

Logistics Management in Cross-Border E-commerce: Opportunity and Regulatory Challenges

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Abstract

Online buying and selling across borders has rapidly expanded in recent years, presenting a good opportunity for firms in emerging economies, such as Pakistan. Although logistics management still poses one of the most significant concerns in providing an effective supply chain for transporting goods across borders. This paper aims to identify major opportunities available to logistics managers and regulatory concerns in cross-border e-commerce in Pakistan. Through a thematic analysis of interviews conducted with 12 logistics managers, three main themes emerged: technology adoption, internationalization and risk regulation. There were subthemes, including supply chain transparency with blockchain, optimizing routes through AI, and—markedly—customs issues. In this study, MAXQDA 2022 software was used for analysis, as it provided a structured approach to the overall process. The conclusion is that, despite the high potential of utilising technology to enhance operational effectiveness in the field of logistics, regulatory issues remain problematic. The author concludes the study by providing policy implications for the government to simplify the regulation of cross-border e-commerce and executive implications for logistics managers to leverage technology in seizing the opportunities presented by the rapidly growing cross-border e-commerce market.

Keywords: Logistics Management, Cross-Border, E-commerce, Opportunity, and Regulatory

1 Introduction

Cross-border e-business has expanded incredibly, creating new opportunities for business entities and individuals regarding international trade. The ease of access to the market has benefited many corporations worldwide, enabling them to reach customers across borders (Quelch & Klein, 1996; Tang & Li, 2024). In Pakistan, a country still on the cusp of an e-commerce revolution, cross-

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border e-commerce is poised to play a key role in driving growth. Alibaba and Amazon offer efficient and hassle-free models for trade, which contribute to Pakistan's opportunity to enter foreign markets and expand its sources of income (Ahmed et al., [2025](#); Chen et al., [2024](#)).

However, this is still a valuable and profitable concept overall, although a major issue still hampers its full development: logistics. Logistics, as a key factor, is crucial in the expeditious delivery of goods at the least cost and is what can be attributed to being one of the most challenging functions of international business. Logistics managers encounter logistical challenges due to the complexities of international shipments, including customs, tariffs, and international trade laws (Brdulak & Brdulak, [2021](#); Hassan et al., [2023](#)). For instance, Pakistan has been criticized for its logistics system's inability to support the fast-growing and evolving international e-commerce sector, where cross-border deliveries have been slow and expensive for both businesses and consumers (Ahmed et al., [2025](#)).

In the case of Pakistan, it is not enough for logistics managers to focus solely on basic delivery mechanisms. Cross-border logistics face challenges arising from regulatory factors, including issues with customs, trade barriers, and bureaucratic processes, as well as the need to conform to international norms (Grainger, [2021](#); Mohsen, [2024](#)). These barriers result in delays, financial costs, and inefficiencies, making the competitive context for Pakistani businesses in the global market less favorable (Ali et al., [2024](#)). Furthermore, this conclusion suggests that fragmented and inconsistent regulation hinders companies' ability to grow their businesses successfully (Lean et al., [2014](#); Zosu et al., [2024](#)).

However, there are many development opportunities shown below. Achievements in logistics technology have presented solutions such as blockchain and AI, which, if implemented, can significantly change the logistics industry. An example is blockchain, which has an added advantage in the supply chain where real-time consentment tracking minimizes fraud and misunderstandings (Singh & Parashar, [2021](#)). Similarly, AI-powered route optimisation has been shown to reduce the delivery time efficiently and cost of the transportation network (Mohsen, [2024](#)). That is why, as more and more logistics companies from Pakistan adopt these technologies, representatives from these industries can discuss addressing the existing shortcomings that affect the performance of these companies at the international level.

This paper examines the potential and constraints faced by logistics managers in Pakistan, specifically in relation to cross-border e-commerce (Grainger, [2021](#)). Employing this type of analysis, connected to 12 interviews conducted with logistics managers. This data analysis methodology involved asking participants questions, and their responses were coded using the MAXQDA 2022 software. This paper will assist policymakers in identifying the problems faced by cross-border e-commerce and help logistics firms develop effective strategies as the e-commerce market becomes increasingly competitive (Ahmed et al., [2025](#); Ali et al., [2024](#)).

2 Literature Review

2.1 Cross-Border E-commerce in the Global Context

International retail sales via the internet are now an essential part of international business, thanks to advances in technology and changes in consumer behavior. Firms from emerging markets are also expanding their selling into international markets through the help of platforms like Amazon, Alibaba, and eBay (Mahmud, [2021](#); Singh et al., [2023](#)). The integration of communication and digital transactions through third-party agents, such as payment gateways, logistics providers, and other online operators, has made the barriers to international trade even less cumbersome (Putrevu & Mertzanis, [2024](#)). Cross-border e-commerce has been seen by several emerging economies, such as Pakistan, as a significant opportunity to enhance export rates and improve their standing in the international realm, as noted by Sumbal et al. ([2024](#)). The conventional trading environment

has been eased by technology to the extent that SMEs can engage in import and export trade without the need for middlemen (Singh & Parashar, [2021](#)).

Therefore, cross-border e-commerce is not only a possibility for Pakistan to expand trade; it is an opportunity to enter the global digital economy (Han et al., [2024](#)). The country's location at the junction of South Asian and Middle Eastern markets provides the buyer with strategic access to these global markets. Still, Pakistan cross-border e-commerce is relatively new, and as with any young industry, it has multiple barriers that affect its performance on the international (Jian et al., [2023](#)). Among them, one can list the slow progress of the country's infrastructure, which complicates the movement of goods across borders. Transport infrastructure is also an important factor that negatively influences the effectiveness of product delivery since businesses have few and limited well-developed logistics technologies (Armah & Li, [2024](#); Hailemariam & Nuramo, [2024](#)).

As articulated by previous researchers, global platforms offer firms an equal opportunity to attain an international presence and increase competition levels (Rbehat & Marafi, [2024](#)). Currently, Pakistani companies are competing with local companies and multinationals that have better logistics systems and advanced technology. The latest studies have also revealed that many Pakistani enterprises are currently in a poor position to satisfy global consumers regarding delivery times and costs (Akram et al., [2022](#)). This situation is exacerbated by the fact that there is a small internet-using population, and most local establishments, including SMEs, are unfamiliar with the opportunities that cross-border e-commerce has to offer.

Still another and perhaps the biggest obstacle for the cross-border e-commerce industry in Pakistan is the question of regulation. While the government has implemented some policies to foster digital trade, they are mostly sector-specific and not a coherent structure that this industry actually requires (Herman & Oliver, [2023](#)). There are normally numerous formalities involved in customs, and high tariffs and other trade barriers frustrate businesses, which lead to a high cost of exporting products. Secondly, Pakistani companies must adhere to stringent foreign trade laws and standards to increase exports, making cross-border e-commerce supply chain management a complex task (Ahi et al., [2023](#)).

2.2 Logistics Management in Cross-Border Trade

Logistics is a critical success factor in global e-commerce since it oversees goods movement throughout the stipulated channels (Cassia & Magno, [2022](#); Coman et al., [2020](#)). It is an essential component for facilitating international trade, ensuring inventory delivery without compromising supply chain security (Shen et al., [2023](#)). The practical and efficient management of supply chain costs provides increased efficiency and satisfaction to consumers, playing a critical role in understanding the relative advantage of a firm operating in a global environment (Ahmad et al., [2024](#); Auboin et al., [2021](#)).

Logistics management has undergone significant changes over the last decade in the global supply chain, driven by technological advancements. The use of blockchain technology, AI, and IoT technologies has enhanced the performance of logistic operations and made it easier for companies to monitor their supply chain (Javed, [2020](#)). For instance, blockchain technology has helped enhance supply chain diversity by enabling all parties to have a verified log of all the transactions made in the supply chain (Agarwal et al., [2024](#); Santhi & Muthuswamy, [2023](#)). This protects companies against losses due to fraud and mistakes, making it easier to conduct business across national boundaries and comply with international market rules. Likewise, delivery processes have been utilized to reduce fuel expenses and improve delivery times through the optimal planning of delivery routes (Russo & Comi, [2021](#); Zosu et al., [2024](#)). Smart sensors and tracking systems within the IoT context can help logistics managers track shipments, minimize theft and damaged stock, and ensure timely and proper delivery of goods (Khan et al., [2022](#)).

It reveals that in Pakistan, the field of logistics management still faces numerous complexities. Most of the logistics infrastructure is inadequate, and many players in the logistics industry cannot utilize the best technological tools to support their logistics services (Ahmad et al., [2024](#)). The transport system, which is actually the most significant part of the domestic supply chain, is usually poor, especially the road network, which is characterized by poor maintenance and congestion, especially in rural areas, which leads to time and cost overruns (Ali et al., [2024](#)). Moreover, most of the foreign trade in Pakistan is through seaports, and these are seriously constrained by such problems as congestion, which causes long transmission durations (Shoukat & Xiaoqiang, [2023](#)). These logistic costs have a direct relation with the overall cost structure in Pakistan that hinders firms' capability of offering their products cheaper than others in the global market (Javed, [2020](#)).

Nevertheless, there are emerging indications on the pathway to improvement. As pointed out by Sumbal et al. ([2024](#)), the role of technology in the operations of the logistics companies has gained high importance in Pakistan, particularly to enhance efficiency and cutting costs. While some companies are experimenting with early applications of artificial intelligence (AI) for demand forecasting and routing optimization, others are exploring the potential of applying blockchain for supply chain transparency. In addition, the relationships with international logistics providers have suggested that some Pakistani organizations enter new markets; otherwise, they will gain adequate knowledge and support to enhance their logistical systems. Although it is a method yet to be fully embraced, most enterprises are not in a position to fund the implementation of the respective technologies (Ahmad et al., [2024](#)).

2.3 Opportunities in Cross-Border Logistics

However, there are several issues in the context of the Pakistani logistics industry, which provide good opportunities for the development of cross-border e-retail services. The authors list the most delightful prospect as the use of technological advancements to improve the supply chain (Khan et al., [2022](#)). When applied, blockchain technology, AI, and IoT enhance supply chain visibility, shorten delivery times, and increase customer satisfaction for Pakistani companies (Javed, [2020](#)). For example, the use of blockchain can enable tracking of inventory through record-keeping, which presents real-time control of product shipments across borders, rules, and regulations. This approach also highlights weaknesses, limitations, and Promising opportunities, along with their corresponding compliance requirements (Ho et al., [2021](#)). Similarly, artificial intelligence applications can take a large dataset for solving route problems for deliveries, demand trends, and risks in the supply chain (Ilyas et al., [2024](#)).

Pakistani logistics companies have essential opportunities, including the last one that involves a joint partnership with established international logistics companies (Ahmad et al., [2024](#)). Such partnerships could give Pakistani firms the foreign knowledge, capacity, and base they need to push into new territories (Hassan et al., [2023](#); Ilyas et al., [2024](#)). For instance, entering into partnerships with the logistics firms of China has helped the Pakistani companies harness the logistics facilities of China that have linkages all over Asia and beyond (Lean et al., [2014](#)). These partnerships can also assist Pakistani companies, consolidate intricate knowledge of the Pakistani and international trading laws governing the trading encounters and therefore assist assure the companies in cross border trade in manner that prevents them from facing expensive delays that might be inclined by low knowledge of the regulations governing cross border trade (Shen et al., [2023](#)).

The third major opportunity for operation and development of the Pakistani logistics companies consists in the technological integration with the global industries and involvement in international partnerships: the fourth opportunity is the trend in the increase of the cross-border e-commerce in the emerging markets (Auboin et al., [2021](#); Ali et al., [2024](#)). Based on the current analysis, the level of e-commerce consumer goods in countries like China, India, and the UAE will increase in

the future, thus offering Pakistani companies the opportunity to export their products into the emerging markets (Chen et al., [2024](#)). To this effect, Pakistan is strategically placed to access these countries through neighboring country logistics; this will result in shorter lead times and cheaper rates, making the Lebara logistics providers more competitive in the Lebara market (Javed, [2020](#)).

At last, there are new measures by the Pakistani government, including the recently drafted Pakistan Digital Trade Policy and an ongoing Pakistan Infrastructure Review that includes improvements of the country's logistics and other strong exits for future growth (Hassan et al., [2023](#)). For instance, the National Freight and Logistics Policy in Pakistan is a policy prepared by the government that focuses on modernizing the logistics sector by investing on new infrastructure, adopting technologies and simplifying custom processes (Javed, [2020](#)). These initiatives are believed to lead to the favorable conditions for expansion of the cross border B2C e-commerce so that the Pakistani companies can effectively compete in the global market (Ahmad et al., [2024](#)).

2.4 Regulatory Challenges

Even with these opportunities, Pakistan logistic firms are faced with a number of regulatory challenges that prevents them from fully competing for cross-border e-commerce business. One of the weaknesses is the over sophistication of customs formalities that most of the time faces[s] lengthy and cumbersome procedures (Rbehat & Marafi, [2024](#)). Businesses end up attuning themselves to a complex network of rules depending on the country of operation, the failure which attracts either a penalty in terms of time and associated cost or confiscation of goods (Ali et al., [2024](#)). Ghazi et al. ([2024](#)) highlighted that Pakistan is one of those nations where customs are complex, and it takes a long time for organizations to get their Import/Export goods cleared, and in most cases, expenses are high due to tariffs. These challenges are compounded by poor collaboration between different government departments, thus adding more time to the process (Coman et al., [2020](#)).

Apart from customs obstacles, the Pakistani companies are under obligations of international trade laws, including the WTO and WCO. This implies that any company getting involved in cross-border E-commerce activities must ensure that they meet this standard, since failure to do so may lead to restrictions on their exports, and their entry into international markets is likely to be denied (Cassia & Magno, [2022](#)). But the problem is that most of the business organisations operating in the Pakistani context do not have the knowledge and capital to implement these laws; hence, they are being hindered from venturing into other new markets (Ghazi et al., [2024](#); Lucas et al., [2022](#)).

Pakistani logistics firms are challenged by other regulations, which include another regulation puzzle for cross-border e-commerce that is yet to be harmonized (Ramizo & Terada-Hagiwara, [2025](#)). Hence, even though the government has put in place some policies designed at (marketing) implementing digital trade, these policies are generally disjointed and do not possess the synergy required to propel the industry forward (Auboin et al., [2021](#)). This must lead to uncertainty among business entities, in the sense that the later cannot be sure of how it's or her logistics chain looks like or perhaps, which investment to make on the commerce (Xiao et al., [2021](#)).

Additionally, the higher cost of meeting the international regulations burden the financial attitude of the Pakistani companies (Farooq & Noor, [2021](#)). Companies have to develop new product technologies, seek skilled lawyers and regulations advisors, and review their operations for compliance with global standards regularly. In the context of the Pakistan brethren, these costs are unaffordable to most SMEs and by implication inhibit their capacities to engage in cross border e-commerce (Abdullah et al., [2023](#)).

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This present research employs a qualitative research paradigm to assess the potential and legal

issues of cross-border electronic commerce logistics in the context of Pakistan. Qualitative research is more suitable for this study because it offers an opportunity to capture the participants' experiences, feelings, and perceptions about the objects of study (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The paper's main method of data analysis is thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a research method used in making patterns (themes) in qualitative data hence suitable for making the following understandings of the aspects of logistics management in cross-border e-commerce.

The study is based on interviews with logistics managers from cross-border e-commerce organisations. Categorisation, which was achieved through a process known as thematic analysis, was considered ideal as it facilitates categorising large amounts of textual data by coding using MAXQDA 2022 software. This way, the study was able to provide a comprehensive account of the participants' experiences regarding the technological, operational, and regulatory prospects of logistics in cross-border trade.

3.2 Participants

The participants for this study were recruited purposively, a non-probability sampling technique favored in qualitative research, where participants are selected to meet specific criteria regarding their competence in addressing the research questions, as affirmed by Palinkas et al. (2015). Special attention was paid to the selection criterion that limits all respondents to those who have been managing logistics operations for at least 10 years and are focused on the e-commerce cross-border market. They were also required to be involved in the decision-making process regarding logistics management in organisations engaged in exporting, importing, or both in international trade companies, and to have first-hand experience with the regulatory requirements of the technologies and logistics faced in Pakistan's cross-border e-commerce market.

Logistics managers available for interviews were identified from a multinational electric logistics company, a multinational logistics firm, a local oil firm, an international shipping company, a small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) logistics firm, a local company, and an international shipping company. This diversification offered a holistic perspective of the cross-border logistics environment and assessed how various types of firms manage logistics issues. The variety of companies also allowed for a comparison of how firms of different sizes and from different industries manage and approach the opportunities and challenges of cross-border e-commerce.

3.3 Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were used for data collection, and they are an extensively employed type of qualitative interview that falls somewhere between fixed questionnaires and open-ended interviews. The interviews ranged from 60 to 90 minutes, depending on how much the participants had to say and the level of detail they provided regarding the logistics operations' problems they faced. Due to variations in plans and participant availability, the interviews were conducted both physically and virtually. The questions to interviewees followed a structure that can help the respondent provide detailed answers to some significant questions which were Logistics issues that affect cross border e-commerce, effect of regulations and customs on Logistics, Role of innovative technologies such as block chain And Artificial Intelligence in logistics, and how they Manage barriers in Cross Border Logistics Environment. By doing so, the author of the research established that the information gathered was comprehensive, having fully identified the areas of concern for the research. Informed consent for audiotape recording of interviews was sought from each of them, and interviews were transcribed airtight in their entirety.

3.4 Ethical Statement

This study is conducted in accordance with the guidelines of the University of Education's Multan Campus Ethics Committee, ensuring the well-being of participants and adhering to the highest standards of research integrity. All participants belong to Pakistan provided informed consent to

participate in the study. Data collection followed all ethical guidelines for maintaining the privacy and security of personal information.

This study was approved by the department of research and Innovations ethical board committee via approval number SBE/BUS/6458654/2024 dated 01-08-2024 of the University of education Multan Campus and the protocols used in the study were approved by the University. The project recruitment period for the data collection through interview lasts from 09-08-2024 to 01-09-2024. A total of sample size of 12 logistics interviews was intended as our survey and informed consent forms in written according to institutional guidelines attained, and the study was approved by the Board. The protocols used in the study were approved by the University of Education Human Subjects Committee.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data analysis process was done manually by employing the qualitative data analysis program, MAXQDA 2022, which has been considered to be very effective in coding, categorizing and looking for themes within massive number of texts. Three reasons for selecting MAXQDA are as follows: First, it is easy to use; second, it is capable of handling large data sets effectively (Silver & Lewins, 2019). To ensure rigorous thematic analysis, the research adhered to a six-phase method presented by Braun & Clarke (2022).

First, there was an initial exposure to the data where the research team tapes and review the interview transcripts several times. This first level of engagement with the data gave the team a chance to sit with it for a while and identify some potential patterns of discussions and macro-level issues that the participants raised. Thus, after that, the team progressed toward the second phase known as generating initial codes. By doing the coding manually in segments relevant for the research questions, it was possible to use the feature of MAXQDA where certain texts matched to topics such as regulatory difficulties or the influence of applications such as blockchain and artificial intelligence on the field of logistics was identified and coded correspondingly.

The third phase, known as theme development, involved assigning codes to more general themes that describe the themes consistently found in the data. For instance, technological integration was identified as a theme, along with its sub-themes, such as the application of blockchain technology to enhance supply chain transparency. The next phase involves reviewing the themes provided and verifying that they are indeed applicable to the data by comparing them to the codes. This review process also ensured that other participants supported the identified themes, as seen from several data points.

The fifth phase involved defining and naming themes, where the labels for each theme were defined clearly and appropriately. Its inclusion ensured that the themes were distinct from one another while acknowledging their connections to other themes. Lastly, the data analysis, which included writing up the analysis, consisted of translating the themes into a narrative that responded to the research questions and findings. Moreover, MAXQDA contains tools like word clouds and frequency tables, which helped the researcher to have a faster understanding of the points mentioned by people through the frequency tables and emphasised points with the word cloud.

4 Results

The thematic analysis of interviews revealed three significant themes: technological integration, market expansion, and regulatory challenges. These themes define the logistics manager's key concern areas in Pakistan for cross border E-commerce. These were subsequently subdivided into sub-themes that offered a more definition of the challenges and opportunities. The themes are described in detail below along with discussion of the sub-themes and quotations from participants to ground the findings.

4.1 Word Cloud

The word cloud included in this paper aims to illustrate topics that constitute the field of cross-border logistics management in e-commerce. The most noticeable terms include trade, supply and chain, pointing to the fact that the vital concern of the undertaking is supply chain and international flow of products. Complexities, compliance, and customs reflect the regulatory and operational challenges that logistics company managers face when working with international standards and customs policies. Also, terms like blockchain, AI, and integration into technology create awareness about the use of technology to enhance, make, and speed up logistics operations. Other frequently used terms, such as market, expansion, freight, present continuous attempts to establish market entry through logistics solutions, while delay, tariffs and cost imply the challenges faced in the cross-border logistics operations. Figure 1 shows the word count and source by MAXQDA.



Frequency of Themes and Sub-Themes Identified

The following table 1 shows the number of themes and sub-themes that emerged from the interviews:

Table 1: Themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-Themes	Frequency
Technological Integration	Blockchain in Supply Chain Visibility	8
	Use of AI for Route Optimisation	10
Market Expansion	Increased Access to New Markets	7
	Reduction in Delivery Time	5
Regulatory Challenges	Complexities of Customs and Trade Tariffs	9
	Compliance with International Standards	6

This is a tabular representation of the number of times each theme and sub-theme appeared in the twelve interviews conducted. The most popular topic of Technological Integration was noted through the use of AI for route optimisation, as mentioned by 10 participants. This indicates that an increasing number of logistics managers in Pakistan are inclined towards availing themselves of the services offered by AI. Risks and Regulatory Challenges were also mentioned by nine participants, who stated that customs and trade tariffs are significant barriers to e-commerce across borders. This means that, despite certain potential for development, one still faces considerable regulatory challenges. Moreover, Figure 2 shows the frequencies of sub-themes.

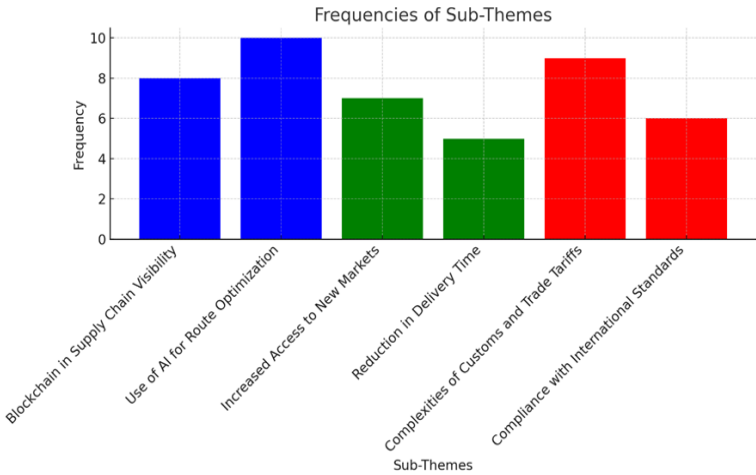


Figure 2: Frequencies of Sub-Themes

Theme 1: Technological Integration

In this study, the role of technological integration emerged as a key success factor in enhancing logistics efficiency and sustaining the competitive advantage of cross-border e-commerce. Several logistics managers stated that the incorporation of blockchain and Artificial Intelligence (AI) has had a significant influence on the companies' performance, as it enables the optimisation of processes and provides transparency in the supply chain.

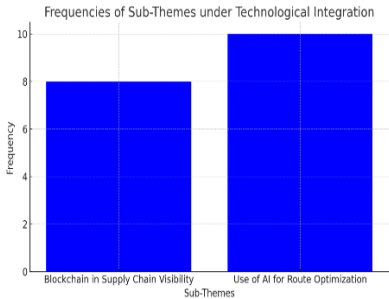


Figure 3: Sub-Themes of First Theme – Technological Integration

Sub-theme 1.1: Blockchain in Supply Chain Visibility

Blockchain was emphasised as a major advancement towards the achievement of visibility and efficiency in supply chains. One of the most cited aspects of blockchain implementation is its ability to provide end-to-end real-time data on shipments to enhance record credibility and meet international requirements.

One participant stated, “I can say that blockchain has been a revolution to us. We have the ability to track our shipments internationally and, anything unlucky is clearly seen, thus, almost eradicating fraudulent activities.”

Another participant said it this way, “The best thing about blockchain is that it’s easier to adhere to international regulations because it creates a record of every steps taken at the supply chain. It

has assisted in negating many of the customs problems.”

With the implementation of blockchain, errors and differences that affect the movement of products among borders are reduced making the logistics system more effective. It has proven to be usefully applied in particular to the logistics of high-value goods, whereby the concerns of clients become obtainable in real-time.

Sub-theme 1.2: Use of AI for Route Optimization

Several Karachi based logistics companies have integrated Artificial intelligence (AI) in their operation to map required delivery routes and as a result curbed their operating expenses. People talked about some of the technologies that use AI in deciding the best ways to deliver goods based on the shortest energy consumption and the fastest speeds at which they can be delivered.

One of the participants reported, “With the help of AI incorporating in the selection of routes we have achieved a decrease in delivery times by up to a quarter. With actual traffic and weather status and real fuel prices, it assists us in determining the best routes to take.” Another participant noted, “Hiring firms using AI has had benefits of reduced fuel and labor expenditure, plus the delivery duration has also been alleviated. This has boosted customer relations to great improved levels.”

As a result, using artificial intelligence tools, the logistics managers can intensify their decisions making to provide very efficient and fast effective deliveries at a lesser cost as they face the complex world of cross border e-commerce environment.

Theme 2: Market Expansion

Opportunities: Increase in Markets: The growth of cross-border electronic business can be seen as one of the major hopes for Pakistan. When asked, participants acknowledged that expansion into new global markets has provided their organisations with opportunities to increase gross and clientele. Figure 4 shows the market expansion.

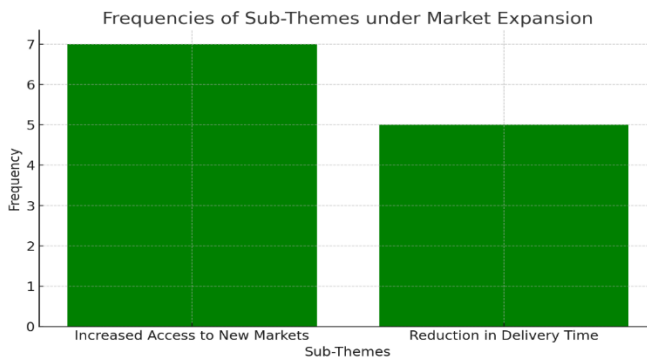


Figure 4: Sub-Themes of Second Theme – Market Expansion

Sub-theme 2.1: Increased Access to New Markets

Through cross border e-commerce Pakistani companies and sellers have been expanded their markets in regions such as Europe, North American and Asia. A number of participants spoke about cross-border commerce as a way for their companies to enter foreign markets or saying their company is no longer confined to their borders.

A participant shared, “Cross border e-commerce has created opportunities for Europe for us.” We

are able to now reach customers we could never get to in the first place and this has greatly improved our sales.” Likewise, another participant added, “This position has made our presence in the North American market expand due to the cross-border e-commerce. It is now international and that is why the standards have gone up.”

New markets are significant for companies trying to avoid concentrating on the domestic market and are, therefore, noteworthy for its cross-country E-commerce growth.

Sub-theme 2.2: Reduction in Delivery Time through Air Freight

Aerospace importing has remained a preferred method of shortening delivery time given the period-sensitive or high-value products it holds. The participants stated that air freight has enabled them to complete delivery within tight time restraints thus serve the customers & mitigate the losses that could be caused by delayed consignment. One participant explained, “We externalised some of our high value products by using air freight instead of road transport. We have successfully eradicated delays where we now can meet the expectation level of our clients with much more ease.” Another participant said, “Air freight has been vital to sustaining competitive advantage in international e-business. Some even said that it is costly, but the speed is good for those who doing urgent delivery of goods.” Air freight although expensive as a transport mechanism is deemed to be very important especially for companies in business with products that require haste. The participants also opined that through air freight their businesses were well positioned to compete in the international markets.

Theme 3: Regulatory Challenges

Opportunities centered on technology and market growth were identified as promising drivers of B2C e-commerce in Pakistan, yet participants agreed that regulatory hurdles present one of the most formidable barriers to cross-border B2C e-commerce. Perhaps, the most significant difficulty reported by the logistics managers was the understanding of the local customs requirements together with the necessity to meet the international standards. Figure 5 is related to regulatory challenges.

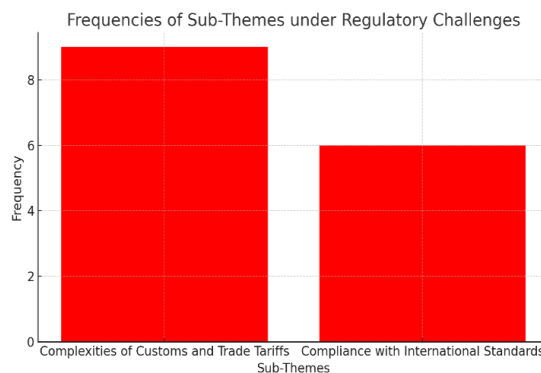


Figure 5: Sub-Themes of Third Theme – Regulatory Challenges

Sub-theme 3.1: Complexities of Customs and Trade Tariffs

Customs formalities and trade taxes are some of the most challenging issues that truck drivers and other players in the cross-border e-Commerce supply chain in Pakistan face to date. Respondents reported on the issues with the time consuming as well as expensive formalities, which are related to customs clearance.

One participant remarked, “The clearance process also positively donned by customs can really be nothing but a nightmare. Far too much paperwork is expected, which is undesirable with tariffs so high that they eat into our profit streams.” Another participant added, “This has happened to us several times: the company receives consignments that arrive at customs for weeks, sometimes even months. This is the worst part: It’s a constant struggle to get things moving.”

Among all these challenges, competition has been a significant hurdle that hinders the efficient operation of Pakistani companies in the international market. The high cost and long time typically lead to unsatisfied customers and low competitiveness of the firm.

Sub-theme 3.2: Compliance with International Standards

The other competitors' strains include the failure to adhere to international standards, for instance, the World Customs Organisation (WCO). Several people accentuated the fact that ‘there is a lack of parity between Pakistani rules and the standard norms of foreign countries to export goods.’

One participant explained, “The greatest risk of our organisation lies in not meeting the standards set by other countries. The principle of non-discrimination has also been met this year, not only do we have to conform to Pakistani requirements, but we also have to be certain about the standards of the countries we are shipping to.”

Another participant stated, “This has cost us business in some regions, due to their laid down laws and regulations, we could not do business with them. We must get some more assistance from the government in dealing with these many standards.” A common problem that arises is the disparity between local and international legislation, resulting in lengthy and expensive processes that make it challenging for Pakistani companies to establish themselves in the international arena.

4.2 Conceptual Framework

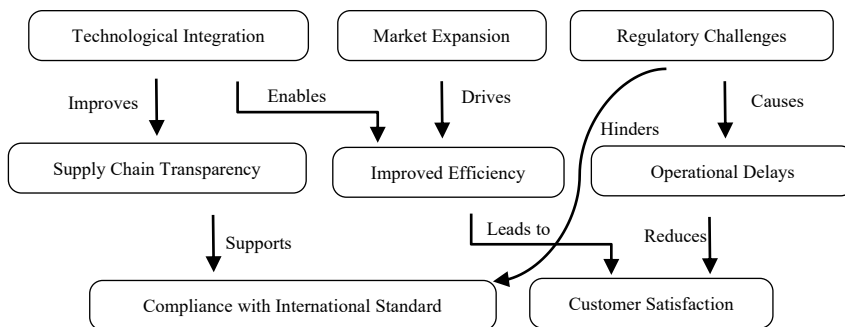


Figure 6: Conceptual Framework

The conceptual flow model in Figure 1 shows how Technological Integration leads to Improved Efficiency and affects Supply Chain Transparency in cross-border management. Reducing cost drives Customer Satisfaction, and increasing the organisation's transparency results in Compliance with International Standards. Nevertheless, Regulatory Challenges are established to result in Operational Delays and negatively impact compliance processes. On the other hand, Market Expansion contributes to the improvement of process efficiency, although it is challenged by regulatory and operational challenges that exist in the field of logistics management. These operational delays lower overall customer satisfaction, drawing attention to the interaction between technology, regulation, and operations in enhancing cross-border logistics management.

5 Discussion

From the above stylised themes, it is apparent that there are rich technological prospects for enhancing logistics management in cross-border e-commerce in Pakistan (Ali et al., 2024; Ho et al., 2021). Technologies of modernity, such as blockchain and AI, have well espoused themselves in some of the conventional challenges of logistical management, including tracking and route finding (Ahmad et al., 2024). However, these technological advancements are not without their controversies, as the logistics sector still suffers significant barriers to regulation and still suffers from high customs procedures and international compliance (Shen et al., 2023; Shoukat & Xiaoqiang, 2023). In this section, the findings are presented in relation to previous research studies to support the themes identified in the research.

Probably, the most dramatic change discussed during interviews is the process of technology enhancement in logistics activities (Ramizo & Terada-Hagiwara, 2025). The most often mentioned technologies by the participants, such as blockchain and AI, were considered crucial enablers of better efficiency, transparency, and cost optimization in the cross-border logistics environment. This is based on the actual research by Büyüközkan and Göçer (2018), which specifies that using blockchain in the supply chain will increase the transparency ratio by having a secure record of all transactions. Another practical application of blockchain is to track the shipment's location and ensure the honesty of the records, for instance, in e-commerce, since numerous and often concealed cross-border supply chains exist in firms today (Abdullah et al., 2023; Farooq & Noor, 2021). For instance, one of the participants also pointed out that using blockchain made it easier to understand and adhere to international standards, as all transactions in the supply chain were documented transparently.

Similarly, the application of AI to achieve better route optimisation has been equally effective. With the help of AI, it becomes possible to sort large amounts of real-time information about traffic flow and weather, for example, to select the shortest time for delivery (Russo & Comi, 2021; Xiao et al., 2021). This results in reduced fuel consumption, decreased idle time, and, most importantly, improved customer satisfaction. Fatorachian and Kazemi (2021) also affirm that with the growing popularity of logistics companies, the AI-enabled route optimization tool has become a must-have for logistics companies in the competitive environment (Ahmad et al., 2024; Ghazi et al., 2024). According to one of the participants in this study, the use of AI has cut delivery time by up to 25%, notwithstanding the vast opportunities that AI holds for making Pakistan's logistics companies more competitive (Cassia & Magno, 2022).

Although technological integration appears to offer numerous benefits, the study also reveals that regulation remains a significant barrier to cross-border trade. Specifically, concerns including distortion arising from complex customs procedures and meeting international trade relations were reported to be significant challenges. This figure aligns with current published work, which emphasises that most emerging economies are constrained by a multitude of regulations when engaging in cross-border e-commerce. According to Ghazi et al. (2024), unpredictable rules regarding importation, high tariffs, and long processing duration make cross-border flows considerably delayed and expensive. As with other participants in this study, customs clearance took centre stage as one of the leading causes of delayed deliveries, some of which could take weeks or even months.

Other important concerns expressed by logistics managers included the inability to agree with the World Customs Organisation (WCO) requirements. Some participants operationalising their logistics in the international marketplace pointed out that regulatory structures in Pakistan were not in conformity with global requirements, thereby adding complications to the cross-border logistics process. These results reiterate the observations made by Brdulak and Brdulak (2021), who assert that differences between national and foreign rules and guidelines may result in slowed shipping, additional expenses and rejection of delivery at customs. To these challenges, some regulatory barriers put up by the regulatory bodies of the country are a big problem for the

international companies to compete with the Pakistani logistics companies as the Pakistan has most e regulatory barriers than other countries where most of the logistic companies work quite easily (Abdullah et al., [2023](#); Farooq & Noor, [2021](#)). One of the participants noted that high cost of implementing these standards and following the multiple and complex rules of Pakistan Customs has become a barrier to future export growth (Ali et al., [2024](#); Ghazi et al., [2024](#)).

Furthermore, other issues aside from customs issues include the fact that the total business environment of Pakistan does not appear to be fully ready to accommodate cross border e-business. While the government has brought out policies for the promotion of digital trade including the National Freight and Logistics Policy, the participants responding in the study pointed out that such measures are yet to bring methods of changing at the field level. This is as echoed in Ahmad et al. ([2024](#)) as he strongly postulates that while there is acknowledgment of policy reforms in the executive premise, the actual practice of these reforms has been slow and many logistics companies still experience the same policy challenges as before.

The literature also goes in support of the view that it is possible for Pakistani firms to overcome, to some extent, some or most of these challenges through entry into partnership with international logistics firms (Grainger, [2021](#); Hassan et al., [2023](#)). Through integrating the local logistics companies with the international partners, the local logistics companies are better placed to understand the regulatory laws in the global market and to penetrate the new market opportunities. According to Nand et al. ([2021](#)), there are still some research gaps, including the following: Emerging economy's firms can enhance and update their technology and regulatory strategies through partnering with international logistic providers to increase competitiveness in cross border-e-commerce (Lean et al., [2014](#); Rbehat & Marafi, [2024](#)). This was confirmed by several of the participants in this study who supported the observations made in this regard, asserting that the establishment of partnership with international firms has made it easier for them to manage their operations and deal with the many challenges that characterize international business.

In conclusion, the research results of the present study are consistent with the theoretical framework on cross-border e-commerce and logistics. Technology offers which includes the blockchain and AI are found to have a potential ability to redefine the logistic operation and provide end to end visibility of supply chain networks while identifying the efficient and accurate delivery routes (Mohsen, [2024](#); Singh & Parashar, [2021](#)). Nevertheless, issues such as custom requirements and the company's compliance with regulations from one country to the other present a major hurdle to growth. Mitigating these issues will call for collective participation of the government as well as private players to rationalize bureaucracy, enhance the customs procedures and avail international linkages. In this way, a Pakistani logistics company can contribute more towards opportunities offered by cross-border e-commerce business and can strengthen its competitive environment in the international market.

5.1 Conclusion

This research offers valuable insights into the growth prospects and ongoing regulatory constraints faced by logistics managers in Pakistan's cross-border Electronic Commerce sector. The application of advanced technologies, such as blockchain and AI, opens up large opportunities to maximize transparency in supply chains, optimize delivery logistics, and minimize expenses. Many logistics companies have adopted these technologies, and their impact on efficiency and customer satisfaction has been documented. Nevertheless, the problem of non-tariff barriers, overregulation, and enhanced bureaucracy, including customs formalities, trade tariffs, and conformity with standard requirements, make the trade of goods across borders more challenging.

However, to optimally exploit the opportunities that come with Cross-Border E-Commerce, it is time for policymakers to address these challenges in regulating Cross-Border E-Commerce. Harmonization of the local procedures with international ones, elimination of excessive

bureaucratic procedures, and cooperation with global logistics companies are seen as the most efficient directions to increase the level of support for cross-border trade. If these barriers are overcome, Pakistan's logistics can improve, enhancing competition and enabling effective participation in global e-commerce.

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7 Appendix 1

Interview Questions: Cross-Border E-commerce Logistics

1. What position are you in logistics management, and how many years have you been in cross-border e-commerce?
2. What have you focused most, in your company or organisation, in the realm of logistic management in international business?
3. What roles would you identify as being strategic to logistics players operating in cross-border e-commerce?
4. In what ways has your company applied advance in technology to enhance the supply chain for international business?
5. Have your company signed any international logistics firms or other players in the value chain into your operations?
6. What has been your primary focus in logistics management related to cross-border trade?
7. In your experience, what are the key opportunities for logistics companies operating in cross-border e-commerce?
8. How has your company leveraged technological advancements to improve logistics efficiency in cross-border trade?
9. Can you describe any partnerships or collaborations your company has formed with international logistics firms? In what ways did these affect you?
10. How is blockchain technology being used in your logistics operations? What benefits have you observed in terms of supply chain transparency?
11. Have you implemented AI-driven solutions for route optimization or demand forecasting? What new enhancement have you observed in terms of delivery time and cost?
12. What difficult you have experience while implementing emergent technologies such as blockchain and AI?
13. In your company, what are the greatest regulatory forces that undermines cross-border logistics activities?
14. What roles do customs procedures together with trade tariffs play in your business?ng

you have been working in cross-border e-commerce?

15. How has cross-border e-commerce allowed your company to enter new markets? What regions have you expanded into, and what challenges or opportunities have arisen?
16. How do you manage logistics for high-value or time-sensitive goods in cross-border trade? Do you use air freight, and what are the trade-offs?
17. How do you think regulatory reforms could improve cross-border logistics in Pakistan? What specific policies or changes would you recommend to simplify logistics management?
18. How do you handle operational delays caused by regulatory barriers? Are there strategies you've implemented to mitigate these issues?
19. What technological or operational innovations do you foresee becoming important in the next five years for cross-border logistics?
20. How do you plan to further enhance your company's logistics operations to remain competitive in the international market?
21. What advice would you give to other logistics managers facing similar challenges in cross-border e-commerce?
22. Are there any other key aspects of cross-border logistics that we haven't covered but are important to your role?