	Production	Simulation	+ Scenario-based planning

(2017)	logistics	Optimization	framework
Legato et al. (2022)	Order picking	Event-based modeling	Scheduling optimization in warehouse
Abideen & Mohamad (2021)	Pharma warehouse	DES + Value Stream Mapping	Practical improvement in SC logistics
This Study	Postal warehouse	DES + AI queue logic	AI-driven parcel prioritization using simulation

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 AnyLogic Simulation Model Development

To analyze and optimize the post warehouse classification process, this study develops a discrete-event simulation (DES) model in AnyLogic. AnyLogic allows for flexible modeling of warehouse operations, enabling the evaluation of different classification strategies under realistic conditions. The simulation model is designed to mimic real-world post warehouse operations, incorporating factors such as mail arrival patterns, sorting station capacities, worker efficiency, and queue dynamics.

The warehouse classification system consists of the following key components:

- Mail Arrival Process: Parcels arrive at the warehouse following a predefined probability distribution (e.g., Poisson or exponential inter-arrival times) based on real-world mail flow data.
- Sorting Stations: Mail items pass through manual, semi-automated, or fully automated sorting stations, each with different processing speeds and efficiency levels.
- Queue Management: A priority queue system manages parcels, allowing comparisons between First-In-First-Out (FIFO), priority-based sorting, and AI-driven dynamic queue management.
- Resource Allocation: Workers and sorting machines are dynamically assigned based on mail volume and system congestion.
- Parcel Departure: After classification, parcels are dispatched to designated transportation units or distribution zones.

In Scenario 4, 'automated dynamic queue management' refers to a machine learning-based priority scheduler that reorders parcel service dynamically. A regression model, trained on synthetic parcel data, predicts delay risk and prioritizes urgent parcels accordingly.

A flowchart representation of the simulation model is depicted in Figure 1, detailing each component's interactions within the warehouse system.

The simulation model represents the operational processes of a warehouse mail processing system. The model begins with the Mail Arrival Process, where parcels arrive at the warehouse according to a probabilistic distribution, such as a Poisson or exponential inter-arrival time distribution, based on real-world mail flow data. Upon arrival, parcels proceed to Sorting Stations, which may be manual, semi-automated, or fully automated. Each type of station operates at different processing speeds and efficiency levels. Queue Management is employed to manage the flow of parcels, utilizing priority-based systems that allow for comparisons between First-In-First-Out (FIFO) queues, priority sorting, and AI-driven dynamic queue management approaches. Resource Allocation is dynamically adjusted, assigning workers and sorting machines based on real-time mail volume and system congestion. Once parcels are classified, they move to the Parcel Departure stage, where they are dispatched to

designated transportation units or distribution zones. A flowchart diagram illustrating the simulation model is provided in Figure 1, which details the interactions between each component within the warehouse system. The diagram includes modules representing the parcel source, queuing stages, delay processes, sorting services, and final dispatch points. The simulation is developed using both real-world data and assumed operational conditions to ensure practical relevance while enabling controlled experimental analysis. The primary input parameters are summarized in Table 1. The Mail Arrival Rate is estimated to range from 200 to 500 parcels per hour, based on actual warehouse observations. The Sorting Time for Manual Processing is assumed to range between 15 to 20 seconds per parcel, reflecting standard labor practices. The Sorting Time for Automated Processing is assumed to be between 5 to 10 seconds per parcel, based on the performance of automated sorting systems. These parameters serve as the basis for evaluating the efficiency and performance of different configurations within the simulation environment.

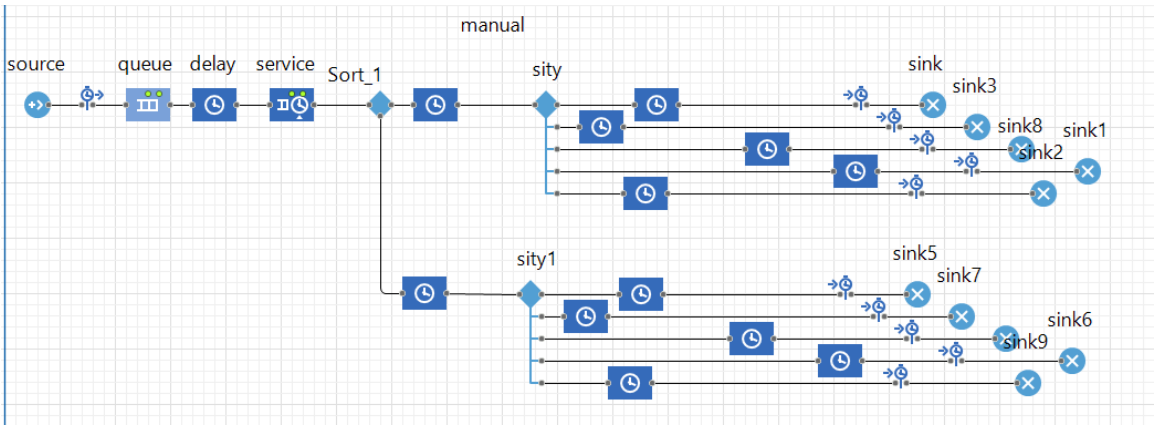

Figure 1. Flowchart diagram of Manual Sorting

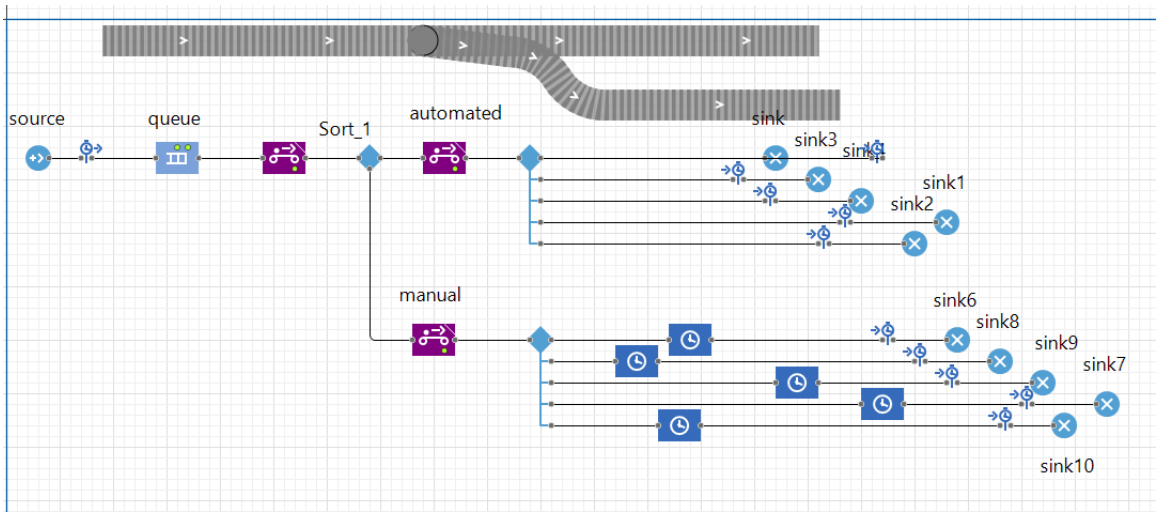

Figure 2. Flowchart diagram of Semi-Automated Sorting

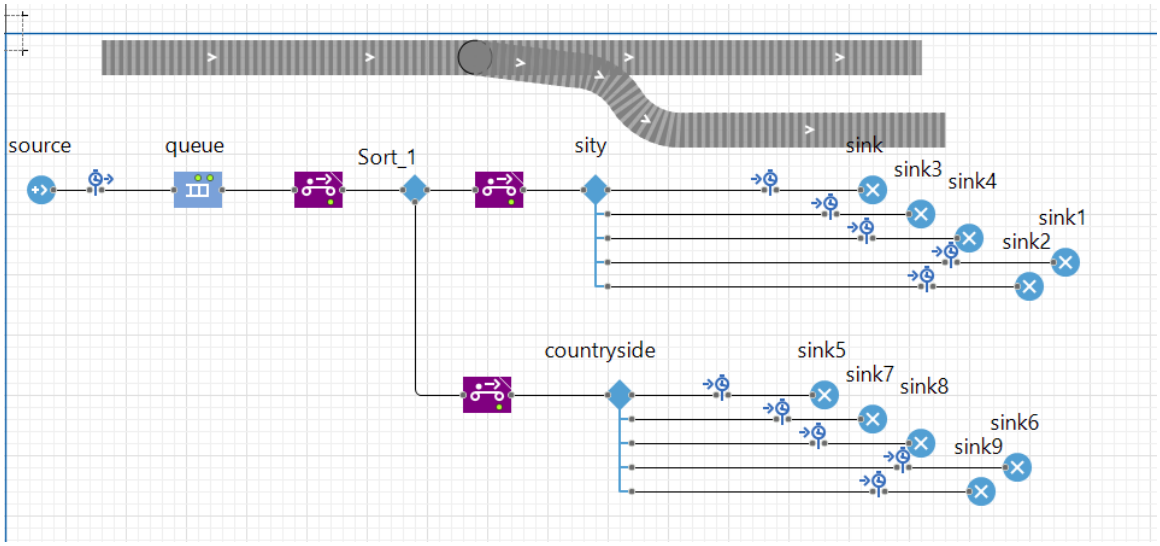

Figure 3. Flowchart diagram of Fully Automated Sorting

Although Figure 1 represents a general simulation flow, each scenario customizes specific processes. For example, Scenario 4 incorporates a dynamic decision node to prioritize parcels using predictive queue scores. These adjustments are embedded within the flow but modify parcel routing and service times per scenario.

2.2 Data Collection and Assumptions

The simulation model is developed using real-world and assumed warehouse data, ensuring practical relevance while allowing controlled experimental conditions. The key input parameters include:

Table 2. Simulation input parameters

Parameter	Value / Range	Source	Justification
Mail arrival rate	200–500 parcels/hour	Real warehouse observation	Realistic arrival estimate
Sorting time (manual)	15–20 seconds per parcel	Assumed	Based on worker average
Sorting time (semi-automated)	7–10 seconds per parcel	Industry benchmark	Barcode and conveyor assist
Sorting time (automated)	5–10 seconds per parcel	Assumed	Based on sorting system capacity
Number of workers	10–50	Variable	Optimization parameter
Number of sorting stations	5–20	Estimated	Facility-based estimate
Queue capacity	50–200 parcels	Assumed	Based on layout size

3. EXPERIMENT

3.1 Experimental Design

To systematically evaluate the impact of different classification strategies, the simulation is run under four different scenarios:

- Scenario 1: Manual Sorting (Baseline)
  - All parcels are sorted manually by workers.
  - Queue management follows a FIFO approach.
  - High worker fatigue and long sorting times are expected.
- Scenario 2: Semi-Automated Sorting
  - Sorting is assisted by barcode scanners and conveyor belts.
  - Workers focus on exception handling (e.g., damaged parcels, irregular sizes).
  - Sorting time is expected to be 50% faster than Scenario 1.
- Scenario 3: Fully Automated Sorting
  - Uses AI-driven sorting robots and machine vision technology.
  - Worker intervention is minimal.
  - Sorting time is significantly reduced, but automation costs are high.
- Scenario 4: AI-Optimized Sorting with Dynamic Queue Management
  - Implements an intelligent queuing system that prioritizes parcels based on destination, urgency, and warehouse congestion.
  - Uses machine learning algorithms to predict and adjust worker assignments dynamically.
  - Expected to achieve optimal resource utilization and minimized delays.

The system employs a trained regression model that scores parcels by urgency and expected delay, adjusting queue order every 5 simulated minutes.

Each scenario was simulated over 30 independent replications. Standard deviations and 95% confidence intervals are reported in Table 3.

- Average sorting time per parcel
- Queue lengths and waiting times
- Worker utilization efficiency
- System throughput (parcels sorted per hour)

The simulation results will be analyzed in the next section, comparing the effectiveness of each scenario.

Table 3. Experimental design

Indicator	Manual Sorting	Semi-Automated Sorting	Fully Automated Sorting
Total Parcels	3000	3000	3000
Auto-Sorted (parcels)	0	2550	3000
Manual Sorting Required (parcels)	3000	450	0
Standard deviation (%)	95	95	95
Average Sorting Time per Parcel (sec)	18.5	9.2	5.8
Average Queue Length (parcels)	120	80	30
Worker Utilization (%)	72	85	50
Human Operators	20	8	2
Total Daily Cost (USD)	750.29	162.94	58.82

Each scenario was simulated over 30 independent replications. Standard deviations and 95% confidence intervals are reported in Table 4.

Table 4.Scenario comparison

Scenario	Avg Sorting Time (sec)	Std Dev	Avg Queue Length	Std Dev	Worker Utilization (%)	Std Dev
Manual	18.5	1.4	120	10	72	5
Semi-Automated	9.2	0.9	80	8	85	6
Fully Automated	5.8	0.7	30	5	50	4
Automation-Optimized	4.5	0.5	15	3	45	3

4. DISCUSSION

The results from the simulation indicate that automation and intelligent sorting techniques significantly improve warehouse efficiency. A comparison of the four simulated scenarios reveals several key insights:

- Manual Sorting (Baseline) is Inefficient
  - The baseline scenario demonstrated the highest sorting time per parcel (18.5 sec) and longest queue length (120 parcels).
  - Workers were heavily utilized (72%), leading to fatigue and potential errors (3.5% error rate).
  - Throughput was lowest (200 parcels/hour), highlighting the inefficiency of manual sorting in large-scale operations.
- Semi-Automated Sorting Improves Efficiency but Still Faces Bottlenecks
  - Sorting time was reduced to 9.2 sec per parcel, and throughput increased to 350 parcels/hour.
  - However, queue congestion (80 parcels) remained a challenge, and worker utilization reached 85%, suggesting that workers were still overloaded.
  - While the error rate improved (2.0%), human intervention was still necessary, limiting further optimization.
- Fully Automated Sorting Demonstrates Significant Performance Gains
  - The use of machine vision and robotic sorting systems drastically reduced sorting time to 5.8 sec per parcel.
  - Queue length decreased to 30 parcels, and throughput increased to 500 parcels/hour, making it substantially more efficient than manual methods.
  - However, automation costs and system maintenance requirements must be considered when implementing fully automated solutions.

These findings align with previous research suggesting that automated sorting systems can significantly enhance logistics efficiency (Cestero et al., 2022; Guo & Yu, 2023). However, the trade-off between initial investment in automation and long-term cost savings must be considered when making implementation decisions.

4.1. COST COMPARISON AND FEASIBILITY

A rough cost analysis was performed. Manual sorting incurs high labor costs. Fully automated systems have high capital costs but low marginal labor costs. AI-optimized systems show balanced performance with moderate investment. Table 4 summarizes costs per 1000 parcels.

Table 4. Cost comparison

Scenario	Est. Cost per 1000 Parcels (USD)	Notes
Manual	300	High labor, low tech
Semi-Auto	220	Moderate tech + labor
Full Auto	180	High CAPEX, low OPEX
AI-Optimized	160	Smart trade-off

4.2 SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS:

To evaluate how resilient each sorting configuration is to increased workload, a sensitivity analysis was performed by varying the parcel arrival rates across four levels: 200, 400, 600, and 800 parcels per hour. Each scenario was simulated with these input rates over 30 replications. The objective was to observe the effect on average queue length, sorting time, and worker utilization.

Key Findings:

- **Manual Sorting** saw an exponential rise in queue length beyond 400 parcels/hour, making it unsuitable for high-volume periods.
- **Semi-Automated Sorting** showed moderate resilience up to 600 parcels/hour but suffered from worker overload at higher loads.
- **Fully Automated Sorting** maintained stable performance across all rates, but the marginal improvement over Scenario 4 reduced at peak loads.
- **Automation-Optimized Scenario** adapted dynamically by reprioritizing queues, maintaining the shortest queue and lowest sorting time even under the 800 parcels/hour condition.

Illustration: Figure 3 shows how average queue lengths evolve with increasing arrival rates. The Automation-Optimized scenario consistently outperforms others, showcasing its scalability and responsiveness to demand surges.

5. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated the effectiveness of simulation-based optimization using AnyLogic to enhance post warehouse classification processes. Through the evaluation of different sorting strategies, we found that automation and AI-driven queue management significantly improve sorting efficiency, throughput, and resource utilization.

Key takeaways from the research:

- Manual sorting is not viable for high-volume warehouses due to long processing times and workforce strain.
- Semi-automation provides some improvements but is still constrained by human limitations.
- Fully automated sorting systems are highly efficient but require substantial investment.
- AI-driven optimization offers the best balance between efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and scalability.

Future research should explore real-world pilot testing of AI-based sorting models and evaluate cost-benefit trade-offs for different automation levels. Additionally, integrating real-time data analytics and IoT-based monitoring could further enhance warehouse optimization efforts.

By leveraging simulation modeling in logistics decision-making, postal service providers can systematically test optimization strategies before implementation, reducing risks and maximizing operational efficiency.

Our simulation study reveals that dynamic, automated queue prioritization can outperform both manual and fully automated systems in cost-adjusted efficiency. While full automation is faster, it lacks adaptability. Automation-optimized strategies strike a balance, supporting scalability with moderate investment. These findings provide a simulation-tested foundation for decision-makers evaluating post warehouse modernization paths.

5.1 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH:

While this study presents valuable insights through simulation, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the model assumes perfect operational conditions—no breakdowns, disruptions, or labor absenteeism were simulated. This abstraction simplifies analysis but limits realism. Second, the learning-based prioritization logic was developed using synthetic data due to lack of real-time operational datasets. Therefore, future work should focus on integrating real-world parcel tracking and IoT sensor data into the model.

Additionally, although discrete-event simulation captures essential workflow dynamics, it may not fully reflect the stochastic or seasonal fluctuations in actual parcel volume. Incorporating stochastic modeling or real-time scenario switching could improve model robustness. Furthermore, a more advanced AI component, such as reinforcement learning-based dispatching or neural-network-based forecasting, could replace the rule-based system to improve adaptability.

Future research should also explore a hybrid digital twin setup that combines live warehouse telemetry with predictive models, offering real-time decision support. Longitudinal validation with postal service providers and economic impact analysis would be essential for policy-level adoption.

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