



RESEARCH ARTICLE

CHARACTERIZATION OF TOTAL LOGISTICS IN THE SMEs IN TULUÁ - BUGA AS A FUNDAMENTAL TOOL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 29th June, 2017
Received in revised form
22nd July, 2017
Accepted 20th August, 2017
Published online 30th September, 2017

Key words:

Total logistics, Supply chain,
Reverse logistics,
International physical distribution.

ABSTRACT

The research project entitled "*Characterization of total logistics in the SMEs in Tuluá - Buga as a fundamental tool for the development of international trade*" was developed based on the need to raise awareness among students of the International Trade Program from the Faculty of Administrative, Economic and Accounting Sciences (FACAEC by its name in Spanish), about the need to obtain competences in the field of research as a fundamental element for the integral training of professionals; Since logistics is one of the key areas of the program offered by the Central Unit of Valle del Cauca (UCEVA), which is proposed as a specialty option within the academic pensum, and deserves the guidance of research efforts towards it. Likewise, this work is framed by the evident need to carry out productive and commercial activities in a competitive and harmonious way in the business sector of the cities of Tuluá-Buga and the neighboring municipalities, in order to facilitate all the processes for the elaboration of products, the services offer and the national and international commercial development. The type of research methodology employed is the applied research methodology and with descriptive study. Besides, complying with the need to know the logistics process carried out by local companies with exporting and importing vision, the posed objective was worked out, to generate a diagnosis of logistics, emphasizing on its whole conception, as a fundamental tool for the development of the international trade of the companies of Tuluá - Buga and the neighboring municipalities

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Citation: Eneis Jaramillo Rodríguez, Angie Nathalia Tascón Hernández and Karol Vanessa Yate Rivera. 2017. "Characterization of total logistics in the smes in Tuluá - Buga as a fundamental tool for the development of international trade", *International Journal of Current Research*, 9, (09), 58295-58300.

INTRODUCTION

In the last few years, great changes in the productive and commercial structures at the local, regional, national and international levels have been made known, where economic and social phenomena such as economic aperture, privatization processes, deregulation and integration of global markets and globalization, which have allowed the creation of highly competitive global scenarios that lead to a general rethinking of productive and commercial practices. Thanks to the above and due to the increase in the levels of goods and services supply, which has been generated by nations and companies in general, the search for new and innovative ways of producing, distributing and selling their products; being the reason why the implementation and application of terms

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related directly and indirectly with the total logistics and its value chain takes place in order to supply the market being competitive. Meanwhile, total logistics is considered a key factor of the supply chain management process, responsible for planning, implementing and effectively controlling the storage as well as the direct and reverse flow of goods, services and all information related to these, from the point of origin to the point of consumption or demand, in order to meet expectations and satisfy the final consumer needs. In this sense, it is possible to show that the importance of logistics is due thanks to the need to improve customer service, treatment and satisfaction that allow to have better interaction with the final consumer; thus, being a substantial factor in the increase of the productivity and business competitiveness of the region in the center of Valle del Cauca and the municipalities of Tuluá and Buga, since they allow the achievement of the development of effective productive and commercial processes and of success in the national market and later in the international market.

In this context, the need to have a gradual and deep knowledge about the interaction of logistics in the business and commercial world as well as its ways of increasing the productivity and competitiveness of municipalities and the region is highlighted, being able to develop successful processes in the national market and later the international one. The research project called "*characterization of total logistics in the SMEs in Tuluá - Buga as a fundamental tool for the development of international trade*", aims to determine how the logistics, in its different definitions and applications, influences the development of the international trade activities in the companies of the cities of Tuluá - Buga and the neighboring municipalities, that demonstrate the competitive, productive and effective performance of these and their operations, taking into account the global logistical, commercial, operational, productive and organizational aspects of the companies under investigation in order to establish pillars that contribute to the achievement of excellent processes directly related to international trade and total logistics. Therefore, a diagnosis of the knowledge, application and use of logistics in the selected sample is generated, emphasizing on the total conception as a fundamental tool for the development of international trade in the cities of Tuluá - Buga and the surrounding municipalities.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the development of the research, the methodology is established according to its purpose of applied research methodology type and descriptive study; since it will be possible to recognize the importance of the logistics area in the companies that shape the sample. The work was carried out in three (3) phases as follows:

Characterization and conceptualization of logistics, analysis of conceptual evolution, knowledge of logistics at local and regional level: For the development of this phase, we investigated through the use of different bibliographic and internet sources to generate a document in which all the theoretical information related to the conceptual description of the total logistics, its aspects and most relevant components were integrated; For this 7 books, 20 documents and articles and 8 internet documents were employed.

Knowledge of the different components of logistics and their evidences in the region (application of information collection instruments): In this phase, the design, enforcement and tabulation of the methods of information collection, surveys and interviews, in the companies of the cities of Tuluá - Buga and the surrounding municipalities were made. For the application of the surveys and interviews the sample was determined as follows:

According to *Figure 1*, it was taken into account segmentation and/or lists provided by the chambers of commerce of Tuluá and Buga which were 119 companies in total(between large, medium, small and micro) that perform logistics processes related to international trade, from where 15 companies of this total correspond to the group of the big companies consequently they were not taken into account, being thus 104 companies from the SMEs group that actually correspond to the scope of application of the research project.



Source: Lists of companies of the Chamber of Commerce of Tuluá - Buga
Preparation: Authors.

Figure 1. Samplescrubbing system (companies)

Correspondingly, from these 104 companies useful for the research process, 50 were not viable or ineffective because they had wrong telephone numbers or e-mail addresses, did not engage in any logistical activity related to international trade or were too small; that situation made the contact process difficult and did not allow it to be effective. Likewise, it was possible to establish communication via email and telephone with 40 of the remaining 54 companies, which mostly claimed, would give the appropriate response to the email or telephone to schedule an appointment in order to hold an interview, but these did not reply to the request made by the members of the SICI by any means. At last, it was possible to do something, and schedule an appointment with 14 of them due to the effective telephone communication and their prompt response, where the surveys were applied entirely, but it was not possible to hold the interview in the total of the sample, due to the little knowledge demonstrated by those who granted the space to do it, in terms of the company in the field of research. For the above, it is established that the sample of the interviews application was of 5 companies. For the development of this phase the following materials (*Table 1*) were used:

Table 1. Materials

Item	Quantity
Minutes to make phone calls to generate appointments with the businessmen.	200 minutes to make calls to landlines and cell phones.
Paper for printing surveys and interviews.	84 sheets of paper, since each survey was composed of (four) 4 sheets and each interview for (two) 2 sheets.
Transport	Round-tripto the 14 companies, considering that some of them were in neighboring municipalities that were distant to the companies place of origin.

Preparation: Authors.

Academy - Company approach, so that the conceptual developments of the project would serve as basis for strengthening the companies' activities, and their experience to be used in the formulation and reformulation of the programs offered by higher education institutions: To conclude, the process of socializing the results obtained through the data collection methods applied and the phases already completed 1 and 2 is carried out, that was done with the entrepreneurs of part of the sample under study and the

managers of the Chambers of Commerce from Tuluá and Buga.

RESULTS

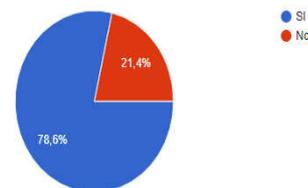
With regard to the research results obtained through the development of the project, the following can be established: As the first specific research objective, it was clearly established the generation of a conceptualization that would allow to collect theoretical information and delve into the concepts and descriptions made by some authors about the object of research. Thus, a theoretical information document was collected by using different books, documents and articles for a total of thirty- five (35) bibliographic sources used. The document that was generated with reference to the bibliographic bases used and the detailed analysis generated by the authors yielded a total of fifty four (54) documented pages, in which the most relevant theoretical and conceptual information regarding the theme Total Logistics, is described and related. This document contains information about the theoretical aspects such as definitions, classifications, functions, among other indicators and key factors in the subject, as well as each of the variables that are related directly and indirectly and that influence the development and operation of the total logistics process. The document was designed with the objective of making it available to students of the international trade program of the Central Unit of the Valle Del Cauca (UCEVA) and of the companies associated to the Chambers of Commerce of Tuluá and Buga, so that they can investigate information on the subject in an easier and faster way, obtaining a global vision of the subject in reference, while serving as a guide for the effective development of each of the productive and commercial activities in which total logistics is used. Aiming at the fulfillment of the second specific research objective, the process of designing, applying, tabulating and analyzing methods of information collection was carried out, where the model and subsequent application of the survey and the interview in each company of the selected final sample was formulated. Respecting the survey, a total of 15 structured questions were defined with single and open selection questions; for the interviews, 10 semi-structured open questions were designed.

Based on the information gathered through the applied instruments, surveys and interviews, it was possible to identify the level of knowledge and application of activities and logistical processes carried out and developed by SMEs in the cities of Tuluá - Buga and the surrounding municipalities; It was also possible to recognize the importance of these logistical processes for entrepreneurs of different economic activities such as commercial, industrial and services, for the effective and productive development of all their business activities, generating greater benefits in terms of costs, time, positioning, price, productivity, among others. In the same way, it was possible to establish the level of logistics and international trade presented by the business sector of the cities of Tuluá - Buga and the neighboring municipalities, the level of knowledge of its applications and implications, the biggest weaknesses and strengths presented in it or for the development of themselves and their ability to establish such processes effectively, as well as their vision of implementation in the short, medium and long term according to each one needs. Regarding the academic training areas related to the research topic, Total Logistics, it is necessary to highlight the

conferences held in the areas of Reverse Logistics and Packaging and Packaging For International Transportation, which were offered by the person in charge of reverse logistics in the battery company MacJhonson and other specialists with experience in the shipping business. It is noteworthy, that these conferences were addressed mainly to the public at the university campus, students and teachers. However, the invitation was also extended to the public and some employees of companies from the city of Tuluá also participated. In order to fulfill the fourth specific research objective and to stimulate the rapprochement and the relationship between academia and business, a space of socialization was generated with the entrepreneurs of the sample and the Chamber of Commerce of Tuluá; In this space all the information related to the results obtained in phases 1 and 2 of the research project was made known, focusing mainly on the results obtained from the surveys and interviews conducted by each entrepreneur. Through this socialization, it was possible to generate a stronger link between the academy and the Chamber of Commerce from Tuluá, which opened its doors and motivated the research group to continue developing projects of this type in the city and in which this entity will be involved in a participatory way with the aim of reaching great conclusions.

The research process evidenced the behavior of the treated variables with the company representatives, who facilitated the information and among them the following can be highlighted:

Su empresa tiene conocimiento de los conceptos y aplicaciones básicas de la logística
14 respuestas



Source: Companies study.
Preparation: Authors

Graph 1. Knowledge of the basic concepts and applications of logistics

Considera usted importante el área y las actividades logísticas dentro de su empresa.
(14 respuestas)



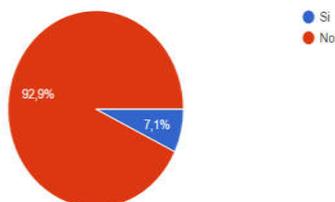
Source: Companies study.
Preparation: Authors.

Graph 2. Importance in the area and the logistic activities in the companies

It is possible to specify that 78.6%, that corresponds to 11 (eleven) companies out of 14 (fourteen) 100%, of the companies surveyed, claim to have basic knowledge about this and 21.4%, equivalent to three companies, claim to be unaware of them; Which makes it possible to show that the business sector in its majority has an great deal of experience in basic conceptual knowledge, but not professional or of greater depth that would allow to apply them effectively (See Graph 1). As

for one of the questions considered one of the most important in the questionnaire; since it allows to identify the importance of logistics and its processes to the local business sector, where it was possible to recognize that 100%, or 14 (fourteen) out of 14 (fourteen) respondents, consider this area to be extremely important within their companies, for the development of activities related to them in an effective way. (See graph 2).

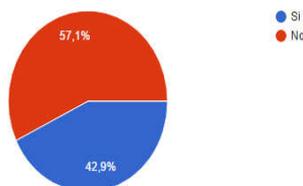
Actualmente existe un área de comercio internacional en su empresa. (14 respuestas)



Source: Companies study.
Preparation: Authors.

Graph 3. Area of international trade in companies

Actualmente su empresa realiza procesos logísticos relacionados de forma directa o indirecta con las exportaciones y/o importaciones. (14 respuestas)

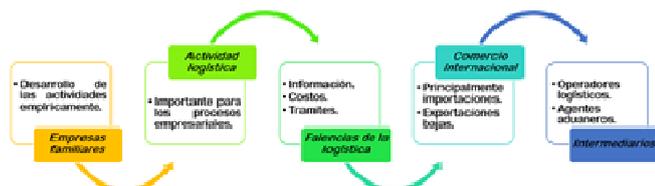


Source: Companies study.
Preparation: Authors.

Graph 4. Logistic processes related directly or indirectly to exports and / or imports

Continuing with the question of whether there is an area of international trade in the companies (Graph 3), it is evident that the vast majority do not have it; But still, companies develop logistical processes related to international trade (exports and / or imports) (Graph 4), where it is possible to recognize that 57.1% corresponding to 8 (eight) companies in the sample do not perform any type of logistical process related to imports or exports and, with regard to 42.9% which equals 6 (six), shows that they do develop them but infrequently, which means, they are classified in the sporadic group.

Illustration 2 Interview results



Source: Companies study.
Preparation: Authors.

It should be emphasized the figure 2, since the results of the interview are synthesized in it, in which it is noted that the companies that formed the sample were mostly family businesses, being able to identify the knowledge, implementation of activities and logistic processes, failures

within itself, recognize the activities of international trade (imports and / or exports) and the use of these trade activities directly or indirectly; In agreement with the importance that these logistic processes represent for the entrepreneurs of the sample, for its successful development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained in this research show that after having applied the data collection systems (surveys and interviews), which were directed towards the SMEs of Tuluá - Buga and the surrounding municipalities, they show a high level of importance to the Logistics processes performed by each entity, although some of them showed weaknesses in their processes, as mentioned such as time, costs and infrastructure, this last which sometimes does not cooperate much in favor of those who carry out activities aimed at international trade. However, these demonstrated a certain interest and care in each logistics process of each company, since logistics is a fundamental pillar for the development of all activities in the company, as mentioned by Rozo V. Alejandro, logistics is

*"That part of the logistics chain that manages effectively and efficiently direct and reverse flow of materials, services, documents, cash and information between the point of origin and consumption, with the intent to meet service levels expected by the customer and reasonable costs in the operation."*¹

This area is of great importance in the productive process of the business environment, since it allows to provide the desired level of services to the client at a reasonable cost in order to obtain competitive advantages, based on efficiency (doing well) and effectiveness of the system (doing the right thing). Likewise, it is considered as the essence or pillar of operation and development of international commercial activities, since with its application and development it allows elevating local, national, regional and global living standards. It is important to make it clear that when collecting data, at the beginning difficulties arose, specifically in relation to the lack of cooperation from the productive sector to get involved with the academy and to have an approach, since for some of them it was complicated to attend the call and to be part of the process, due to their schedules and their agendas. As mentioned previously, Logistics is a fundamental pillar, other authors such as Moreno, SP and Ochoa. E., M.² in his project highlight it as well, which demonstrates and frames the importance of logistics through the proposal of creating a company that provides logistics services, where there is agreement on the need to contribute to the economic development, not only of a region, but of a country; Generating economic activities that allow to recognize the importance of the logistic processes in every company. In the mentioned work it is possible to recognize that both are related and agree in the support of the theoretical bases about the logistics, since they are the base of the project. On the other hand, Moreno, L. and Zúñiga, C.³ in their degree thesis, offered to optimize

¹ Rozo V. A., *Gerencia logística: estrategia y análisis en la cadena logística*. Centro Editorial Esumer, 2014. Pág. 14.
² Moreno, SP and Ochoa. E., M. Project Manager choose title companies. " *Creación de una empresa prestadora de servicios de logística dirigida hacia las pymes de laboratorios clínicos de la ciudad de Bogotá.*" UNIVERSIDAD DE LA SALLE, 2008. Retrieved from: <http://repository.lasalle.edu.co/handle/10185/4226> [Accessed: July 14, 2017]
³ Moreno, L. and Zúñiga, C. Thesis to qualify for the title as Business Manager

inventory turnover through a specialized software and thus avoid over costs in a company, this is where knowledge of the logistics and the benefits that this brings with it has an important role to be efficient in a company; This unlike the already mentioned project, manages a different methodology, through the case study; However, both projects are based on a fundamental theoretical basis in the research process, such as Porter (1985),

"A theoretical model that allows describing the activities of an organization graphically in order to generate value to the final client and to the same company".⁴

Based on this definition, a company is said to have a competitive advantage over another when it is able to increase the profit margin (either by lowering costs or increasing sales); this margin is dimensioned and evidenced through each of the activities of the value chain. It deploys the total value of organizational and business logistics activity, and consists of value and margin activities.

As a conclusion, it is shown that logistics presents several strategic opportunities for growth and competitiveness both nationally and internationally, through the integration of various internal activities that are developed from the logistics chain and supplies.

Similarly, the importance of the implementation and application of information systems (ICT) is also exalted, which allows the management of the logistics chain, inventories, information, and other benefits in a more practical and modern way.

Conclusions

It is necessary to highlight that Total Logistics is important for the integration and productive and competitive development of the different local, national and international companies; where each one, through the application of Total Logistics, manages to reach creative, innovative and efficient solutions with the objective of remaining in the market in the long term. Likewise, it is reflected that logistics presents a strategic opportunity for growth and competitiveness through the union of internal, external functions and the association between the actors of the chain. Likewise, the role of reverse logistics or ecological logistics was recognized in the development of its total conception, since it allows efficient processes, reduce costs and significantly reduce the environmental impact that could be generated, while allowing an increase in business productivity and communication with the final customer. In addition, the level of knowledge and application of activities and logistical processes carried out by companies in the cities of Tuluá - Buga and the surrounding municipalities was identified; As well as to recognize the importance of logistics

processes for entrepreneurs of different economic activities such as commercial, industrial and services, for the effective and productive development of all their business activities, generating greater benefits in terms of costs, time, positioning, price and productivity, among others. Finally, through the investigative process carried out, a document of theoretical bases and analysis was developed that serves as a source for the generation of academic, professional and business works, being a documentary basis and a guide for the implementation, creation and application of logistics processes.

Thanks

First of all, it is important to highlight the work done and the support provided by the members of the International Trade Research Seedling (SICI), who participated actively in Phase 2 of the research project in the process of collecting information, that is to say, in the effective application of the surveys and interviews. In addition, it has been a great team that has supported and collaborated in the participation of the research project in the different research seedlings conventions to which the project has been linked to. Secondly, it is to exalt the active participation and the disinterested and professional help provided by the entrepreneurs of the cities of Tuluá - Buga and the surrounding municipalities:

- Antioqueño de Porcinos SAS. (porcicarnes)
- Armametal S.A.S.
- Bloem Desings.
- Casa del Sonido Tuluá
- Constructora Océano Proyectos S.A.S.
- Fruty Fénix.
- Gonarez y Cía. S en C.
- Nel Ingeniería
- Imagen creativa
- Indumetalicas SYC SAS
- Químicos PROQUIMPI
- Sociedad Comercializadora Internacional INDUCORSET S.A.S.
- Activa Integra S.A.
- Fadeplast Buga S.A.S

The companies mentioned above are those who contributed to the accomplishment and fulfillment of the objective of the second phase through their participation answering the given survey and the created interview. Finally, it is worth mentioning the support offered by the Chambers of Commerce of Tuluá and Buga, by giving the information required by the authors of the research project to be able to comply with the second phase of the research work by delivering the lists of companies that were required to be able to initiate the process of application of the instruments of data collection.

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⁴Moreno, L. and Zúñiga, C. Work degree to qualify for the title of business manager with emphasis in insurance and finance. "Proyecto de mejoramiento para los problemas de logística y Almacenamiento en Fujian Shan S.A." UNIVERSIDAD SAN BUENAVENTURA – Bogotá, 2014.Retrieved from: <http://biblioteca.usbbog.edu.co:8080/Biblioteca/BDigital/82313.pdf> [Accessed: July 15, 2017]

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