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ANALYZING AND DISTRIBUTING OUTBOUND LOGISTICS IN THE FMCG INDUSTRY OF CHINA

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Abstract

The FMCG industry in China has been making a significant profit, in terms of sales. However, certain issues are arising with the outbound logistics that are in place which helps in operating the industry. For this purpose, research is needed to be carried out to understand the ways that would help in having an efficient and cost-effective outbound logistics mechanism. The research philosophy used in the study is the pragmatism philosophy, with the research design used in the study, are mixed methods. The study has used both quantitative and qualitative approach, with primary data collected from interviews from 10 participants and survey questionnaire from 100 participants, and secondary sources collected from past journals and articles. The research approach used in the study is the inductive approach. The data analysis carried out for the interviews is thematic analysis; while for the survey questionnaire, regression and correlation have been used.

The developed results explain the importance of amending the outbound logistics services in the Chinese FMCG market. This will help Chinese economy in making effective growth of outbound logistics in the country.

Keywords: Outbound Logistics, FMCG'S Sector, China.

1. Introduction

For any business looking to attain success, its logistics factor must be operating efficiently, with a special focus on outbound logistics. In the FMCG sector, outbound logistics plays a key role as it helps in reducing waste, and decreasing cost of the business operations. The reducing waste factor takes place with business looking at the areas that are causing overproduction, waiting, and stocks piling up in the inventory. If a company's outbound logistics is efficient, it would be easily able to satisfy consumers and become the most likeable brand among the consumers. The main factors that help the FMCG sector be a success are high efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and sustainability, which are the main areas that a consumer focuses on when choosing a brand.

Montanari (2018) mentions that the FMCG sector of China is the sector that is growing rapidly but there are complexities and inefficiencies involved in its businesses. The complexities that take place in the FMCG sector in China are mainly related to the delay of delivery to the end-user that drive dissatisfaction among customer. The article will focus on improving the effectiveness of the FMCG sector in China and analyse the drivers that are vital for having efficient and cost-effective outbound logistics mechanism. As the researcher of this article is aware of the research gap existing in previous studies with regards to improving the effectiveness of FMCG sector in China, this article will play the role of filling up the gap of providing solutions to how the effectiveness of FMCG sector in China can be improved.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Outbound logistics

The Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals described the terms "outbound logistics" as the procedure linked to the movement and storage of products from the point of production to the point of the consumer receiving the products (Klump and Heragu, 2019). This entire process also plays a key role in the relationship management process between the supplier and the consumer. Fontaine et al. (2017) stated that suppliers have to abide by extremely stringent product delivery standards that are set by retailers. If a supplier fails to offer reliable service to its consumers, it can cause significant financial issues for the suppliers, along with even de-listing the suppliers from the retailer's active product portfolio. Therefore, outbound logistics of the businesses should work efficiently as it is linked to the brand perception that customers have on the brand. One of the key aspects to note here is that for every business, outbound logistics are different. The chances of businesses having almost the same outbound logistics process are minimum (Barreto, Amaral and Pereira, 2017).

2.2 Significance of outbound logistics for businesses

Shurbi (2018) asserts that an effective and productive supply chain helps to ensure that businesses can satisfy customers and make their market position strong. One of the ways, this can be done is keeping the outbound logistics aspect free from any kind of discrepancies or obstacles. Businesses, all over the world, understand that they need to regularly evaluate their outbound logistics procedure to ensure that consumers are receiving their products on time (Hakim and Abbas, 2019). There are a series of benefits that



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outbound logistics brings for businesses. The benefits such as an increase in sales, having better relationships with the consumers and having improved customer service are some of the prominent benefits.

Abushaikha (2018) is of the view that the main goal for every business is to ensure they are having increased sales in their business. Outbound logistics plays a role here, with the businesses making certain that they are keeping the required products in stock, delivering the shipments on time, and efficiently moving the products through the warehouse (Manders, Caniëls and Paul, 2016). This would help the businesses in preventing any loss of sales, as well as capitalise on the existing orders.

The second beneficial area for businesses is having better relationships with their employees as well as consumers. Kumarasiri and Arunathilake (2016) state that it is the responsibility of the suppliers that he is hiring the drivers with good interaction skills; so in case there is some confusion between the driver and retailer regarding the delivery not reaching on time due to traffic, the driver must have the ability to interact positively with the retailer. This would lead to having a positive impact on the entire business.

The third beneficial area that outbound logistics brings for the business is improved customer service. Businesses should inform their customers about the entire product journey which involves the outbound logistics stage too (Bayarçelik and Doyduk, 2020). The customer should be aware of which stage the product is and how long would it take for the product to reach the consumer as one complete package. This would not only make the customer feel valued, but there are high chances that the customer would become a loyal customer of the business.

2.3 Outbound logistics in the FMCG industry of China

The logistics industry of China has been on the rise as per the State Post Bureau (SPB), which revealed that during November 2019, around 2.8 percent increase was witnessed in comparison to the year 2018 (Li Paisey, 2019). Moreover, Li and Paisey (2019) stated that the increase in logistics shows that various businesses in China are focused on improving their business operations, by ensuring that their supply chain process is running efficiently. Klumpp and Heragu (2019) are of the view that due to the logistics industry of the country showing improvement, it leads to the overall positive growth of the economy of China. The focus of the government related to the logistics aspect is in the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry.

Montanari (2018) assert that the FMCG industry in China is on the rise owing to the high demand for high-end products, smaller brands and new retail format as well. The main areas in FMCG that showed a high rise were home care and personal care, and the food and beverages had a slow rise. Li Paisey (2019) mentions that even though the FMCG industry in China is showing positive results, there are some hindrances taking place in the outbound logistics of this industry that cannot be overlooked. There is a severe need for outbound logistics to be improved, concerning the efficiency and cost-effective mechanism. Li and Paisey (2019) stated that the FMCG industry in China has been continuing to invest excessively in its outbound logistics area, without rectifying the issues that are delaying the entire process owing to which the customers are not able to attain the products on time.

2.4 Identify and evaluate drivers of outbound logistics within the FMCG industry

Fontaine et al. (2017) had a view that the drivers of outbound logistics are customer service, warehouse management, and transportation management. These three areas are the basic drivers that make the base of the outbound logistics and must be part of every business to run their operations efficiently. In the FMCG industry, similar drivers are part of this industry as well. The FMCG industry comprises of brands that are focused on serving the end-user. The end-user informs the brand of the product that they are looking to purchase, which the brand makes certain to provide them (Barreto, Amaral and Pereira, 2017).

As discussed, the drivers of outbound logistics in the FMCG industry comprise customer service, warehouse management, and transportation management. The first dimension is customer service, in which the end-user informs the brands about the product that he wants to purchase. The brand must ensure that they have the stock of the product in their inventory. In case, the brand does not have it, it would need to decline the customer of the product that he is asking for (Shurbi, 2018). If the brand does have the product, there are two ways through which the delivery of the products takes place. The first is sending the purchase order placed by the customer to the warehouse for picking and packing. The second way is that the brand can direct the retailer to provide the specific product which the consumer has requested. The retailer would have a major role to play here to ensure that outbound logistics is carried out effectively.

The second driver is warehouse management. This is a key factor for the FMCG sector because this is the phase where the shipment of products is placed in the warehouse, or the delivery of the products are carried out for the end-user (Hakim and Abbas,



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2019). For a business, it must have a clear record of the warehouse products as it would help in deciding if there is a need for further production for some products or not.

The third driver is transportation management. In the FMCG sector, on time delivery of the products is a key factor as this particular aspect decides if the customer would stay with the brand or not (Abushaikha, 2018). For instance, a customer has ordered a product online from a clothing brand, he is given a specific date by which the delivery of the product will take place. Now if the clothing brand is not able to deliver the product on the specified date, this would lead to customer becoming dissatisfied with the brand and opt to not purchase any product from it in future. The transport provider chosen should be reliable and must ensure that he is aware of the routes to take (contingency route management) to avoid traffic and reach the destination on time. The distribution cost savings focus on looking to reduce the cost from various areas which are the labour, stock loss, distribution, packaging, cost of low productivity, and cost of poor quality. Manders, Caniëls and Paul (2016) assert that the FMCG industry has made certain to analyse all those areas that can help in cost savings, so that the products are reached on time to the end-user.

2.5 Impact of drivers on outbound logistics in the FMCG industry of China

In China, the impact of drivers on outbound logistics in the FMCG industry can be both positive and negative. The first driver of outbound logistics is customer service. The FMCG industry in China is focused on satisfying its consumers, which means that the industry continues to serve the customers in the best way possible. Kumarasiri and Arunathilake (2016) state that the demand by the end-users for various products is on the rise which has put pressure on the FMCG industry in China, with most of the brands struggling to keep up.

The second driver which is warehouse management has a positive impact as well on the FMCG industry in China, as most of the warehouses are modern which means they make use of computerised tracking system and retail technology (Bayarçelik and Doyduk, 2020). It is easier for the FMCG industry to keep a record of what products are in stock and what are out of stock.

The third driver which is transportation is a real issue for the FMCG industry in China. One of the issues is that China's extensive rail network only allows raw materials to be transported. The finished products have to be sent through some other mediums, which means the additional cost would be incurred (Bayarçelik and Doyduk, 2020). Another issue with transportation is that the demand for transportation is on the rise, which is increasing the traffic situation in the country. This is leading to the overall delivery of the products to be delayed significantly.

3. Methodology

The research philosophy used in the study is pragmatism which combines the qualitative and quantitative approaches. The focus of the study is on the outbound logistics in the FMCG industry of China for which the researcher would need to collect detailed opinions and experiences of professionals that are working in logistics. The research design that the researcher has implemented is the mixed design research because of the insights collected from the professionals from both the qualitative and quantitative measures. For the research approach, the inductive approach was used as the information that will be part of the study will be comprised of the interview responses that are not specific.

The primary data collection method has been proceeded with the survey questionnaire and interview. The interview questionnaire will be used to collect qualitative data, and the survey questionnaire is used to collect quantitative data (Quinlan et al., 2019). The sample size chosen for the interviews are 10, and the sample size chosen for the survey questionnaire is 100. The secondary data is collected from past journals, and articles that are relevant to the topic of the study.

The researcher has made use of two types of data analysis methods for the research. For the qualitative data, the data analysis method used is thematic analysis. The thematic analysis will be assessed by extracting codes from responses that are attained from the participants (Walliman, 2017). The codes will be used to create themes that would comprise of quotations from interview responses. For the quantitative data, the data analysis method used is regressions and correlation analysis. The researcher will carry out regression and correlation analysis through the use of SPSS software, focusing on the impact and relationship between variables.

Throughout the study, the researcher has followed the appropriate ethical guidelines. The researcher has focused on avoiding using any kind of plagiarised work and made certain to give credit to credit to the researcher or analysts for any of his work that has been used in the study (Morse, 2016). The participants that were part of the study were made to fill the consent forms to prevent any issues in the future, such as participants saying that they were made part of the study without their consent. The researcher has made certain to keep the confidentiality of personal information of participants, which are their names, contact number, and address.



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4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Thematic analysis

4.1.1 Current scenario of the FMCG industry in China with regards to outbound logistics

The researcher asked the interviewees about the major challenges that they have faced while working in the FMCG industry in China, along with focusing on outbound logistics. Majority of the participants stated that:

“As a whole, the FMCG industry is growing, but there are some issues within the supply chain of this industry that is not being addressed. The challenges that I have faced are mainly related to the warehouse and transportation stages.”

However, one participant had a different view to state which was:

“For me, the major challenge was in the customer service area. Customers never stick to what they want, but keep on changing their choices which were very frustrating.”

Kumarasiri and Arunathilake (2016) stated that transportation was one area that has been causing major issues for outbound logistics in FMCG industry which supports the first interview extract.

4.1.2 Drivers of outbound logistics within the FMCG industry

The researcher asked the participants about the drivers of outbound logistics that are considered to be the most significant for the FMCG industry. Majority of the participants stated that warehouse management was an important part of the outbound logistics in the FMCG industry, as seen from the extract below:

“For the FMCG industry to operate successfully, the warehouse management driver of outbound logistics must function efficiently. This is the area where the details of products are recorded regarding which products are in stock and which are out of stock. An optimisation of warehouses by analysing their numbers, location and size can be carried out to reduce several issues of outbound logistics.”

Bayarçelik and Doyduk (2020) have stated that warehouse management which is turned into a modern system helps the FMCG industry to keep a clear record of its products.

4.1.3 Impact of drivers of outbound logistics within the FMCG industry of China

The researcher asked the participants about the impact of drivers of outbound logistics in the FMCG industry of China. Majority of the participants stated that transportation was a major issue, which can be seen from the extract below:

“The main issue that I continue to face with outbound logistics in my company is that of transportation. The drivers that are appointed or the transport company that has been chosen to deliver the products on time, which is causing major customer dissatisfaction. The companies can focus on using different road routes or make use of flights to transport some products from one point to another”.

From the above statement, it is clear that transportation is a major concern for many of the professionals, which is supported by Li and Paisey (2019). Montanari (2018) states that excessive cost is being spent on the transportation phase of the outbound logistics, which goes to show that the FMCG industry in China is not focusing on the check and balance aspect of its budget.

4.2 Quantitative analysis

The quantitative analysis of the current research is conducted on the basis of questionnaire data that was developed on Likert scale. This likert scale help the research in quantifying the collected responses and use different statistical tests. The statistical tests that were used on the transformed data were correlation analysis, and regression analysis. But, before doing such analysis on the collected data, descriptive statistics test is performed that describes the deviations in the collected data and their level of normality.

4.2.1 Descriptive analysis

The descriptive statistical analysis was performed on the data collected through questionnaire. From descriptive analysis, it is evident that collected data has positive derivations from mean. This positive derivation from mean explains the steepness in the normal probability bell curve.



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Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
					Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Gender	100	1.50	0.522	0.273	0.217	0.241	-1.470	0.478
PrExp	100	3.81	0.419	0.176	-1.176	0.241	0.635	0.478
MovGoods	100	4.11	0.737	0.543	-0.177	0.241	-1.126	0.478
SlzOfChMar	100	3.73	0.839	0.704	-0.289	0.241	-0.407	0.478
CostsIncur	100	4.06	0.886	0.784	-0.831	0.241	0.148	0.478
TranspFac	100	4.15	0.687	0.472	-0.393	0.241	-0.106	0.478
ChEcoGro	100	4.18	0.702	0.493	-0.266	0.241	-0.933	0.478
LogInfra	100	4.19	0.720	0.519	-0.303	0.241	-1.019	0.478
GovPayInc	100	4.16	0.662	0.439	-0.187	0.241	-0.717	0.478
DeIAIFMCG	100	4.19	0.662	0.438	-0.228	0.241	-0.727	0.478
Valid N (listwise)	100							

From above developed descriptive statistics table, it is observed that most of the values in the Kurtosis table are negative. This negative value of kurtosis means that the peak of normal bell curve is much flatter than normal and the tail of collected data are much steeper.

4.2.2 Correlation analysis

Moving forward in the statistical analysis of collected data, correlation analysis was also performed on the collected data.



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		Correlations									
		Gender	PrExp	MovGoods	SlzOfChMar	CostsIncur	TranspFac	ChEcoGro	LogInfra	GovPayInc	DeIAIFMCG
Gender	Pearson Correlation	1	0.023	-0.066	0.012	-0.131	-0.070	0.028	-0.013	-.263**	-.219*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.820	0.517	0.909	0.194	0.487	0.785	0.895	0.008	0.028
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
PrExp	Pearson Correlation	0.023	1	.722**	.542**	.249*	.345**	.461**	.455**	0.111	.241*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.820		0.000	0.000	0.013	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.273	0.016
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
MovGoods	Pearson Correlation	-0.066	.722**	1	.718**	.268**	.486**	.547**	.683**	.357**	.350**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.517	0.000		0.000	0.007	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
SlzOfChMar	Pearson Correlation	0.012	.542**	.718**	1	0.185	.334**	.444**	.487**	.387**	.348**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.909	0.000	0.000		0.065	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
CostsIncur	Pearson Correlation	-0.131	.249*	.268**	0.185	1	.549**	.405**	.283**	.328**	.342**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.194	0.013	0.007	0.065		0.000	0.000	0.004	0.001	0.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
TranspFac	Pearson Correlation	-0.070	.345**	.486**	.334**	.549**	1	.677**	.574**	.457**	.447**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.487	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
ChEcoGro	Pearson Correlation	0.028	.461**	.547**	.444**	.405**	.677**	1	.591**	.437**	.469**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.785	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
LogInfra	Pearson Correlation	-0.013	.455**	.683**	.487**	.283**	.574**	.591**	1	.359**	.368**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.895	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.004	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
GovPayInc	Pearson Correlation	-.263**	0.111	.357**	.387**	.328**	.457**	.437**	.359**	1	.828**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.008	0.273	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
DeIAIFMCG	Pearson Correlation	-.219*	.241*	.350**	.348**	.342**	.447**	.469**	.368**	.828**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.028	0.016	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From above correlation analysis, it is visible that the all values of collected data are positively correlated with each. This positive correlation values were identified by using the Pearson coefficient of correlation. From the conducted correlation analysis, it can be discussed that every value of the data has weak but positive correlation with each other. After conducting the correlation analysis on the collected responses through questionnaire, the quantitative analysis develops a regression analysis.



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4.2.3 Regression analysis

For doing the regression analysis, identification of dependent and independent variable of research has a significant importance. Therefore, the dependent variable of research is ‘delivery to all Chinese FMCG with outbound logistics’ coded as “DelAllFMCG”. The independent variables of the research were size of Chinese market coded as “SizOfChM”; movement of goods coded as “MovGoods”; Costs incurrence as “CostsIncur”; transport factor coded as “TransFact”; economic growth of China coded as “ChEcoGro”; logistics infrastructure coded as “LogInfra”; and, government paying incentives coded as “GovPayIn”. The conducted regression analysis of these research variables is based on the model summary.

Model Summary

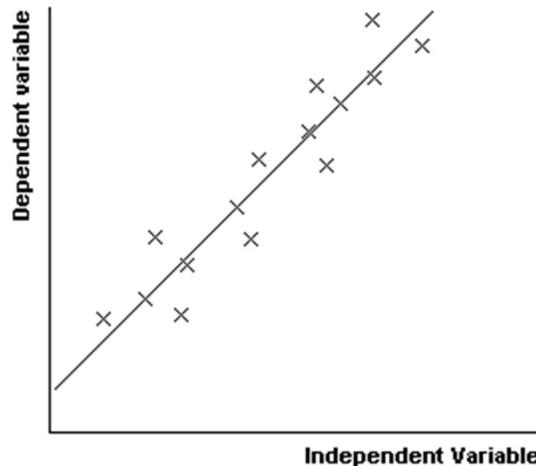
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.838 ^a	0.702	0.680	0.375

a. Dependent Variable: DelAllFMCG

b. Predictors: (Constant), GovPayInc, CostsIncur, MovGoods, ChEcoGro, LogInfra, SizOfChMar, TranspFac

The developed model summary of the determined dependent and independent variables of the research has the important figures of R and R². Both of these values explain the level of association among the dependent variable and independent variables of research. The value of R in the model summary is 0.838 which means that the tested research variables have strong positive association among each other with the value of 83.8% of association. This fact is also supported by the value of R² in the table. The value of R² is 0.702 that transform into 70.2%; that also explains the strong association among the research variables.

The developed model summary of the variables through regression analysis helps the current researchers in understanding the reputation of the practices among the dependent and independent variables of research. The regression analysis of the research variables helps in understanding the actual variable of the data from the regression line that is drawn among the variables. The regression line is drawn with the help of developed R² value and then the collected data is been scattered around the line as shown in the graph below.



This regression line also provides the proof that when there is an up and down among the values of the independent variable, then, the values of dependent variable also get changed in the similar manner.



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5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study aimed to evaluate and allocate outbound logistics in the FMCG industry in China. The findings of the study have been attained in three areas. The first is that outbound logistics in the FMCG industry in China has been facing issues because of the inefficiency in some of its drivers. The industry is not focused on resolving those issues and investing excessively to continue with running the outbound logistics phase. The second area is that the drivers of outbound logistics in the FMCG industry are customer service, warehouse management and transportation. The third area is that the impact of transportation driver of outbound logistics has been creating major issues for the FMCG industry of China, causing late deliveries.

The quantitative analysis findings of the research conclude the fact that the changes in the outbound logistics can directly impact the delivery system FMCG for distributing the finished products and services. This impact of effective outbound logistics is supported through the incentives given by the Chinese government. These incentives will be distributed among the FMCG drivers who conduct outbound logistics in the Chinese market.

Some of the recommendations to optimise the outbound logistics in the FMCG industry are:

- The FMCG industry in China needs to set up a standard for warehousing by which all the companies that come under the FMCG industry abide by when stocking their products.
- The sequence of actions should be carried in the form of pallet breakdown, which would make the entire process easier to carry out.
- The transportation area, which is a major issue, should be analysed by assessing the historical transport data for a full year, and see which routes are most prone to traffic at what hours. Those routes should be avoided at those specific times.

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