



Freight Handling Operation and Resources Management in Selected Forwarding Companies in Metro Manila: Inputs to Sustainability Action Plan

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed freight handling operations and resource management practices in selected forwarding companies in Metro Manila. Specifically, it examined cargo receiving and dispatching, packaging and labeling efficiency, warehouse management and storage, transportation and routing systems, safety and security measures, technology integration, and resource management practices. A quantitative descriptive research design was employed using a structured survey questionnaire administered to 201 respondents consisting of management, staff, and clients from seven selected forwarding companies. The companies were purposively selected based on their active involvement in freight forwarding operations, while respondents were chosen using proportionate stratified random sampling to ensure adequate representation of the three respondent groups. Data were analyzed using percentage distribution, weighted mean, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation. The findings revealed that freight handling operations (WM = 4.39) and resource management practices (WM = 4.44) were both rated as highly evident, indicating that the participating companies generally implement standardized operational procedures, effective resource utilization, and technology-supported logistics practices that contribute to efficient service delivery. No significant differences were found among the assessments of management, staff, and clients. A significant relationship was likewise established between freight handling operations and resource management. Furthermore, the challenges encountered were generally minimal, while the proposed Sustainability Action Plan was rated acceptable (WM = 4.17). The study concludes that effective freight handling operations, supported by resource management practices, contribute significantly to operational efficiency and sustainability among forwarding companies. However, the findings should be interpreted with caution because they are based on self-reported survey responses from selected forwarding companies in Metro Manila, which may be influenced by response bias and may limit the generalizability of the results.

Keywords: Freight Handling Operations, Resource Management, Freight Forwarding, Sustainability, Logistics Management

INTRODUCTION

Freight forwarding companies play a vital role in facilitating domestic and international trade through the efficient movement, storage, and management of cargo. Despite their importance, forwarding companies continue to face challenges related to operational efficiency, resource utilization, technological adaptation, and sustainability. Existing literature has focused primarily on cost reduction, infrastructure development, and digital transformation; however, limited studies have examined freight handling operations and resource management from the perspectives of managers, staff, and clients in the Philippine setting. The present study addresses this gap by assessing freight handling operations and resource management in selected forwarding companies in Metro Manila and by proposing inputs to a sustainability action plan. The study is anchored on Systems Theory and the Resource-Based View Theory, which emphasize the importance of integrated operations and effective resource utilization in achieving organizational sustainability and competitive advantage.



LITERATURE-BASED RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The study is anchored on Systems Theory (Bertalanffy, 1968) and the Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory (Barney, 1991).

Systems Theory explains that freight forwarding operations consist of interconnected activities such as cargo receiving, warehousing, transportation, safety, and technology integration. The effectiveness of one component affects the performance of the entire logistics system.

Resource-Based View Theory emphasizes that efficient utilization of organizational resources (human, financial, technological, and physical resources) creates operational efficiency and sustainable competitive advantage.

The framework assumes that effective freight handling operations influence the level of resource management practices among forwarding companies. Improved operational processes contribute to efficient utilization of organizational resources, which in turn supports sustainability and organizational performance. Findings from the study serve as the basis for developing a Sustainability Action Plan.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study utilized a quantitative descriptive research design. This approach enabled the researcher to analyze survey data and provide a comprehensive description of freight handling operations and resource management practices among forwarding companies in Metro Manila. The design was appropriate because it allowed the systematic examination of trends, patterns, and relationships among the study variables.

Research Locale and Participants

The study involved respondents from selected forwarding companies in Metro Manila. The total population consisted of 404 individuals, including management personnel, staff, and clients. Using proportionate stratified random sampling, 201 respondents were selected, consisting of 10 management personnel, 68 staff members, and 123 clients. The participating companies included Evergreen Logistics Philippines Corporation, Timecargo Logistics Corporation, IFS Global NVOC Inc., ACA Cargoline International Freight Services, Inc., Penanshin Shipping Philippines Inc., CTSI Logistics Phils., Inc., and Topnatch Freight International Inc.

Sampling Technique

The study employed Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling. The respondents were categorized into three strata: (1) Management, (2) Staff, and (3) Clients. This technique was selected to ensure that each subgroup of the population was adequately represented in the study. The seven forwarding companies were purposively selected based on their active freight forwarding operations and willingness to participate. The sample size was computed using Slovin's Formula (5% margin of error). Respondents were proportionately allocated per stratum and randomly selected where lists were available to ensure fair representation and reduce bias. This approach ensured that both company selection and respondent distribution were appropriate and representative of the study population.

Research Instruments

A researcher-made survey questionnaire was used as the primary data-gathering instrument. The instrument consisted of five sections: demographic profile, freight handling operations, resource management, challenges encountered, and acceptability assessment of the sustainability action plan. The questionnaire underwent content validation through consultation with experts, advisers, and specialists in the freight forwarding industry.

Data Gathering Procedure

Formal permission was obtained from the participating companies prior to data collection. The survey questionnaire was distributed both personally and through Google Forms. Completed questionnaires were collected, organized, and analyzed with the assistance of a statistician. Data were presented in tabular form and interpreted using appropriate statistical tools.

Statistical Treatment

The following statistical tools were utilized in analyzing and interpreting the data: (1) Frequency and Percentage Distribution- used to describe the profile of the respondents according to classification and other demographic characteristics. (2) Weighted Mean- used to determine the extent of freight handling operations, resource management practices, challenges encountered, and acceptability of the sustainability action plan. (3) Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)- used to determine whether there is a significant difference in the assessments of management personnel, staff, and clients regarding freight handling operations and resource management. (4) Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r)- used to determine the significant relationship between freight handling operations and resource management. These statistical treatments are appropriate for analyzing the respondents' assessments and testing the hypotheses of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the Respondents

The study involved a total of 201 respondents from selected forwarding companies in Metro Manila. The respondents were composed of 10 management personnel (4.98%), 68 staff members (33.83%), and 123 clients (61.19%). The inclusion of these three groups provided a comprehensive assessment of freight handling operations and resource management from both organizational and customer perspectives. The larger proportion of clients reflects the importance of customer feedback in evaluating the effectiveness and quality of freight forwarding services. The diverse composition of respondents ensured a balanced representation of stakeholders directly involved in or affected by freight handling operations.

Assessment of the Freight Handling Operations

The assessment of freight handling operations revealed an overall weighted mean of 4.39, interpreted as Highly Evident. Among the indicators, cargo receiving and dispatching obtained the highest rating, indicating that forwarding companies have established efficient procedures for receiving, processing, and dispatching cargo.

Packaging and labeling efficiency, warehouse management and storage, transportation and routing systems, safety and security measures, and technology integration were likewise rated highly evident. These findings suggest that the selected forwarding companies maintain effective operational practices that support timely delivery, cargo protection, and customer satisfaction. The results further imply that freight handling activities are being implemented in accordance with industry standards and operational requirements.

Significant Difference in the Assessment of Freight Handling Operations

The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) results indicated that there was no significant difference in the assessments of management personnel, staff, and clients regarding freight handling operations. The computed p -values for all operational indicators were greater than the 0.05 level of significance, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. This finding suggests that the three groups shared similar perceptions regarding the effectiveness of freight handling practices within the selected forwarding companies. The consistency of assessments among respondents implies that operational procedures are observable and experienced uniformly across different stakeholder groups, reflecting a common understanding of the companies' freight handling performance.

Assessment of Resource Management

The assessment of resource management yielded an overall weighted mean of 4.44, interpreted as Highly Evident. Human resource management, financial resource management, equipment and asset management, time and productivity management, environmental and waste management, and energy and fuel management all received high ratings from respondents. The findings indicate that forwarding companies effectively manage their available resources to support operational efficiency and organizational objectives. Furthermore, the results demonstrate the companies' commitment to maximizing productivity, minimizing waste, and ensuring the optimal utilization of physical, financial, and human resources in the conduct of their operations.

Significant Relationship between Freight Handling Operations and Resource Management

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between freight handling operations and resource management. The findings indicate that improvements in freight handling activities are associated with better resource management practices. Among the operational indicators, technology integration exhibited particularly strong correlations with environmental and waste management, energy and fuel management, and time and productivity management. This suggests that the adoption of modern technologies enhances operational efficiency and contributes to more effective utilization of organizational resources. The results support the premise of Systems Theory and the Resource-Based View Theory, which emphasize the interconnectedness of operational processes and resource optimization in achieving organizational performance and sustainability.

Challenges Encountered

The respondents reported that challenges related to freight handling operations were generally moderately encountered, while challenges associated with resource management were least encountered. Among the identified concerns, insufficient equipment and materials emerged as one of the most notable operational challenges, potentially affecting the efficiency and continuity of freight handling activities. Other challenges included occasional delays, resource constraints, and operational disruptions; however, these were not considered severe enough to significantly impair overall performance. The findings suggest that while forwarding companies experience certain operational difficulties, existing management practices and resource allocation strategies effectively mitigate their impact on organizational operations.

Acceptability of the Proposed Inputs to the Sustainability Action Plan

The proposed Inputs to the Sustainability Action Plan received an overall weighted mean of 4.17, interpreted as Acceptable. Respondents from management, staff, and client groups generally agreed that the proposed initiatives could contribute to enhancing freight handling operations and resource management practices. The positive evaluation indicates that the action plan is relevant, practical, and aligned with the operational needs of forwarding companies. Moreover, the findings suggest that the proposed strategies have the potential to strengthen sustainability efforts, improve resource utilization, and support continuous organizational improvement within the freight forwarding industry.

Freight Handling Operations

The overall assessment of freight handling reveals an overall composite mean of 4.39, verbally interpreted as "Highly Evident." The findings demonstrate that freight handling operations in the selected forwarding companies are highly evident across all operational dimensions, reflecting strong operational management and adherence to logistics standards. However, the comparatively lower rating of technology integration suggests that companies may further strengthen digital systems, automation, and real-time monitoring technologies to enhance operational efficiency, accuracy, and coordination in freight management.

Table 1 Summary of the Assessment of Respondents on Freight Handling Operations

Dimension	Interpretation
Cargo Receiving and Dispatching	Highly Evident
Packaging and Labeling Efficiency	Highly Evident
Warehouse Management and Storage	Highly Evident
Transportation and Routing System	Highly Evident
Safety and Security Measures	Highly Evident
Technology Integration in Freight Processes	Highly Evident
Overall Mean = 4.39	Highly Evident

The findings support Systems Theory, are consistent with an interconnected system where cargo receiving and dispatching, packaging and labeling, warehouse management, transportation and routing, safety and security, and technology integration work together to achieve operational efficiency and sustainability.

Difference in Respondents' Assessment of Freight Handling Operations

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) results presented in Table 15 indicate no statistically significant differences among management, staff, and client assessments across the six freight handling variables examined. Specifically, "Cargo Receiving and Dispatching" produced an F-value of 0.828 ($p = 0.4383$), "Packaging and Labeling Efficiency" an F-value of 1.241 ($p = 0.2913$), "Warehouse Management and Storage" an F-value of 0.811 ($p = 0.4460$), "Transportation and Routing System" an F-value of 0.693 ($p = 0.5010$), "Safety and Security Measures" an F-value of 0.615 ($p = 0.5416$), and "Technology Integration in Freight Processes" an F-value of 0.763 ($p = 0.4679$). Because all p-values exceed the conventional alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis of equal means cannot be rejected, indicating substantial agreement among respondent groups on the effectiveness of freight handling practices within the selected forwarding companies in Metro Manila. This convergence of perceptions likely reflects standardized procedures, uniform training, and consistent exposure to operational processes among management, staff, and clients.

Resources Management

Generally, the assessment of resources management reveals an overall composite mean of 4.44, which is verbally interpreted as "Highly Evident." It was indicated that resources management practices are highly evident in the selected forwarding companies, particularly in financial allocation and time management. However, the comparatively lower ratings in environmental and waste management suggest that companies may further strengthen sustainability practices and waste reduction strategies to improve environmental performance while maintaining operational efficiency.

Table 2 Summary of the Assessment of Respondents on Resources Management

Dimension	Interpretation
Human Resource Capability and Training	Highly Evident
Financial Resource Allocation	Highly Evident
Material and Equipment Utilization	Highly Evident

Energy and Fuel Management	Highly Evident
Time and Productivity Management	Highly Evident
Environmental and Waste Management	Highly Evident
Overall Mean = 4.44	Highly Evident

The findings support the Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory which emphasizes organizational success depends on the effective utilization and management of valuable resources such as skilled personnel, financial resources, equipment, technology, and operational capabilities.

Relationship between Freight Handling Operation and Resources Management

The study found significant positive relationships between all dimensions of Freight Handling Operation and Resources Management. Cargo receiving and dispatching showed strongest correlations with financial resource allocation ($r = 0.681$) and material and equipment utilization ($r = 0.587$), while time and productivity management also demonstrated a meaningful association ($r = 0.563$), indicating that efficient handling processes depend heavily on timely resource allocation and proper equipment use. Packaging and labeling, warehouse management, transportation routing, safety measures, and technology integration similarly correlated with various resource dimensions, reinforcing that operational performance aligns with targeted resource inputs.

Table 3 Summary of Significant Relationship Between Freight Handling Operation and Resources Management

Freight Handling Operation Variable	Relationship with Receivable Management
Cargo Receiving and Dispatching	Significant
Packaging and Labeling Efficiency	Significant
Warehouse Management and Storage	Significant
Transportation and Routing Systems	Significant
Safety and Security Measures	Significant
Technology Integration in Freight Processes	Significant

Overall, all computed p-values were less than 0.05, so the null hypotheses were rejected and the relationships are statistically significant. These results imply that strengthening financial support, operational scheduling, equipment utilization, and environmental/energy practices will most directly improve freight handling performance in Metro Manila forwarding companies.

Challenges Encountered

Respondents identified several challenges related to Freight Handling Operation and Resources Management. Freight handling operations obtained an overall weighted mean of 2.60, interpreted as Moderately Encountered. The highest-rated challenge includes transportation and routing delays affect delivery schedules. Having a limited warehouse space affects storage efficiency were also moderately encountered.

Resources management challenges had an overall weighted mean of 2.56, which is interpreted as Least Encountered. Respondents indicated that they faced difficulties due to time constraints that impacted productivity and workflow, as well as budget limitations affecting the allocation of operational resources.

Table 4 Summary of Challenges Encountered

Area	Overall Mean	Interpretation
Freight Handling Operations	2.60	Moderately Encountered
Resources Management	2.56	Least Encountered

The findings indicate that resource management difficulties are generally minimal, with the primary issue concerning the availability of equipment and operational supplies. Enhancing equipment availability and securing sufficient operational resources could further enhance efficiency and facilitate the proper administration of freight handling operations.

Acceptability of the Proposed Sustainability Action Plan

The proposed Integrated Freight Operations and Resource Sustainability Enhancement Plan had received an overall weighted mean of 4.17, indicating as Acceptable. Respondents agreed that the proposed interventions addressed operational challenges and would improve resource management practices.

Table 5 Acceptability of the Proposed Action Plan

Indicator	Interpretation
Relevance to Freight Handling Challenges	Highly Acceptable
Practicality of Proposed Strategies	Acceptable
Improvement of Resource Management	Highly Acceptable
Support for Sustainable Freight Operations	Acceptable
Enhancement of Organizational Performance	Acceptable
Overall Mean = 4.17	Acceptable

The acceptability rating suggests that the proposed plan can serve as a practical framework for enhancing freight handling operations and promoting sustainable logistics practices within forwarding companies.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

First, the selected forwarding companies in Metro Manila demonstrate a high level of effectiveness in their freight handling operations. The dimensions of cargo receiving and dispatching, packaging and labeling efficiency, warehouse management and storage, transportation and routing systems, safety and security measures, and technology integration in freight processes were all assessed as Highly Evident. These findings indicate that the companies maintain efficient operational systems that support timely, accurate, and reliable freight movement.

Second, no significant differences were found in the assessments of management, staff, and clients regarding freight handling operations. This result signifies a strong consensus among the different stakeholder groups, reflecting a shared perception that the forwarding companies effectively implement their operational procedures and maintain consistent service standards.

Third, resource management practices in the selected forwarding companies were likewise assessed as Highly Evident. The findings suggest that the organizations effectively manage their resources, particularly in areas related to energy and fuel utilization, environmental and waste management, and time and productivity management. Such practices contribute to operational efficiency and support organizational sustainability.

Fourth, the study established a significant relationship between freight handling operations and resource management. All dimensions of freight handling operations were found to be significantly associated with resource management practices. In particular, technology integration in freight processes demonstrated the strongest relationship with resource management, indicating that the adoption of technological systems plays a vital role in improving efficiency, productivity, and sustainability within forwarding companies.

Fifth, although freight handling operations and resource management were generally assessed positively, respondents reported the presence of operational challenges. Freight handling challenges were moderately encountered, while resource management challenges were least encountered. These findings suggest that while existing systems are generally effective, there remain opportunities for continuous improvement in operational processes and resource utilization.

Sixth, the Sustainability Action Plan developed from the findings of the study provides a comprehensive framework for enhancing freight handling operations and resource management. The proposed inputs address identified concerns through clearly defined objectives, strategies, programs, responsible departments, timeframes, budgets, and success indicators, thereby supporting long-term organizational sustainability.

Finally, the proposed Inputs to the Sustainability Action Plan were assessed as Acceptable by managers, staff, and clients. The favorable evaluation indicates stakeholder confidence in the relevance, practicality, and applicability of the proposed interventions. This strong level of acceptance suggests that the action plan has a high potential for successful implementation and for contributing to continuous operational improvement and sustainable business practices within forwarding companies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Forwarding companies should continuously strengthen freight handling operations through regular evaluation and enhancement of cargo receiving and dispatching procedures, packaging and labeling practices, warehouse management systems, transportation and routing processes, safety and security measures, and technology integration initiatives. Periodic operational audits and performance assessments should be conducted to sustain operational efficiency and service quality.
2. Organizations should maintain strong collaboration and communication among management, staff, and clients by institutionalizing stakeholder engagement programs, regular operational review meetings, client feedback mechanisms, and cross-functional coordination activities. These initiatives will help ensure that freight handling practices remain responsive to stakeholder needs and industry requirements.
3. Management should further enhance resource management practices by strengthening human resource development programs, optimizing financial resource allocation, ensuring the availability and maintenance of operational equipment, promoting energy-efficient practices, and improving time and productivity management systems. Such measures will contribute to greater operational effectiveness and organizational sustainability.
4. Integrated digital technologies should be adopted and expanded across freight handling and resource management functions. The implementation of automated cargo tracking systems, warehouse management systems, electronic documentation platforms, fleet monitoring technologies, and data analytics tools can improve operational visibility, resource utilization, decision-making, and overall service performance.



5. Forwarding companies should address operational challenges by implementing more effective cargo scheduling systems, standardized packaging and labeling procedures, improved warehouse space utilization, optimized route planning strategies, and enhanced safety and security programs. These measures will help minimize delays, reduce operational errors, and improve service reliability.
6. Resource management concerns should be addressed through regular employee training on cargo handling, safety procedures, technology utilization, documentation management, and customer service. In addition, management should establish strategic budgeting practices, ensure timely procurement and maintenance of equipment, monitor energy consumption, and improve workload distribution to enhance productivity and operational efficiency.
7. Sustainability initiatives should be strengthened through the adoption of environmentally responsible practices, including waste reduction programs, energy conservation measures, fuel-efficiency monitoring, and the integration of sustainable resource management policies into daily operations.
8. The proposed Sustainability Action Plan should be implemented, continuously monitored, and periodically evaluated to ensure its effectiveness in addressing operational concerns, improving resource management, and supporting long-term organizational sustainability and competitiveness.
9. Future researchers may replicate the study in other sectors of the logistics and transportation industry or in different geographic locations to validate the findings. Additional variables such as digital transformation, organizational resilience, employee competency, customer satisfaction, and supply chain sustainability may also be explored to further expand the body of knowledge on freight handling operations and resource management.

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