

Contextual factors for omni-channel warehousing: An empirical study in China

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Omni-channel retailing is a new concept developed from multi-channel retailing where different channels are integrated. Warehousing is the core of the distribution system and very important in reducing lead time and logistics cost. The Chinese market has much difference from a developed market. Chinese retailers have experience in transforming warehouse operations and design to omni-channel logistics. There are also some contextual factors and challenges in implementing omni-channel retailing.

Omni-channel retailing has led to more efficient and effective distribution systems and has become increasingly important in recent years. In this context, more and more companies plan to use omni-channel retailing. Therefore, many companies urgently need to transform into omni-channel logistics. Transforming to omni-channel logistics is critical for these companies because it reduces logistics costs and improves logistics performance. However, there is a lack of research on omni-channel logistics warehousing, especially in the Chinese market. Therefore, it is very useful and interesting to study China's omni-channel warehousing.

The focus of this study is how Chinese retailers adapt their warehouse operations and designs to omni-channel logistics. The purpose could be refined as looking for the experience of Chinese retailers, important contextual factors, and the challenges of omni-channel warehousing. To achieve this, the study follows a systematic approach. Use cross-case study methods and collect qualitative data through interviews and company websites. After we compared the data of the four companies, we gained the experience of Chinese retailers in omni-channel warehousing. Then, based on different experiences, the contextual factors are analyzed and the important contextual factors that affect the omni-channel warehousing in China are found out. The challenges were also discovered by comparing the company's data.

The research has shown that China's omni-channel retailing has a trend to higher automation and online fulfillment centers. Many contextual factors also have been analyzed regarding configuration elements. Retailers also face similar challenges such as cost-effective material handling, packaging and handling fluctuations. The conclusion was compared with the Swedish cases and some interesting differences were found. For example, because of the different labor costs in the two countries, they have different solutions for picking and storage in the electronics industry. In order to further improve the quality of this study, it is recommended to explore more differences between Chinese cases and Swedish cases and find out the reasons.