



ISSN Print: 2394-7500
ISSN Online: 2394-5869
Impact Factor: 5.2
IJAR 2016; 2(7): 236-242
www.allresearchjournal.com
Received: 04-05-2016
Accepted: 05-06-2016

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Importers' Satisfaction with the service of multimodal transportation system: the case of Ethiopia

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Abstract

The main purpose of this paper was to examine importers' satisfaction with Multimodal Transport System currently being practiced by Ethiopian Shipping and Logistics Services Enterprise. The related theoretical literatures and empirical studies were incorporated in this study to provide a theoretical basis for the development of the research. Importing and exporting in trade management are becoming an assignment for Ethiopia since it has paramount contribution to the national economic development and for the business people to be successful. The data were collected from importers through self-administered questionnaires from selected respondents. Analysis ranging from simple descriptive statistics to exploratory factor analysis is used to analyze the data. The findings have suggested that in order to improve the services of Multimodal Transport System, the Ethiopian Shipping and Logistics Services Enterprise should work on how to improve the unsatisfactory areas by using appropriate technology and legal requirements. Importers expectation of the Multimodal Transport System services showed that they were unsatisfied with cost, performance, time and reliability of information in using the services. As a result, it is clear that beneficiaries are not satisfied with the services which were significantly related to importers satisfaction. The study concluded that in using the services of Multimodal Transport System, transit cost is not minimized, performance activities of Multimodal Transport System is not as promised to importers, time is not saved in using the services, importers are doubtful of Ethiopian Shipping and Logistics Services Enterprise information and importers have expectations concerning damage, documentation accuracy of the Multimodal Transport System.

Keywords: satisfaction, services, transit, cost, time

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the study

The development of international trade is driven by international logistics and management and the provision of the global supply chain. The ultimate objective of global supply chain management is to link the marketplace, distribution network, manufacturing/processing/assembly process and procurement activity in such a way that customers are serviced at a higher level, yet lower cost. Branch, Alan E., (2009)^[4]

The modern global business demands a highly sophisticated and adaptable multi-modal transport structure/organization with a genuine worldwide door-to-door and just-in-time (JIT) logistics capability with an emphasis on partnership with the customer. (Branch, Alan E., (2009)^[4]. Furthermore the organization must be consumer driven in the competitive global market with a strong emphasis on synergy between carrier and shipper. Thus, the total multi-modal transport product must be logistically driven and market-led to provide an acceptable service/schedule to the consumer, the shipper. According to Branch, Alan E., (2009)^[4], the globalization of the world economy and the resulting increase in international trade, have had, and will continue to have, significant implications for transportation networks worldwide.

UNESCAP (2007; 2008 cited in Poti Chao, 2011)^[16] found that based on Thailand's logistics cost to GDP (1999 – 2007), Logistics cost accounts for an average of 18.7 per cent of the Thailand's GDP. In comparison with other developing countries, Thailand had outperformed China by 3 per cent, but under performed India by 5 per cent. One of the reasons why the Thai government has been struggling to reduce logistics costs are mainly due to the increase in fuel price, congestion in major ports, insufficient port capacity and lack of competitiveness in rail and maritime transport.

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As a component of international trade, Multimodal Transport has generated considerable commercial values for shippers in comparison to other alternative transport systems. According to some writers (Campisi and Gastaldi, 1996; Banomyong, 2000; SLA, 2008; and Islam, *et al*, 2008 cited in Poti Chao, 2011) ^[2, 16] Multimodal Transport has many advantages such as reduction of time, risk of lost or damaged goods through a planned and coordinated single transport operation, the establishment of a seamless communication link maintained by single Multimodal Transport Operator, increase market access opportunity through speedy transfer and transit time, reduction of multiple documentation, cost saving through possible reduction of freight rate, minimizing confusion through a single point of contact (the MTO), reduction in energy used, thus provides environmental and social benefits and ultimately, an improvement in the competitive position of companies in the international market place.

1.2. Statement of the problem

According to Branch, Alan E., (2009) ^[4], transport is at the core of the logistic global operation, it is multi-modal, embracing forms of transport. The efficiency of the global supply chain is very much focused on the transport network used. The author generalizes that transport is very complex and increasingly so, as multi-sourcing is widely practiced. More emphasis is being placed on overland distribution of road, rail and canal, embracing combined transport from a supplier to consumer supply chain.

Evidences have shown that poor trade logistics has numerous impact on manufacturing cost and countries development. For instance, in East Africa poor trade logistics can add about ten percent to production cost in light manufacturing (World Bank, 2012) ^[25]. It can also cause long and uncertain delays which are not acceptable to most global buyers, especially in time-sensitive industries. As a result, production is often confined to small market niches.

There are several developments and investment initiatives of government and cooperative sectors in Ethiopia towards reducing poverty and to realize the country's transformation strategy. Importing and exporting in trade management are becoming an assignment for Ethiopia since it has paramount contribution to the national economic development and for the business people to be successful. And this can be ground to be considered as empirical issues. This study has assessed importers' satisfaction in using Multimodal Transport System in Ethiopia.

1.3. Objective of the study

Multimodal Transport System is being applied only to importers of goods from abroad and the objective of this study was to examine the extent of importers satisfactions following the introduction of Multimodal Transport System based on importers expectations in Ethiopia.

1.4. Researchable questions

What is the extent of satisfaction following the introduction of Multimodal Transport System among Ethiopian importers?

1.5. Significance of the study

This study provided information that could help importers to know the gap in using Multimodal Transport System, especially with respect to satisfactions with multi modal

transportation system. It would also be expected to help the Ethiopian Shipping and Logistics Services Enterprise to learn the importers satisfactions in the operation of the services. The policy makers, academicians, researchers, and potential service users who directly or indirectly involved in the trade logistics would be benefited from this study if they make use of the outcome.

1.6. Limitation of the study

The research was limited to examining the extent of service improvement for the future development of the Multimodal Transport System rather than identifying the change in freight cost, transit time, and the service reliability in the country and comparison with other an international context.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical literatures

The growth of containerized transportation together with technological developments improving the systems for transferring cargo between different modes has considerably affected modern transport patterns and practices. In response to new modes of production, in the context of globalization, and with respect to a highly competitive market environment integrated supply chain management has developed. Thus, physical flows also involve a significant amount of information flows. Hence, major inventions in information and communication technologies were the requirement for making the new logistics systems operational particularly in the management of information flows, regarding load units transport vehicles, distribution centre operations or the entire inventory management of a firm (Waters, D., (2010) ^[22].

2.2. Empirical literatures

Ethiopia's performance of trade logistics: Ethiopia shares the high cost of inland transportation with other landlocked countries (Rwanda, Uganda, and Zambia). In the apparel sector, for instance, higher inland transport costs adds more than a two percent production cost penalty and a ten-day delay, due to longer distances, inadequate transport infrastructure, and a lack of competition in the trucking industry (World Bank, 2012c) ^[25]. The cost of document preparation is also an additional cost penalty on exporters. Here Ethiopia stands out, also in relation to other landlocked countries. The cost of apparels increases by an estimated two percent as a result, according to World Bank (2012c) ^[25]. In Ethiopia, commercial banks charge three percent of the value of the shipment on imports and a two percent advisory fee on exports (compared with less than one percent in China).

Trade logistic costs and the cost for shipping to and from Africa:- The National Bank of Ethiopia charges a 1.5 percent foreign exchange commission fee on the dollars needed to import the inputs. Waiting for the National Bank's authorization can take up to six months when foreign exchange is scarce. In fact, the time needed for approvals and verification for foreign exchange cascades through the whole logistics chain. It starts at the beginning where pre-import permits require foreign exchange related documents. Moreover, it goes down the chain to post clearance where there is a need to close the documentation loop with the national bank. As such, foreign exchange regulations add even more complexity to documents and trade procedures causing further delays in the system. At the same time, it

costs 60 percent more to ship to the United States from Djibouti than from China, and about the same to ship to Europe, despite the much greater distance from China (World Bank, 2012c) [25]. Reasons include the relative low traffic in Djibouti, as well as the structure of exports and imports. A domination of heavy imports and largely low-scale, small exports complicate logistic matters. Therefore, fully loaded ships with heavy goods for Ethiopia into Djibouti are not necessarily at full capacity when they leave the port again.

Ethiopian trade logistics are stagnant: While there are slight improvements in the time to export since 2010, the time to import is getting longer since 2009 and without any change for the last four years. In terms of costs, there are modest savings in exporting costs while the cost of importing increased since 2009 owing to the positive correlation between trade costs and delays. Overall, the situation is best described as stagnant. (World Bank Report, 2013) [24]

Competition in the Ethiopian trade logistics system: When importers financed operations through one of the state banks, the bank required the importer to use either Ethiopian Shipping Line (ESL) or Ethiopian Airlines to transport cargo into Ethiopia. As such, even in the old system, ESL was the de facto default carrier from over 30 destinations. To overcome capacity constraints, ESL often contracted service to other shipping lines and charged a mark-up per container on imports. This is still the case, even though the recent restructuring increased the fleet size and reduced the mark-up. A similar system, which increases trade cost, also impacts air cargo on the Ethiopian Airlines side. (World Bank Report, 2013) [24]. A market-based implementation of the Multimodal Transport System ESLSE enjoys monopolistic privileges, which are reflected in its pricing behaviours. Effectively importers have become price takers and ESLSE, as a multimodal operator, has been assigned responsibility for bringing cargo from most ports of origin, via Djibouti, to the dry ports and temporary storage facilities. There are currently no competitors for this single contract service offered by ESLSE and mandated for use through the Ministry's Directive. Experiences from other countries have shown, however, that the gradual creation of competition in markets is a key for economic development. In fact, competition is so important that the actual ownership—domestic or foreign, state owned or private—not matter (World Bank Report, 2013) [24].

3. Research methodology

The study was conducted among importers basing in Addis Ababa and were using Multimodal Transport System in importing of goods from abroad. A descriptive research design was used to guide the existing situations of the services.

The sample size was decided based on the existing population identified as the users of MTS (Multimodal Transport Systems) before and after the implementation of the service. Accordingly 485 Ethiopian Shipping and Logistics Services Enterprise customers imported their goods before the implementation of MTS and after the implementation of MTS. These customers imported their goods using the services more than two times per a year were taken as the total population and 241 importers were selected as the sample sizes. The simple random sampling technique was used to identify importers who participated in the study. The data collected through self administrated method.

The data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS V.20). Descriptive statistics were used to describe the results and exploratory factor analysis was used to assess whether the items of satisfactions measured a single underlying concept and the results were presented using narrative text, tables and graphs.

The study was approved by Jimma University ethics review committee. Respondents were provided with detail information about the study and informed written consent obtained from all respondents.

4. Results & Discussion

Out of total 241 distributed questionnaires, 189 were properly filled and collected response rate of 78.4%. The respondents' satisfaction level with Multimodal Transport System was rated based on their expectations by using a five point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5.

4.1. Demographic characteristics of sample importers

Table 1 presents the background information of respondents. Consequently, 127 (67.2%) of the respondents were first degree holders and in term of year of experience, 114 (60.3%) were experienced for 11 and above years. This implies that respondents are well educated in their area of expertise.

Table 1: Background information of the respondents

Items	Respondents Type	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Educational Background	Third degree (PhD)	0			
	Second degree	39	20.6	20.6	20.6
	First degree	127	67.2	67.2	87.8
	College Diploma	23	12.2	12.2	100
	Certificate	0			
	Others	0			
Position/Current Job	General Manager	61	32.3	32.3	32.3
	Sales & Marketing Manager	87	46	46	78.3
	Importing & Exporting Officer	41	21.7	21.7	100
Service years	Less than 5 years	5	2.6	2.6	14.3
	5 – 7 year	22	11.6	11.6	39.7
	8 – 10 year	48	25.4	25.4	100
	11 and above	114	60.3	60.3	

Source: Based on the survey questionnaire for this study (2015).

With respect to the position of the respondents' Sales & Marketing Manager 46%, General Manager 32.3% and

Importing & Exporting Officer 21.7%. These positions may show that respondents were in appropriate positions in their

organization which enable them to have a direct relation with the operation of a Multimodal Transport System.

4.2. Importers satisfaction level with Multimodal Transport System

The respondents’ satisfaction level with Multimodal Transport System was rated based on their expectations by using a five point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 as follows:

Table 2: Importers satisfaction level with Multimodal Transport System

Descriptive Statistics								
Rate Variables	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Rank	Rated satisfaction level
Easiness of placing orders and tracking of the ordered goods	189	2	4	3.03	0.837	0.701	1	Satisfactory
The willingness of employees to help customers.	189	1	4	2.99	1.057	1.117	2	Satisfactory
Information is proactively and easily accessible by importers.	189	2	4	2.99	0.668	0.447	3	Indifferent
The physical appearances of facilities and equip. are satisfactory.	189	2	4	2.89	0.574	0.329	4	Indifferent
Orders are complete as per the plans.	189	2	3	2.67	0.473	0.223	5	Indifferent
Information from the ESLSE is believable and honest.	189	2	4	2.66	0.671	0.45	6	Unsatisfactory
Overall satisfaction of Multimodal Transport System service.	189	2	4	2.58	0.715	0.511	7	Unsatisfactory
Multimodal Transport System saves transit time.	189	1	4	2.46	1.069	1.143	8	Unsatisfactory
Multimodal Transport System improvement is promising.	189	2	4	2.43	0.685	0.47	9	Unsatisfactory
MTS minimizes transit cost.	189	1	4	2.2	1.01	1.02	10	Strongly unsatisfactory
Valid N (listwise)	189							

Source: Based on the survey questionnaire for this study (2015).

As summarized in table 2 above, respondents were asked to rate the satisfaction level of Multimodal Transport System service based on their expectation of the services by using a five point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. Based on the responses given by the sample respondents shown in the summary table above, the ranks of the variables are identified from its satisfactory level to strongly unsatisfactory level in decreasing order.

From the variables identified above, the top two ranked variables that importers are satisfied in using the services of Multimodal Transport System service are: Easiness of placing orders and tracking of the ordered goods through using the services of Multimodal Transport System (with the mean value 3.03 & Std. Deviation 0.837) and Willingness of employees to help customers (with the mean value 2.99 & Std. Deviation 1.057) were ranked first and second respectively. This leads toward the conclusion that the importers were satisfied with the service of placing orders by using Multimodal Transport System is easy and the Employees of ESLSE are always willing to help customers. This can be interpreted as the Employees of ESLSE are polite, friendly, and respectful to their customers.

On the other hand, from the least ranked strongly unsatisfactory to unsatisfactory levels by respondents are: Multimodal Transport System minimizes transit cost (with the mean value 2.2 & Std. Deviation 1.01), Multimodal Transport System improvement is promising (with the mean value 2.43 & Std. Deviation 0.685), Multimodal Transport System saves time (with the mean value 2.46 & Std. Deviation 1.069), overall satisfaction of Multimodal Transport System service (with the mean value 2.58 & Std. Deviation 0.715) and information from the ESLSE is believable and honest (with the mean value 2.66 & Std. Deviation 0.671) which were rated by the importers that the service from using Multimodal Transport System is strongly

unsatisfactory from the least ranked to unsatisfactory levels accordingly. The identified variables indicate that the service of Multimodal Transport System is unsatisfactory to importers. It can be concluded that from the services of Multimodal Transport System, cost is not minimized, performance activities of Multimodal Transport System is not as promised to importers, time is not saved in using the services, importers are doubtful of ESLSE information and importers have expectations concerning damage, documentation accuracy of the multimodal transport system. The remaining variables, information are proactively and easily accessible by importers (with the mean value 2.99 & Std. Deviation 0.668), the physical appearances of facilities are satisfactory (with the mean value 2.89 & Std. Deviation 0.574) and orders are complete as per the plans (with the mean value 2.67 & Std. Deviation 0.473) were rated by the respondents as indifferent or no change in using the services of Multimodal Transport System. This implies that there is no change with regard to proactively inform importers, no improvement with availability of facilities and no change in performing as the plan following the introduction of the Multimodal Transport System.

4.3. Factor analysis of the service improvement in the eyes of importers

In order to easily interpret and understood with fewer numbers of service variables, a factor analysis was used to examine the underlying variables; whether the service improvements really measure a single dimension or concept for each scale. In each case, the scale was subjected to exploratory factor analysis with the principal component extraction method.

For the service improvement, factor solution with Eigenvalue greater than one was considered for retention of factors after Varimax Rotation method. Consequently, the

analysis produced only one meaningful factor with Eigenvalue greater than one implying that these items measured only one concept which is satisfactions with Multimodal Transport System. This factor explained 81.7% of variance in service improvement. All items are strongly loaded to this factor with lowest factor loading of 0.822 indicated that the factor analysis works best for all items and all items strongly contributed to the service improvement status. According to Kothari, (2004) [5], Factor-loadings are correlation coefficient between each item and the factor and it explains how closely the variables are related to the factor emerged from the analysis, in this case the service

improvement.

For instance, the variable “Transit cost is minimized due to usage of Multimodal Transport System” is more important to importers and followed by the variable “Transit time is saved because of using the Multimodal Transport System” (Table 3). The composite measure of this service improvement was computed by summing up all responses (range of possible 10 - 50) to each item. The mean of the services improvement score was 26.88 (SD = 7.09) and the median score was 26. Figure 1 shows the kernel density estimate for the services improvement score.

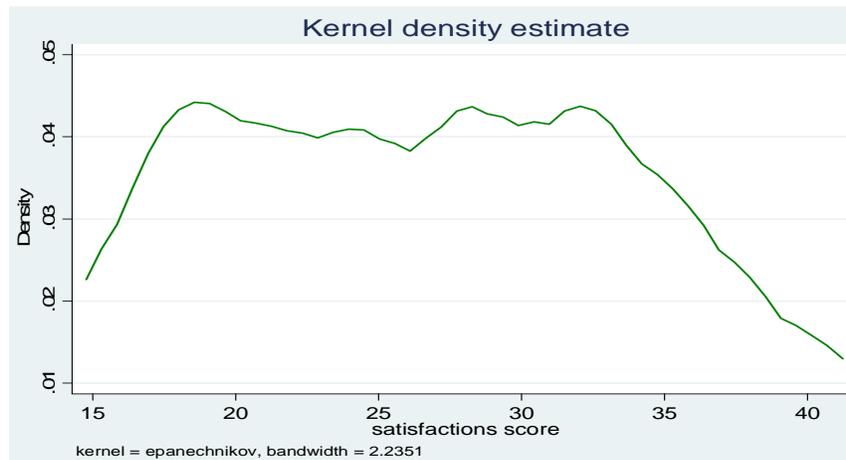


Fig a: The kernel density estimate for service improvement score.

Table 3: The service improvement of multi-modal transport in the eyes of importers

Component Matrix ^a	
Items (Variables)	Satisfaction Level
	Factor loading
Transit cost is minimized due to usage of Multimodal Transport System.	0.973
Transit time is saved because of using the Multimodal Transport System.	0.962
Easiness of placing orders and tracking of the ordered goods through using the services of Multimodal Transport System	0.94
Employees of ESLSE are always willing to help customers.	0.918
Information from the ESLSE is believable and honest.	0.915
Overall satisfaction of Multimodal Transport System service.	0.904
ESLSE make information proactively and easily obtainable to importers.	0.902
The physical appearances of facilities and equipment of the ESLSE are satisfactory.	0.866
The improvement of MTS performance from time to time is promising.	0.825
Orders are complete and as per the plans.	0.822

5. Discussion

From the analysis carried out, importers are satisfied with the easiness of placing orders and tracking of the ordered goods, and willingness of ESLSE (Ethiopian Shipping and Logistics Services Enterprise) employees to help their customers in using the services of Multimodal Transport System. On the other hand, based on the expectation of the Multimodal Transport System services, beneficiaries were unsatisfied with transit cost, performance, transit time and with believable and honest information. In other words, transit cost is not minimized, the performance of all activities is not as promised to importers, transit time is not saved and information from the ESLSE is not believable and honest in using Multimodal Transport System by the importers. As a result of this gap, it is clear that beneficiaries are not satisfied with the services. With regard to the information that Ethiopian Shipping and

Logistics Services Enterprise make proactively and easily obtainable by importers, the physical appearance of the facilities of the ESLSE and whether the orders are complete as per the plans, the study indicates that there is no change in using the services of the Multimodal Transport System and it is the same to before implementation of the services.

6. Conclusions

In this paper, the extent of a Multimodal Transport System service has been examined in which it transforms the relationship between trading partners and international carriers under a single liability system. From the analysis and discussion of the previous topics related to the contribution of Multimodal Transport System to importers’ trade competitiveness, the following points are concluded:

- Importers were satisfied with the service of easiness of placing an order by using MTS (Multimodal Transport

System) and the Employees of ESLSE are always willing to help customers. In other words, it can be concluded as the Employees of ESLSE are polite, friendly, and respectful to their customers.

- In other side in using the services of Multimodal Transport System, transit cost is not minimized, performance activities of MTS is not as promised to importers, time is not saved in using the services, importers are doubtful of ESLSE information and importers have expectations concerning damage, documentation accuracy of the Multimodal Transport System.
- Related to proactively inform importers, availability of facilities and performing as per the plan, there is no change after the implementation of the Multimodal Transport System.

7. Recommendations

It is clear that when customers transact business with suppliers, they have numerous expectations, many of which revolve around the supplier's basic logistical service platform; that is, they have expectations regarding availability, operational performance, and service reliability. Bowersox, Closs and Cooper, (2002)^[3]

The researchers recommend that ESLSE should first properly understand the expectations of customers' needs and they are able to meet the needs of their customers, in order to attract potential Multimodal Transport system beneficiaries. The identified services areas indicated in the findings that importers are satisfied with the service areas, the ESLSE should continue by strengthening it and the ESLSE should work on to improve the unsatisfactory service areas in using Multimodal Transport System through consideration of issues related to quick handling of importers inquiries, resolution of problems and timely handling of all interactions in order to provide better services to the beneficiaries.

In order to improve the trade competitiveness of importers in using the Multimodal Transport System in relation with the transit cost, transit time, information and the overall performance, the ESLSE should solve through technological and legal requirements that should be put into place to facilitate the operation of the services. The exchange of timely and reliable trade related information between the ESLSE and importers will help to advance the trade logistics performance by taking advantage of ICT such as Internet and other sources of mobile data services will improve the information gap between the two parties and to improve the quality of service delivered to satisfy its customers.

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