

# **A Review of Logistics Management Practices, Performance, and Strategy: Current Issues and Future Directions**

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## **Abstract**

In today's highly competitive global economy, firms face increasing pressure to develop innovative methods to produce and deliver value to their consumers. There has been a growing realization that good logistics strategies throughout the company and supply chain can be significantly helpful in achieving the goal of cost reduction and service enhancement. Academics and practitioners have recently paid attention to the strategic role of logistics. However, in the logistics and supply chain literature, the review paper focusing on the SMEs' logistics strategy is quite limited. To fill the gap, this research proposes a review to identify the current issues, such as opportunities and challenges of effective logistics strategy. For the identity of the logistics management papers, a total of 45 research papers were reviewed which met the criteria. The result show that logistics practices is still being noticed and successfully help the organization to improve their competitiveness, improve quality, reduce costs, increase customer satisfaction. The research would lead to various managerial and theoretical implications in this scope in future empirical research.

## **Keywords**

Logistics management practices, logistics strategy, strategic related logistics, logistics challenge

## **1. Introduction**

In today's dynamic and highly competitive marketplace, companies are under constant pressure to find innovative ways to improve their value proposition to customers. One of the key enablers of this process is effective logistics management, which plays a crucial role in both reducing operational costs and enhancing service delivery. In general, integrating effective logistics management across the entire supply chain can help companies reduce operational costs while simultaneously enhancing service delivery, providing them with a competitive advantage in today's fast-paced marketplace. "Logistics is concerned with managing two key flows: the material flow of the physical goods from suppliers through the distribution centers to stores and for the online business through to the end-customer; information flow of demand data from the end-customer back to purchasing and to suppliers, and supply data from suppliers to the retailer, so that material flow can be planned and controlled accurately" (Sople, 2010).

Logistics management is crucial for both industrial and service companies. Research suggests that effective logistics might improve organizational performance and market share (Ayantoyinbo & Gbadegesin, 2021; Douglas M. Lambert & Burduroglu, 2000; Stock, Greis, & Kasarda, 1999). Logistics is a crucial strategic factor for achieving corporate goals and maintaining a competitive edge (Karagöz & Akgün, 2015; Olavarrieta & Ellinger, 1997; Sezhiyan, Page, & Iskanius, 2011). Logistics aims to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of many corporate operations, including

transportation, warehousing, order processing, and material handling (Assouman, 2022; Idowu & Faarouq, 2024; Ifekanandu, Ihuoma, Rennner, & Lawrence, 2024; Rutto & Omwenga, 2024).

It has been noted that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) constitute a substantial portion of a country's economy. Nonetheless, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) face numerous challenges in logistics practices and strategies, significantly impacting their competitiveness and operational efficiency. Key issues include financial constraints, inadequate logistics skills among employees, and poor demand forecasting, which hinder effective inventory management and supply chain optimization (Abdul Nizar & Matriano, 2022; Kittisak, 2023; Mafini & Omoruyi, 2013).

Additionally, SMEs often struggle with operational limitations and a lack of technological integration, which is critical for adapting to the globalized market environment (de la Hoz Hernandez et al., 2020) (Singh & Kumar, 2020). The need for continuous improvement in logistics processes is emphasized, as SMEs must enhance their human resource competencies and adopt technology-driven solutions to remain competitive (Abdul Nizar & Matriano, 2022; Singh & Kumar, 2020). Furthermore, the high costs associated with information technology and rapid technological advancements pose additional challenges, necessitating strategic planning, and investment in logistics capabilities (Mafini & Omoruyi, 2013). Thus, addressing these multifaceted challenges is crucial for the sustainability and growth of SMEs in the logistics and supply chain sector.

The article addresses two gaps in LM research. The first gap is that LM research in certain industries is underexplored, necessitating additional theory-driven and empirical evidence research. The second gap is a lack of review studies on SMEs' logistics practices and strategies. As a result, this article seeks to explore what and how LS is structured by SMEs to gain competitive performance.

The literature review will be described in the next part, focusing on concepts and previous research, followed by the research's aim. Furthermore, current topics will be highlighted, followed by a discussion about the opportunities and difficulties of a successful logistics strategy. Finally, the study will conclude with implications and future research areas.

## **2. Methodology**

A thorough search of academic databases was conducted to gather relevant articles, journals, and publications that address logistics management practices and their implications on performance and strategy. The articles are reviewed starting from articles published since 1997 ~ 2024, according to predetermined criteria, then searches can be carried out. Conduct a thorough literature search using academic databases such as Google Scholar and Scopus. Keywords such as "logistics management," "performance," "strategy," "current issues," and "future directions" were utilized to gather relevant articles, journals, and publications. This study considers four stages as described in Figure 1. It consists of collecting the predefined papers, journals, and some textbooks, doing some quick review, and making the shortlisted papers to continue in-depth review. The full text articles assessed for review exclude the papers with keyword "Logistics service provider" or similar term.

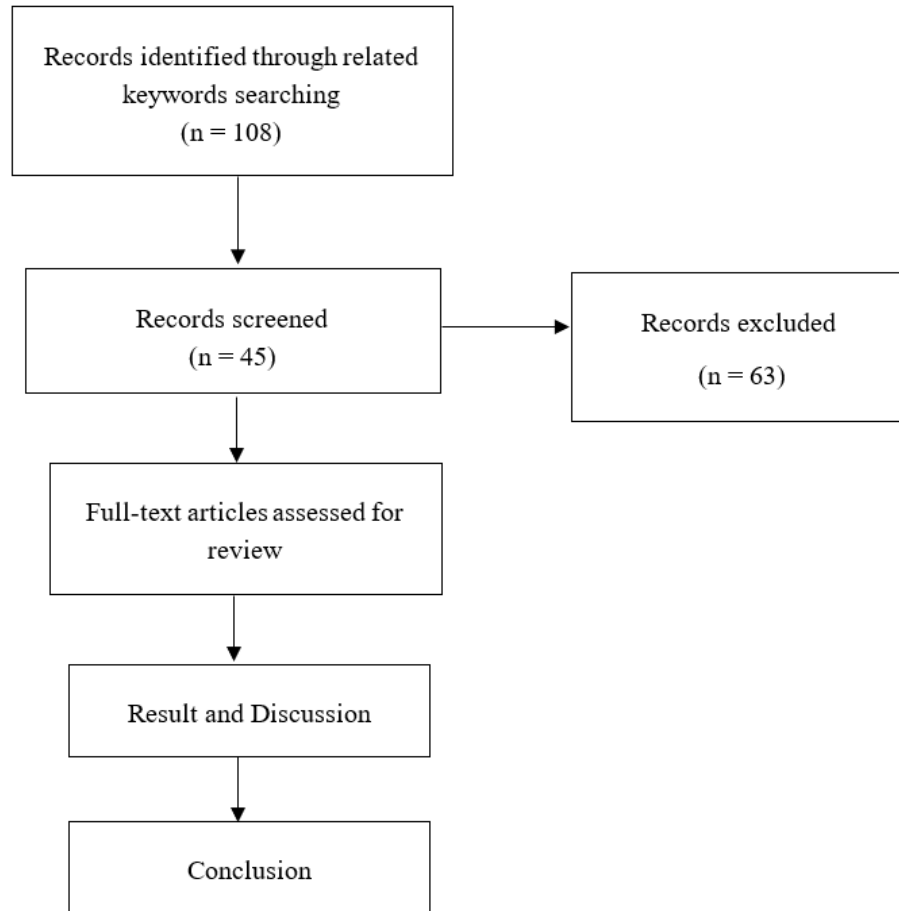


Figure 1. Study framework

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### 3.1 Definition of Logistics management

Logistics is the process of planning, implementing and controlling procedures for the efficient and effective transportation and storage of goods including services and related information from the point of origin to the point of consumption to conform to customer requirements, and it includes inbound, outbound, internal and external movements” (D.M. Lambert, Stock, & Ellram, 1998).

In this connection, “Logistics management activities typically include inbound and outbound transportation management, fleet management, warehousing, materials handling, order fulfillment, logistics network design, inventory management, supply/demand planning, and management of third-party logistics services providers. To varying degrees, the logistics function also includes sourcing and procurement, production planning and scheduling, packaging and assembly, and customer service. It is involved in all levels of planning and execution – strategic, operational, and tactical. Logistics management is an integrating function that coordinates and optimizes all logistics activities, as well as integrates logistics activities with other functions, including marketing, sales, manufacturing, finance, and information technology.” (Logistics Management, Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals, CSCMP, 2004).

Logistics management, a subset of supply chain management, involves planning, executing, and controlling the flow and storage of products, services, and information from origin to consumption to meet customer needs (Amin & Shahwan, 2020). Logistics management enables businesses to decrease costs while improving customer service. (Esper, Fugate, & Davis-Sramek, 2007; Fugate, Mentzer, & Stank, 2010).

Scholars highlighted five key activities in logistics and supply chain management. First, facility network design includes strategic planning and techniques for designing and expanding warehouse and depot locations. Second, inventory management involves the procurement and storage of raw materials, components, work-in-process, and finished goods. Third, order processing includes information management and exchange, communication, data transmission and processing, and import/export documentation. Warehousing, material handling, and packaging may include storage, freight handling equipment, loading and unloading, packing, and quality control. The last action, which includes the physical transportation of products from one site to another, requires the use of several carriers and the cost of delivery, known as transportation (Bowersox, 2013; Spillan, Mintu-Wimsatt, & Kara, 2018).

Logistics management encompasses the strategic coordination of the flow of goods, information, and resources from origin to consumption, aiming to optimize efficiency and effectiveness within an organization. It involves various functions such as inventory management, transportation, warehousing, and material handling, which are essential for ensuring that products reach consumers at the right time and place while minimizing costs. Furthermore, effective logistics management is critical for maintaining competitive advantage and achieving long-term organizational success by facilitating seamless communication and flow of materials and information.

### **3.2 SME performance and strategic-related logistics**

One of the biggest difficulties for SME businesses in today's competitive business world is maintaining and improving their performance. Superior company performance has an impact not only on their customers but also on their internal organization. Firms are compelled to be vigilant in meeting client expectations due to the pressures of changing and increasing customer demand and a logistics strategy is characterized by guiding concepts, driving factors, and engrained attitudes. These help to coordinate objectives, strategies, and policies and are supported by conscious and unconscious behaviors developed inside and across supply chain partners. Strategy enables an organization to identify how to create and use critical resources to attain its intended goals in a dynamic and competitive environment (Fawcett, Stanley, & Smith, 1997). Furthermore, other specialists believe that a logistics plan is an excellent instrument for optimizing a company's resources and business operations. Companies that implement an effective logistics strategy might also obtain a competitive edge (Brewer, 2008).

Academics and practitioners have recently focused on the strategic importance of logistics. Managers prioritize improving logistics, which involves managing both material and information flows to meet customer requirements. Strategic decisions should determine the design of a complex distribution/logistics network. Furthermore, strategic logistics planning strives to reduce inventory-related expenses associated with creating and storing items from producers to customers (Moynihan, Raj, Sterling, & Nichols, 1995; Moynihan, Saxena, & Fonseca, 2006). Managers develop and implement logistics strategies to achieve long-term competitive advantages in supply chains and especially in information flow management, which is important for the reduction of transaction costs and the increase of traceability, safety, and effective logistics processes (Adeitan, Aigbavboa, & Bamisaye, 2021; Bosona & Gebresenbet, 2013; Yuwono, Suroso, & Novandari, 2024).

### **3.3 Current issues, opportunities and challenges**

LM and LS have gained significant attention in the literature on logistics and supply chain management. Research has shown that organizations with efficient LS tend to have better performance, higher customer satisfaction, and improved financial performance. Therefore, developing and leveraging LS can help organizations gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

It has been widely acknowledged that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in manufacturing face several key challenges that significantly impact their logistics practices and strategies. One major issue is the pressure to integrate logistics systems to enhance operational efficiency, as traditional management styles are increasingly inadequate in a competitive global market. Additionally, SMEs often struggle with inventory management, including difficulties in forecasting and maintaining optimal stock levels, which can lead to order fulfillment issues and increased costs (Aziz et al., 2020; Abdul Nizar & Matriano, 2022). The dynamic nature of market demands necessitates that SMEs continuously adapt their logistics processes to remain competitive, yet many lack the resources and expertise to implement effective strategies (Demirova, 2023).

Furthermore, the development of lean logistics practices is essential for SMEs to streamline operations, but many are still in the early stages of adopting such frameworks (Lorena & Ramirez, 2014). Collectively, these challenges hinder

SMEs' ability to respond swiftly to market changes, ultimately affecting their competitiveness and sustainability in the manufacturing sector (Hernández-Linares, Kellermanns, & López-Fernández, 2021).

Through literature review, the relationship between logistics research and theory is found to be ambiguous, with most studies not explicitly incorporating theoretical frameworks. Researchers have used general theories to create frameworks that describe the discipline's key domains and concepts, as well as their underlying antecedents and outcomes (Defee, Williams, Randall, & Thomas, 2010). It was noted that logistics research benefits significantly from theories originating from other disciplines, such as economics, strategic management, marketing, social sciences, and engineering (Fisher-Holloway & Mokhele, 2022). It has been summarized in Table 1 that the resource-based view and transaction cost economics are the most used theories in logistics research, which had been agreeably mentioned by early scholars (Defee et al., 2010; Fisher-Holloway & Mokhele, 2022; Karatas-Cetin & Denktas-Sakar, 2013).

Table 1. Breakdown of theoretical categories by logistics and supply chain management (2001-2012).

Theory	Disciplines	JBL	IJLM	IJPDLM	Total
<b>Eighteen most frequently identified theories (2001-2012)</b>					
1. Resource-based view	Strategic management	23	11	18	52
2. Transaction cost economics	Economics	10	7	16	33
3. System theory	Systems	1	5	13	19
4. General inventory theory	Inventory	9	3	7	19
5. Relational view	Strategic management	4	2	10	16
6. Relationship marketing	Marketing	6	4	6	16
7. Social exchange theory	Sociology	6	3	3	12
8. Network theory	Marketing	2	3	7	12
9. Relationship management	Marketing	3	2	6	11
10. Innovation	Theories of organisation	2	3	6	11
11. Value chain	Strategic management	0	3	7	10
12. Competitive advantage or strategy	Strategic management	1	1	8	10
13. Risk management	Risk	1	7	2	10
14. Contingency theory	Theories of organisation	4	1	4	9
15. Collaboration theory	Marketing	2	6	1	9
16. Interorganisational relationship theory	Theories of organisation	5	3	1	9
17. Integration theory	Strategic management	4	3	2	9
18. Culture and organisational culture	Theories of organisation	3	1	5	9

Source: Karatas-Cetin & Denktas-Sakar (2013). Logistics research beyond 2000: Theory, method, and relevance. The Asian Journal of Shipping and Logistics, 29(2), 125-144. JBL, Journal of Business Logistics; IJLM, International Journal of Logistics Management; IJPDLM, International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management

The theory of logistics strategy significantly impacts an organization's overall performance by enhancing efficiency, reducing costs, and improving customer satisfaction. Effective logistics management, encompassing inventory control, transportation, and warehousing, directly correlates with better organizational outcomes, as evidenced in studies of

manufacturing firms where optimized logistics practices led to improved performance metrics (Adelwini, Toku, & Adu, 2023). Furthermore, logistics performance is a critical determinant of supply chain success, which in turn influences marketing and financial performance, highlighting the interconnectedness of these domains (Aćimović, Mijušković, Markovića, & Spasenić, 2022)

Additionally, a well-structured logistics strategy can create competitive advantages by optimizing material and information flows, ultimately supporting broader corporate strategies. The integration of logistics management with organizational objectives, particularly through effective coordination and customer service commitment, further enhances competitiveness (McGinnis, Kara, & Wolfe, 2016; Singh & Kumar, 2020; Wudhikarn, Chakpitak, & Neubert, 2018). Thus, a robust logistics strategy is essential for achieving superior organizational performance.

The existing research on logistics management has provided valuable insights into the operational challenges and performance implications of logistics practices. However, the review also highlights several gaps in the literature, particularly in relation to the strategic aspects of logistics management and its alignment with overall business objectives.

### **3.4. Future directions**

It is commonly acknowledged that SME businesses is facing problems in commercial operations as a result of technical advancements and rising societal expectations for products in terms of safety and quality (Leitão, Paiva, & Thomé, 2024). Thus, emerging trends in logistics strategies include the influence of globalization, advancements in information technology and e-commerce, and the adoption of new technologies. These factors are reshaping logistics operations, enhancing efficiency, and driving innovation within the industry.

At first, key technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and blockchain are enhancing operational efficiency, traceability integration and enabling real-time decision-making. Additionally, the rise of data-driven and the need for agile responses to customer demands that require technology and innovation adaptation. Thus, these new digitalization processes contribute to business success towards era 4.0 (Adeitan et al., 2021; Demirova, 2023)

Secondly, sustainability practices, including green logistics and circular economies, are increasingly prioritized to reduce environmental impacts and align with corporate social responsibility goals (Agyabeng-Mensah & Tang, 2021; Seroka-Stolka & Ociepa-Kubicka, 2019)

Additionally, the interplay of globalization and localization further complicates logistics strategies, necessitating robust risk management to address disruptions from geopolitical tensions and natural disasters (Arifin, Arini, Herdianto, & Muliata, 2022; Bukola A. Odulaja, Timothy Tolulope Oke, Tobeckukwu Eleogu, Adekunle Abiola Abdul, & Henry Onyeka Daraojimba, 2023).

## **4. Conclusion**

Overall, developing logistics strategies are heavily influenced by technical breakthroughs, environmental initiatives, and changing market conditions. These developments highlight the need for ongoing innovation and adaptation in logistics to remain competitive in a continuously changing market.

Filling the gap of knowledge by research on SMEs' logistics strategy literature view, the study attempts to provide cutting-edge on strategy-related logistics at the firm level. Moreover, the result of this study will also be of value to academics and practitioners to have a better understanding of effective logistics strategy and their role in examining the firm's competitive performance.

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