# PERSPECTIVES AND LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SAMSUNG DATA SYSTEMS EMPLOYEES IN THAILAND TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL LOGISTICS RISKS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper intends to understand the view of Samsung Data Systems Thailand employees towards international logistics risks based on their personal working experience. Its methodology uses phenomenological approach to cluster logistics risks and subsequently analyzes these risks in the context of international logistics operations. Additionally, this paper includes mitigating strategies against these risks amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The review of related literature identifies some research gaps, which consequently aided in the formulation of research questions. Qualitative method served as the nature of research and thematic analysis was then employed in order to generate the codes and determine the themes that emerged, extracted, and then evaluated out of the responses of the 15 purposely selected participants. Findings revealed that logistics delivery and open communication within Samsung SDS turned out to be the prevalent issues that were perceived. Mitigating measures and strategies were also suggested in connection in with the concluding results. Several recommendations were then forwarded to answer the pressing needs and issues that Samsung SDS in Thailand faced and continues to face as perceived by the employees.*

*Keywords: Samsung Data System, Logistics risks, Phenomenological study, Thailand*

## INTRODUCTION

It is a given that any business faces uncertainties and difficulties daily. Managers, be it supply-chain or financial, are confronted with many types of risks as they engage in decision-making processes. Hence, they work hard to be adaptable and resilient towards these risks when they administer their decisions.

Logistics is defined as the subgroup or subcategory of supply chain management which is part of the control of both forward and reserve movement, as well as in handling and storing valuables coming from where it originated towards the points of distribution (Berry & Francisco, 2019). The various activities of business firms pertaining to logistics have certain implications. Foremost of these implications is that the enterprise is involved in transporting its finished goods or products, including its components, for manufacture and fabrication reasons coming from the supplier to the manufacturer. Logistics risks occur. For example, when cargoes are transported, there are possibilities that such would result in losses and so this is identified as a risk. Some of the circumstances that can relate to logistics risks, specifically transportation of cargoes, involve traffic accidents even. In order to identify risks, there must be evaluation. Assessing the risks may be both quantifiable and qualifiable (Oklander et al., 2019). Any business firm or company aims to improve itself in terms of managing economic, financial, and logistics matters, among other things. This may be true for all supply chain managers and leaders as well as finance or

perhaps treasure managers who, realistically, may thrive in entirely unique settings and environments. It is inevitable that integration will not come easy. Supply chain, finance, logistics and other risks in management are embedded in any management action. Guidelines coming from top management are provided as to what is being changed, what is to be erased, and what things are to be adapted together with new strategic plans or strategies in response to the dynamic and ever-altering needs and wants of clients and customers. As a result, all these point to maximization of profits instead of only minimization of costs. Both of which are acceptable parameters in terms of risks (Mathis & Cavinato, 2010).

In line with this, the study aimed to understand how the Samsung SDS Thailand employees perceive international logistics risks through their personal experiences and what these participants think about how Samsung SDS ought to have done in mitigating these logistics risk operations. Qualitatively, questions about international logistics risks were asked as well to elicit the personal perspectives and opinions of the employees at Samsung SDS in Thailand, in order to generate some common themes in their verbal responses.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to be cognizant of the perceptions of the Samsung SDS-Thailand employees about the international logistics risks which they encounter and experience. In order to fulfill this purpose, this study aimed to 1) identify, cluster, and analyze various risks involved in international logistics in the case of Samsung SDS, and 2) investigate or evaluate the risk mitigating strategies in the way Samsung SDS manages these types of risks as viewed by the participants in this study, and 3) generate possible themes that actually surfaced from the answers of the participants.

## METHODOLOGY

This paper followed the phenomenological qualitative research design. It is anchored on an interpretive research approach as well.

Interpretive research refers to research paradigm-based assumptions in Ontology. Its foundational conjecture is not the singularity of a goal that shapes human experiences and social context. However, it is the socio-historic context which closely studied and integrated with various subjective interpretations that makes the foundational social reality in interpretive research.

These all emerged or surfaced since the research questions revolved around these categories and they all relate to international logistics risks that Samsung SDS faced as well as the risk management mitigation strategies or plan of action to diminish such risks or harms that may potentially harm or affect Samsung SDS as perceived by the participants.

Fifteen research participants from four different countries were recruited to participate in the study. They were purposefully selected according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria set by the researcher. Those who were included as participants were those working in the company who have been employed for 5 years and above, at the least, and who mostly are in the logistics department. Those who did not have any direct association with logistics and delivery have been excluded from this study as the main considerations in choosing the participants (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). To ensure anonymity of the participants and to uphold confidentiality of the information that the participants shared to the researchers, their real names were replaced with codes (Neuman, 2011).

The data was collected using survey questionnaire with open-ended questions. The survey questionnaires is distinguished by six categories: 1) General profile and information; 2) Risk Identification which is categorized into four types – logistics, economic, political, and administrative risks; 3) Risk Clustering that helps in deciphering complex relationships in a field to detect unknown risks; 4) Factors Causing Risks that include positive and negative factors; 5) Risk Management Strategies recommended by the Samsung company, which are management of key areas, clustering risks, consultation between administration and workforce, managing tasks, and motivating employees; and 6) suggestions that may result to Positive Outcomes.

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The research questionnaire was validated by the experts in the area of management and technology and applied mathematics for logical and credible presentation of the research questions later on in response to the research protocol for open-ended questions to ensure that the meaning of the question items is clear to the respondents, and that the respondents will clearly understand the questions the way they are designed and intended (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

The data analysis was conducted through the use of directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Accordingly, this approach to data analysis is generally used if "existing theory or prior research exists about a phenomenon that is incomplete or would benefit from further description" in order to "validate or extend conceptually a theoretical framework or theory." To do this approach of qualitative data analysis, the initial coding was done by the researcher based on the three concepts which are risk identification, risk analysis, and risk mitigation. To facilitate the data analysis, the NVivo 12 software was used.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Risks involved in international logistics in the case of Samsung SDS

**Risk Identification.** The participants in this study have identified risk based into four categories, namely: logistics, economic, political, and administrative. Logistics risk refers to the exposed risks in a logistics operation that impedes a performance from being smooth and hinders the overall supply chain. From the perspectives of the research participants, logistics risk includes the availability and cost of carrier freight; the high cost, cancellation, and delayed schedules of flights; and damaged or lost items while en route. According to Lewandowska (2013), the loss and damaging of goods are results of physico-chemical factors, adverse climatic factors, stimulus measures, and biological factors. It is worthy to underscore that majority of the participants of this study are in the logistics department, hence their perspective of risk is inclined towards the responsibility associated with their job.

The second category of risk identified by the participants is economic risk. This type of risk is centered on "macroeconomic circumstances that may result in significant loss for a business". Analogous to the contextual definition of economic risk, these circumstances are perceived by C1 and C3 in terms of the fast-growing competitors of similar products and services with their innovations. Further, KC2 and KC4 referred economic risk as the imbalance between demand and supply that subsequently lead to the high cost of freight charge and the decreasing number of carriers according to KC1. In addition, KC2 and KC4 explained that the global effect of the Covid pandemic which subsequently results to the decrease demand of products and the increased freight charges also shaped the economic risk.

In the innovation economics, innovation is risky and getting the most from a portfolio of innovation initiatives is more about managing risk than eliminating it (Global Innovative Leadership Module, 2015). There is inverse relationship between supply and prices of goods and services when demand is unchanged. An increase in supply for goods and services causes prices to fall in a lower equilibrium price and higher and higher equilibrium quantity of goods and services. On the other hand, if there is a decrease in supply of goods and services, prices tend to rise to a higher equilibrium price and a lower quantity of goods and services (Kramer, 2019)

According to C1, the "fast growing competitors and rapidly changing diplomatic global relationships may be a threat factor of Samsung Data System." This scenario is a view that political perspective is one of the risks that Samsung is facing in the international logistics. Concurrent to growing competitions in the global area are the diplomatic global relationships that these huge companies are facing and adjusting to. Another aspect with which Samsung faces risks in the political realm is the international trade, regulations and standards as shared by C2. This is in consonance with the findings of Withall and Berry (2019). When the international trade faces challenges, the 'flow of cargo, across inland borders, and escalating abnormal costs on the shipping' causes the rise of costs and delays the time of deliver. In order to make sure that the entire

requirements or regulations are rightfully conveyed and taken noted of and that nothing is forgotten, it is recommended that business firms ought to have a Trade Compliance Management Program. A lot of firms that have operated for decades or more have this TCMP strongly rooted in them. Examples of such companies are those in the aerospace and automobile fields. It is believed that 'specialized logistics firms, internationally, can guide and help with the progress of a TCMP, business firms that are newbies to the import and export of goods or services are advised to hire or develop 'internal resources' to take care of the total compliance issues.

Finally, another area by which Samsung faces risks is on the administrative angle. This, according to C2, is exemplified in the vendor infrastructure of the company. Moreover, as mentioned by most of the participants, the carrier freight is one of the biggest blunders in international logistics.

Protocols related to bookings and reservation of international logistics are also a risk that Samsung administration may look into. Bookings and reservation in international logistics is an arrangement made to have space, event, or service reserved at time in the future. This is often transacted with a carrier for reservation of freight space or vessel. Slot booking applications gave allowances or permission for the shippers to learn to subdivide loading points or cluster into similar groups. Space booking is a type of booking that enhances the practices and the constraints between the supply of delivery places and the demand (Patier et. al, 2014). In the research conducted by Patier (2014), it was found out with integrated book system, the performances of carriers when faced with system always find solutions and in the execution of time is entirely satisfactorily.

While the participants have identified these risks factors, they have also suggested ways by which these risks can be addressed, based on their experiences and insights. First and foremost, planning and decision-making for the top management should be data driven. C1 mentioned that a regular case study must be conducted to monitor progress and identify problems. C2 likewise mentioned that a good data analysis must be done on a regular basis; C3 mentioned that statistics must be kept for referencing purposes; and HAST1, HAST2 and HAST3 shared that risk assessment and development plan with partner must as well be conducted. These insights from the participants are in consonance with the findings of Rashid et. al (2019), which states that case study is qualitative research that helps in exploring a certain event or happening which is within a particular context coming from various types of data sources, undertaking such exploration through various lenses with the purpose to reveal many facets of the certain phenomenon and has been stressed that to conduct case studies into four phases: foundation, pre-field, field, and reporting phase.

**Risk clustering.** Risk clustering is the first step to identify various risks from the macro view down to the micro view. In this way, leaders and personnel can access to analyze each clustering group of risks in a systematic manner. As perceived by the research participants, clustering techniques in risk analysis brings both a disadvantage and a number of advantages. C1 said that it is time-consuming. Meanwhile, KC1 and CK2 mentioned that clustering helps the workers see a better and wider perspective of the situation, thereby, it helping them to understand the situation better, added KC4. By being able to see the whole picture. The findings of Marle and Vidal (2011, 2014), which reported that grouping risks gives a more sophisticated view, better awareness, consideration, and management or project risk, agrees with the insights shared by the participants.

Risk clusters, according to the participants, are best done through mapping method when monitoring and evaluating the risks involved in the business, shared by C1. This strategy is feasible as most of the risks are interconnected according to KC1 and KC4. In so doing, KC3 shared that it is convenient to check the contents, thereby making future countermeasures easier than previously identified risks.

Risk clustering, when appropriately conducted in any company, is important. The participants shared, based on their experiences, some benefits of this risk management strategy (Blue Sky, 2019). According to C1, risk clustering

enables the administration and workers alike to identify problems in the organization as well as identify the skills needed to solve and improve the problems. Risk clustering also allows the workforce to work together, especially within the and with the other departments, mentioned KC1 and KC2. According to the study of Marle (2011), using cluster approach in risk management can improve the coordination in an organization. The communication and coordination of risk owner improve the decisions in an organization. Clustering by interactions and fieldwork leads to an improvement.

**Factors Causing Risk.** The implementation of risk management is caused by different factors. Human beings, through their cooperation among workers and among contractors, as well as the role that technology play contributes to the success of risk management. More specifically, C1 and KC2 have identified teamwork and cooperation among the workers as positive factors that influence risk management. C3 and C4 also shared that open communication to understand human behavior is another factor that shapes the success of risk management. This is supported by HAST4 stating that business partners must share openly communicate with each other.

Further positive factors that influence risk management include research skills, organizational policies, experiences, and management. With research skills, C2 mentioned that accurate data and the ability to scientifically analyze the data is an edge in risk management. Researching in the field of risk accomplishes two main tasks. The first one is to study and treat risks that arise from certain activities in risk management, while the second task aims to research and perform developments in methods, concepts, theories, approaches and frameworks, to be able to characterize, assess and understand the (Aven & Zio, 2013). Furthermore, organizational policies which are stipulated in manuals and guidelines provide direction and standards for operations as well as human protocols. These policies and programs actually contain some so-called high-level principles or requisites which a specific agency or department

or even a functional area of the firm should observe and follow as per agreement with the management. They provide the organization a strategic vision by showing what risk and control environment looks like (Amadei, 2016). Previous experience from continual monitoring and reviewing of methods, actions, and procedures is essential to manage risk successfully.

Aside from the positive factors, the participants have also identified negative factors that may shape the risk management strategies. It is deemed necessary to share these insights in this study to shed light on both sides of the experiences. These negative factors include human attitude and interactions. According to C1, prejudice is one big blunder in risk management strategy. Biased judgment at works leads to poor choices, decisions and insights that are often incorrect (Blue Sky, 2019). It may cause employees and managers to make discriminatory decisions which, if employees filed a complaint, can affect the name of the institution or establishment (Mendez, 2017).

In addition, lack of open communication, according to C1 and C2, may lead to misunderstanding of human behaviors as shared by C3 and C4, which will subsequently lead to conflict within the department as mentioned by KC2. Open communication is vital in any organization. According to Victoria (2018) in his study about open communication, he mentioned that communication plays a vital role in the success of any organization, as such, it improves the employee and organization effectiveness, improve morale or enhance the self-esteem of management. With data-driven information, management is empowered to weigh priorities as deemed urgent within the organization. The ability to carefully balance priorities in an organization is a skill that organization leaders must uphold according to the study of Lexa (2016). In so doing, this enables the organization to achieve the organization's strategic objectives through appropriate time management and project management (Workfront, Inc., 2020).

**2. Risk Management Strategies.** Risk management strategy provides a structured and coherent approach to identifying, assessing and

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managing risk. This structured and coherent approach sets up a process which regularly updates and reviews the assessment which is based on new developments or actions taken. In this study, the participants suggested five management strategies to be considered by Samsung company. These strategies are: (1) focusing management strategies on key areas such as a) container management, risk management, and politically-influenced risks such as supplying shipping transporting and delivering; (2) clustering risks; (3) consultation between administration and workforce; (4) managing tasks; and (5) motivating employees.

In addition to the above-mentioned strategies, the participants further identified areas in which Samsung should give priority to the different departments of the company. The top two suggestions made by the participants were pertaining to facilitating team-building activities and reviewing the employee benefits. HAST1 suggested that when employees are involved in analysis brainstorming activities with colleagues, it will help augment employee relationships, thus empowering the employees to be even more productive at work. In so doing, HAST4 mentioned that such team-building activities can help develop symbiotic relationships among employees. Symbiotic relationships among employees within an organization, as reported in the study of (Anderson & Caldwell, 2018) help in increasing positive employee response.

The employee benefits are an important factor that motivates an employee to work. Accordingly, the benefits show to the employees how they are valued in an organization, as such it attracts and helps retain valuable employee in an organization. The participants in this study shared to the researchers that a clear manual and guideline is needed where KPI point system are stipulated. In this way, the employees enjoy the benefits and avoid being penalized for unmet quota.

In order to minimize risks that Samsung will face, the participants suggested that the administration must focus on container management, according to HAST1, HAST2 and HAST3. In addition, decision-making should be data driven, according to HAST 4, so that biases in decision -making can be avoided. Meanwhile, the human resource management of the Samsung organization should facilitate and encourage open communication among the colleagues within the and with other departments according to KC3 and Wittaya.

**3. Positive Outcomes.** To mitigate the occurrence of risks, the participants have identified suggestions that will help, based on their experiences and perspectives.

In addition, positive communication can be done by listening to the problem from partners as well as working and meeting with other departments, shared by HAST1. In this way, KC2 mentioned that employees will gain understanding of the risks. Open communication is vital in any organization.

Aside from positive communication, the participants of this study suggested that administrators must also exercise management of tasks. KC4 stated that the human resources should delegate tasks and divide cases among the different department as deemed appropriate based on given tasks. In so doing, KC1 affirmed that this will enable the company to maintain a well-structure and service standards. These perspectives from the participant about management agrees with the article from Project Central. The article gave statistics which state that 39% of projects struggled due to lack of planning, resources, and activities, 57% struggled due to "breakdown in communications", and 73% of respondents acknowledged that their projects are either always or usually do not have promising future even right from the start. The article also listed three factors where task managing makes a difference: the process, tools, and people.

## CONCLUSIONS

These are the final conclusions based on the findings:

Risk mitigation is necessary for Samsung SDS to succeed. The delay of delivery is the most common problem encountered in Samsung SDS so clustering the risks is the best option to address the issue on the delay of delivery.

Internal and external risks must be clearly delineated. This is because risks are always part of any company. Samsung SDS has to collaborate with other business associates. This is in line with the implementation of risk management strategy where the specialized logistics firms serve to be the most helpful factor.

It can be concluded as well that the identified strategies in the survey questionnaire create positive outcomes for Samsung SDS logistics network. Teamwork and cooperation are vital factors in influencing risk management. Prejudice and lack of open communication hinder risk management strategies.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

From the given conclusions which were just cited, the following recommendations are respectfully forwarded in line with Samsung SDS's needs:

1. Samsung SDS must always be vigilant and aware of the ever-increasing competition in the global market.
2. Samsung SDS management must consider the political and economic risks identified and come up with measures to counter these risks in a dynamic global order.
3. The top management must cluster these risks to address the issue of the delay of carrier freight or delivery.
4. To cluster these risks, Samsung SDS must use the mapping method as it monitors and evaluates risks.
5. Top management, especially the planning and decision-making areas, must be data driven.
6. There must be a good data analysis that must be done on a regular basis.
7. There must be a regular case study to be conducted to monitor progress and identify problems.
8. That Samsung SDS needs to maintain teamwork and cooperation among their employees to counter the negative factors of prejudice and lack of open communication among the workers as Samsung SDS tries to find strategies in risk management.

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