

Inbound Logistics in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Case Study on Current Practices and Challenges

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Abstract

Inbound logistics is a major challenge in Sub-Saharan Africa, especially in landlocked countries such as Burkina Faso, Niger and Uganda. The World Bank's Logistics Performance Index (LPI) is a well-established international logistics benchmarking study, but does not offer context or specifics of problems faced by importers in Africa. For this research, we adopt a case study approach on a large Singapore-headquartered distributor with significant operating experience in Africa. The case company distributes consumer electronics from principals in East Asia to more than 10 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Semi-structured interviews of local managers based in 4 African countries and the headquarters in Singapore were conducted in late 2017. Interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis and interpreted in conjunction with landed cost analysis. Our preliminary findings indicate that while Africa is often seen as a contiguous market, logistics challenges and solutions are highly diverse within the continent. More importantly, landed costs of importing into an African country do not necessarily correlate with that's country LPI score. Due to practical realities and infrastructure constraints, optimal freight movements during last-mile deliveries sometimes transcend international boundary considerations. These findings have implications for researchers and policy-makers studying logistics performance in emerging African markets.

Keywords

Africa, Inbound logistics, Supply chain management, Last-mile distribution, Landed-cost

Biographies

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