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# LOGISTICS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF IMPORT AND EXPORT THROUGH THE BORDER GATE OF CAO BANG: SITUATION AND SOLUTIONS

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*In recent years, border gate logistics service has contributed to ensure the production business activities of companies, cut costs and improve quality of products and services, which allow businesses to create competitive advantages in the market. However, logistics services in the border area are still inadequate and have not been fully exploited. The paper evaluates the current situation of logistics to afford the needs of import and export through the border gate economic area in Cao Bang province by using results of surveys to group of import and export enterprises, transport enterprises, logistics service providers and state management agencies. Based on these results, the research team proposed a number of recommendations, which can help to develop logistics services to meet the needs of export and import through border gates in Cao Bang province next time.*

**Keywords:** Cao Bang's border gate; logistics; import and export.

## 1. Introduction

According to the report of Vietnam Logistics Service (2017), the border gate logistics services contributed to ensure the production and business activities of enterprises, reducing costs and improving the quality of products and services. Beside that, logistics services contributed to improve the socio-economic efficiency of the nation through economic stimulation in the border provinces. In addition, the border gate economy has contributed significantly to socio-economic development; the system of services and trade has been strongly promoted, has been gradually forming points, service area for importing and exporting goods at border gates.

Cao Bang is considered as a province with sufficient conditions and potential to develop the border

gate economy, especially export and import activities, serving the need of transiting goods through border gate. In addition, the process of accelerating economic integration allows Cao Bang province to have more favorable conditions for the development of the logistics services system. According to statistics, the growth rate of total import and export through the border gates in Cao Bang province is relatively high and stable, the total import and export in the period 2011 - 2015 reached USD 1,575 million, an increase of 168% in comparison to the period 2006 - 2010. The total import-export of temporary import and re-exported through Cao Bang province in the period 2011-2015 reached 3.035 million. However, according to experts, logistics services in Cao Bang province are not developed corresponding with the potential, especially not

actively contribute to increase the competitiveness of enterprises. Logistics activities from production to storage, transportation, distribution, circulation, etc... have developed for many years, but still at the scattered and fragmented level. These logistics activities are limited in the form of mechanical assembly.

In this context, this research aims to analyze and assess the logistics situation in order to meet the import and export demand at the border gates in Cao Bang province, thereby proposing solutions to develop logistics services to meet the export and import demand through border gate economic zone in Cao Bang.

## 2. Theoretical issues on logistics through border gates

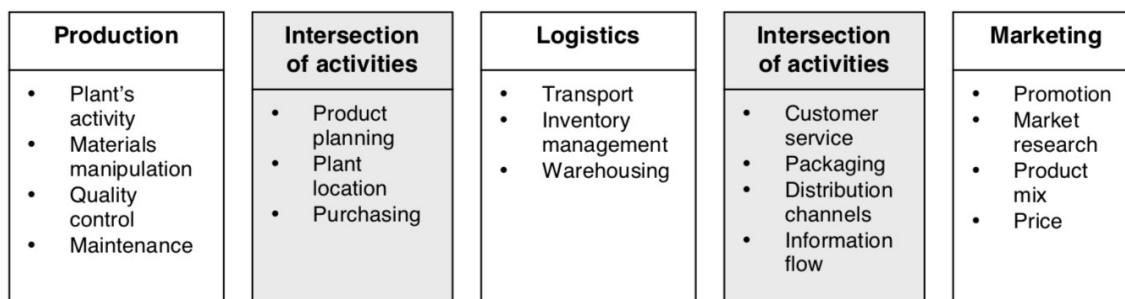
Logistics is a Greek term - *logistikos*- reflecting science that studies the nature of the supply chain and ensures organizational, material and technical elements for the key process to achieve the right goal. In the study "Concept, role, characteristics and international commitments of Vietnam in logistics services", Nguyen Hong Thanh (2007) mentioned that logistics is the process of planning, selecting the optimal solution to carry out the management and control of movement and storage of raw materials, semi-finished and finished products for the most effective cost and shortest time from the preparing production period to stage, which the goods are delivered to the last customers to satisfy customers' s requirements. More specifically, logistics is the strategic process of strategically managing the procurement, movement and storage of materials, parts and finished inventory (and the related information flows) through the organization and its marketing channels in such a way that current and future profitability are maximised through the cost-effective fulfilment of orders (Christopher 2011). Oliavarrieta et al. (1997) emphasized that businesses are increasingly focusing on efficient consumption initiatives, on time delivery, and rapid response systems. In other words, different logistical capabilities play as a strategic source to satisfy customer demands through availability of inventory, on time delivery and reducing defective goods.

According to Grazia (2016), logistics is made up of many different elements. Some of the basic elements can be mentioned as transport (Grazia, 2016); marketing (Robin, 2013); distribution (Yu-Hsiang et al., 2017); governance (Tsan-Ming et al., 2016); human resources and human resources training (Chanaka et al., 2013); along with a number of other factors, including warehouses, workshop, testing and support equipment, technical documentation... (Chanaka et al., 2013).

According to term 233 of the Commercial Law in 2005, "Logistics is a commercial activity whereby a trader organizes one or more jobs including receiving, transporting, warehousing, custom clearance, other paperwork, customer consultation, packaging, marking, delivery or other services, which related to the goods as agreed with the customer for remuneration"

Basically, logistics services have two functions (Figure 1): *Firstly*, logistics service has the function of supporting the production process and distribution of goods to final consumers. Logistic services directly provide inputs to the business or consulting for businesses about the guaranteed resources (Duncan et al., 2016). *Secondly*, logistics services have the function of linking production with the market, and linking the domestic economy with the international economy by supplying inputs, outputs, consulting services, and transport services... Logistics service providers conduct research to capture market demand; mobilize and utilize resources to provide the best quality logistic services (Maisam and Fredrik, 2017).

Border gate logistics is the implementation of one or more operations, including receipt of goods, transportation, storage, warehouse, customs clearance, other paperwork, customer consultation, packaging, marking, delivery or other services, which related to import and export goods at border gates as agreed with the customer for remuneration (Duncan et al., 2016). Basically, border gate logistics is the process of optimizing the location, transport and stockpiling of resources from the first point of the supply chain to the final consumer, through a series of economy operations.



**Figure 1:** The production, logistics and marketing functions

*Adapted from Casanovas, A and Cuatrecasas, LI (2001): Logistics Empresarial*

According to Tsan-Ming et al. (2016), as global markets grow with progressive technology, especially opening market in the underdeveloped and developing countries, logistics in generally and border gate logistics in particularly can be seen as a tool, a means of linking different fields of business strategy. Border gate logistics creates the usefulness of time and place for import and export activities of enterprises.

Theodore and Patrick (1998) argue that developing efficient border gate logistics services will contribute to increase the competitiveness of the economy and the nation by improving the import and export capabilities of goods and services. Most of countries have to establish a long - term strategy to develop border gate logistics services to meet the needs of import and export. Requirements for the development of logistics technical infrastructure, especially, focus on border gate logistics, may include:

- Building and developing the border gate logistics system should focus on building and developing an appropriate logistics hub.
- Developing a multi-modal transportation network, which links roads system, domestic waterway systems, special railway systems and air transport.
- Building a suitable and specialized warehouse system for strategic merchandise groups.
- Investing to develop information technology infrastructure, contributing to promoting the efficient development of logistics services and logistics enterprises.

Some principles in developing border gate logistics systems include (Leung et al., 2002):

- The significant growth of international shipping lines, including freight and passenger transport in the current context.
- The national traffic system with border gates is the main traffic hub, that is affected by the principles of international conventions and agreements, which apply to countries and regions.
- In order to reduce transportation costs, manufacturers must rely on appropriate multimedia systems, enabling the selection of the most appropriate and competitive modes for each specific case.
- There should be a strategic plan for the development of logistics infrastructure and transport in the mid - term and long - term.

**3. Research methodology**

This study was conducted by carrying out a sociological survey. The formal survey was conducted by using non-probability sampling and was conducted in the form of a direct survey. The time to carry out survey was in September 2017, the subjects were (1) import-export enterprises, transportation and logistics services, (2) managers at state management units in Cao Bang province. The questions in the questionnaire were measured in two types of scales: the ratio scale and the Likert scale (from level 1: totally disagree to level 5: totally agree). The research team conducted direct interviews in combination with emailing to the survey participants. After eliminating invalid responses, the number and structure of the sample was 194 state managers (see Figure 2) and 362 enterprises (see Figure 3).

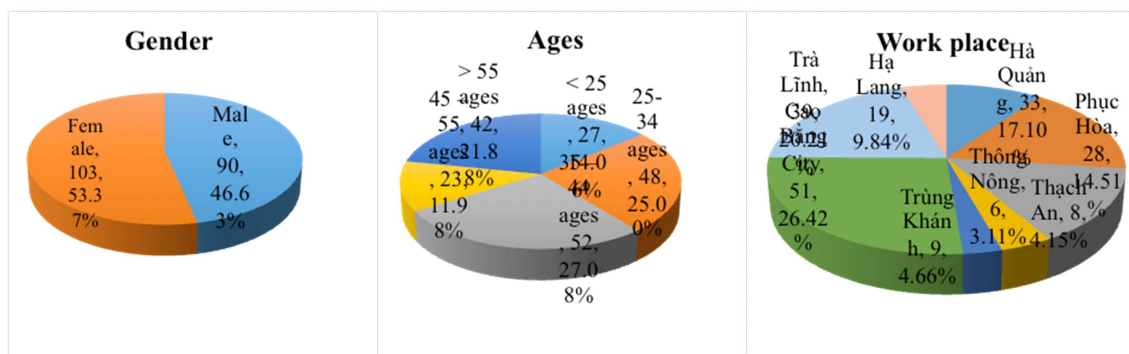
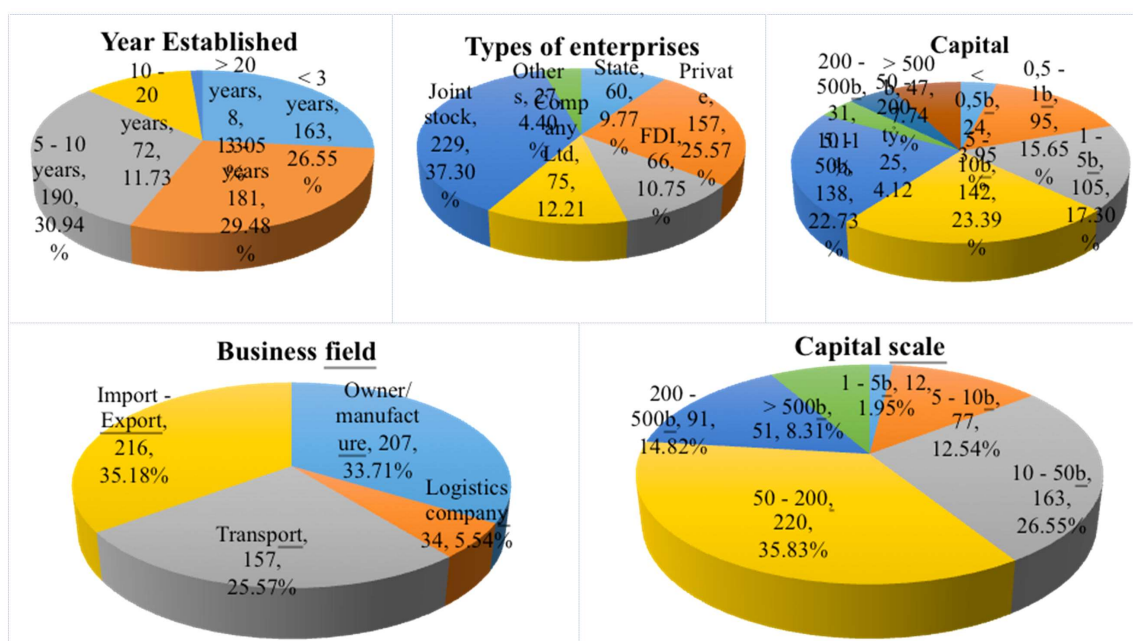


Figure 2: Features of sample at state management unit in Cao Bang



Source: Summary of survey results

Figure 3: Feature of samples at companies in Cao Bang province

The majority of managers at state management units in Cao Bang are between 35 and 44 years old, accounting for 27.08%. The number of female managers accounts for a higher proportion of male managers, however this difference is not significant. For the workplace address, the number of managers, which works in Cao Bang and Tra Linh border gate accounts for the highest proportion. Specifically, 26.42% of managers work at the management units of Cao Bang province, followed by Tra Linh (20.21%). The majori-

ty of respondents are experts in management agencies in Cao Bang province (47.03%); also, there are managers from the middle to high level (12.43%), police and border guard (11.35%). Most of the managers participated the survey had a college degree (77.08%).

Most of the enterprises in Cao Bang province have operated from 5-10 years (30.94%), belong to joint-stock companies (37.30%). The number of enterprises over 20 years is still limited (1.30%). 23.39% enterprises that joined this survey had small capital from 5

to 10 billion. About the field of enterprises, most of enterprises operated in three main areas, including import and export (35.18%), goods owners / producers (33.71%), and transport (25,57%). Logistics enterprises accounted for the smallest proportion of surveyed enterprises (5.54%). In term of business capital, up to 35.83% of enterprises have business capital ranges from 50 to 200 billion.

**4. Results of research on logistics situations to meet export and import needs through Cao Bang border gates**

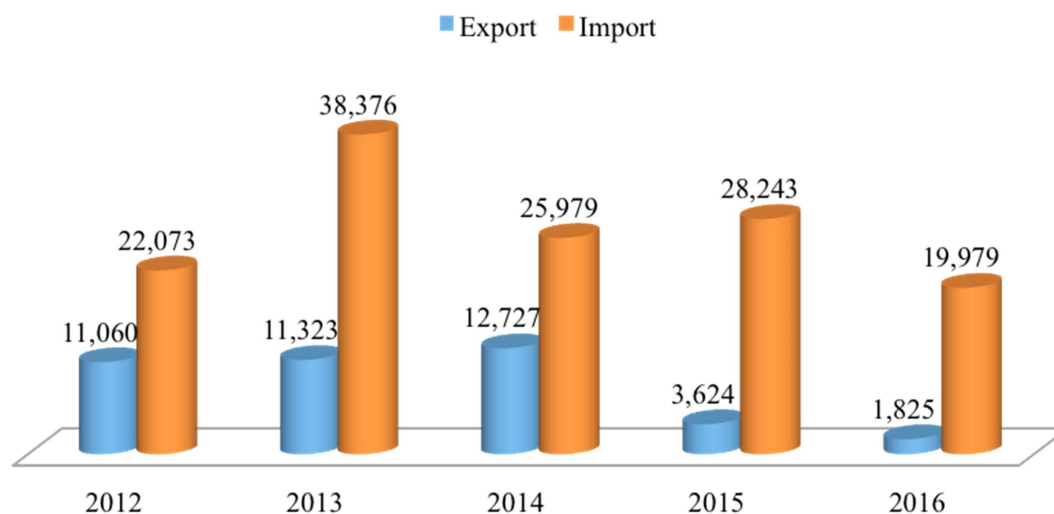
**4.1. The situations of export and import of goods through Cao Bang border gates**

Cao Bang is a mountainous province in the north-eastern economic region of Vietnam. Cao Bang province has over 333 km of land borders with the Zhang - an autonomous region in Guangxi (China), with many border gates, including one international border gate (Ta Lung), 03 national border gates (Tra Linh, Soc Giang, Ly Van) and many auxiliary border

The People's Committee of Cao Bang province is presently announcing the temporary list of 12 auxiliary border gates and crossings with China. There are three sub-border gates including Ha Lang, Ly Van (Ha Lang district), Po Peo (Trung Khanh district). And nine crossings: Na Lan (Thach An district); Coc Sau, Po Tap (Phuc Hoa district); Na Doong (Tra Linh district); Truc Long (Ha Quang district); Bang Khoong, Pac Ty, Ky Soc (Ha Lang); Na Quan (Thong Nong district). Basically, the goods exported and imported through the auxiliary border gates, the crossings in Cao Bang mainly belong to the business type of temporary import and re-export, bonded warehouse. Recently, the Prime Minister agreed to carry out re-exporting, transiting and bonded warehouses continuously through the opening of Na Lan, six sub-border gates and customs clearance's points in Cao Bang province (Po Peo, Bi Ha, Ky Soc, Ban Khoong, Pac Ty and Na Quan).

The export and import situation in Cao Bang province in recent years is shown in detail in Figure 4:

Unit: 1000 USD



Source: Vietnam General Statistics Office, 2016

**Figure 4:** Value of export product in Cao Bang province

gates and other border crossings make Cao Bang a great potential for boosting cross-border import and export activities.

The value of import - export goods in the province decreased some imported goods such as machinery and equipment for investment projects in Cao Bang

province, especially in the field of hydropower. At the same time, infrastructures, warehouses and yards gathering goods, roads to some border gates are under construction, not completed also have certain effects. In addition, China increases tight border area management has affected the import-export activities and trade between the two sides...

and one of the four centrally-run cities in China. Chongqing is an important historical and cultural area; the city is also the economic center of the Changjiang's upstream river, a major manufacturing center and a transport hub of southwest China.

In order to promote socio-economic development, the People's Committee of Cao Bang is proposing to

**Table 1:** Value of exported goods

Unit: 1000 USD

Criterion	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Total value</b>	11.016	11.323	12.727	3.624	1.825
<b>Types of export</b>					
Direct	10.860	11.166	12.502	3.361	1.517
Delegate/trust	200	157	225	262	308
<b>Types of goods</b>					
Heavy industry products and mineral	9.382	10.448	11.679	2.296	301
Light industry products and handicraft	673	157	225	216	632
Agricultural products	989	696	814	1.103	835
Forest products	16	22	8	9	57

Source: Vietnam General Statistics Office, 2016

#### 4.2. The situation of logistics infrastructure serving export and import of Cao Bang province

Cao Bang is a mountainous province, which has advantage geography; located on the nearest route that connects Western China and ASEAN countries. It can be seen as convenient condition for Cao Bang can connect to dynamic development clusters of West and Southwest China. The two transport corridors of Hai Phong - Lang Son - Cao Bang and Cao Bang - Bac Can - Thai Nguyen - Hanoi/Hai Phong / Quang Ninh (Figure 5) can be identified as an important economic corridor linking the East North Vietnam with Northern economic area, connecting the provinces of Cao Bang, Lang Son, Bac Can, Thai Nguyen to Hai Phong / Quang Ninh seaport, to ASEAN countries and in the region.

Looking further, the economic corridor of Hai Phong - Cao Bang - Bach Sac helps to connect Cao Bang with Bach Sac, from here towards Chongqing, China. Chongqing is a big city in southwestern China

the Prime Minister to supplement the planning and investment projects of expressway from Dong Dang (Lang Son) to Tra Linh border gate (Cao Bang) in period from 2016 to 2020. In previous stage, approving the proposal of the People's Committee of Cao Bang province, the Prime Minister added the expressway from Dong Dang (Lang Son) to Tra Linh (Cao Bang) and the Cao Bang-Bac Kan expressway in the planning of the expressway network of Vietnam until 2020 and orientation to 2030. According to the direction of the Ministry of Transport, the Lang Son - Cao Bang expressway is prioritized for investment to connect with the Hanoi - Lang Son expressway to build a complete corridor.

Transportation system is one of the basic and most important components to develop logistics system, especially logistics service for import and export goods. Currently, the transport of goods in the province is still totally based on roadway (river transport only serves people). This is a huge constraint for demand of



**Figure 5:** Hai Phong - Lang Son - Cao Bang economic corridor

long-distance transport, low-cost. The diversification of transportation forms is one of the most important requirements in the coming time.

Currently, Cao Bang has national highway 3 - the main road from Hanoi to the northern provinces to the important border gates in the Northeast; national highway 4A, 4C and national highway 34 are located in the beltway1 from Tien Yen, Mong Cai to Lai Chau. Provincial roads link from national highways to district centers in the shape of fish bones, creating a continuous transport network in the province. Although the North-South vertical axis, the East-West horizontal axis basically has a fairly uniform distribution, but the network of road in general has not reached the technical quality because during the design and construction process, there has many limitations such as technical factors, narrow road area, bad surface structure and degraded symptom, incomplete. The total length of the national highways is 688.7 kilometer; reaching from grade IV to grade V mountainous areas, basically asphalt, as the main roads, which link between Cao Bang and other provinces in Vietnam. The route from Tra Linh border gate to Cao Bang city connects two central corridors according to national highway 3A and 4A with Bac Kan, Thai Nguyen, Hanoi; Lang Son, Ha Noi, Hai Phong are low-grade (mountainous grade IV) and degraded. In fact, these routes are mostly small, therefore, the transportation of large container from

Lang Son to Cao Bang is difficult and unsafe circulation. Inter-regional traffic, big volume transportation, especially for import and export goods are not effective, not attractive to attract transshipment through the region.

Regarding the network, national roads, provincial roads and district roads have not been connected continuously and synchronous. At present, some provincial roads are degraded and need upgrading such as DT.208, DT.211, DT.204... many district roads have not been invested to complete, not yet put into management level, the commune roads are small and difficult to access, many people's bridges, suspension bridges are weak, seriously degraded and need to be repaired and renovated to ensure security for people and vehicles.

Static traffic, there is no planning for the warehouse, bus station in the province. Parking lots have been built in some locations, however the scale is limited, individually invested, not meet the demand for collecting goods and circulation. Currently, warehouse is not only a place, where companies serve their goods; it is also a part of modern supply chain and it helps to create added value for goods. Developing an appropriate warehouse system in terms of location, scale, with modern equipment and suitable with the target goods, will contribute to increase the value of all supply chain of each product line in particular and the whole logis-

tics system of goods / import and export goods in general. In Cao Bang province, planning the system of warehouses at the border gates can be shown in the table 2 below:

services. About one third of the respondents (34.58%) said that they spent between 10% and 12% on outsourcing logistics services. There are 33.33% of surveyed enterprises believe that the main reason for their limited

**Table 2:** Warehouse planning in border gate

Border gate/ warehouse	Area(m <sup>2</sup> )
<b>1. Ta Lung international border gate</b>	
1. Typical storage area along the North Vong River, two wings of Ta Lung 2 bridge (behind the international trade)	21.000 (total land area 15 ha)
2. Group of cold storage after international trade	9.900 (total land area 8 ha)
3. Bonded warehouse complex after international trade	4.900 (total land area 3 ha)
4. Temporary storage and depot located behind the international trade center	7.000 (total land area 7 ha)
<b>2. Tra Linh main border gate</b>	
1. Container yard (Na Doong opening way)	(total land area 19,8 ha)
2. Areas for gathering, storing and checking goods, transferring goods to trucks (in combination with ordinary storehouses, cold stores and bonded warehouses)	(total land area 30 ha)
<b>3. Soc Giang main border gate</b>	
1. Common storage area (Truc Long opening way)	7.000 (total land area 10 ha)
2. Cold storage and bonded warehouses	9.700 (total land area 15 ha)
<b>4. Ly Van main border gate</b>	
Warehouse (warehouse types)	13.200 (total land area 28 ha)
<b>5. Pò Peo sub-border gate</b>	
Export yard	1.000
<b>6. Ha Lang sub-border gate</b>	
Export yard	1.000

Source: Department of Industry and Trade of Cao Bang province, 2017

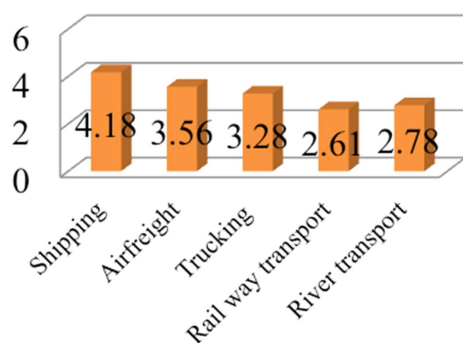
#### 4.3. Assessing the situation of logistic services to meet the import and export demand through the Cao Bang border gate by using the survey data

Regarding the demand and ability of self-supplying or outsourcing logistics service providers, the research team conducted the needs assessment as well as the level of self-supplying or outsourcing of logistics services for three groups of services: international transportation, domestic transportation and other logistics

outsourcing is due to the desire to actively coordinate their own capacity, cost of self-supplying is lower than outsource, and businesses can guarantee better operations. For businesses choosing to outsource logistics services, they think that outsourcing this service will reduce the investment in facilities and people, reduce the risk to focus resources and core competence, and increasing flexibility (flexible response to the current needs of enterprises) in the operation of the business.

The results of the questionnaire also indicated that, for international transportation services, the priority of businesses is given to outsource, especially priority for outsourcing of sea transport services (average point for this criteria is 3.69). For domestic transport services, these enterprises also have a large demand for outsourcing of logistics services, especially sea transport and road transport. For other logistics services, the outsourcing demand for customs clearance is highest with an average point of 3.11; Mean while, the demand for planning services, inventory management, order management has not been paid much attention by businesses (average score is only 1.60). In addition, in this survey, 50.92% of businesses believe that the demand for outsourcing their logistics services in the future (2016 - 2020) will not change, while to 29.82% of businesses believe that the demand for outsourcing their logistics tools will increase significantly in the future. This shows that 3PL, 4PL and higher logistics service providers in Cao Bang are essential and have the potential to thrive.

Regarding the level of satisfaction of the enterprise for logistics services: the research team also conducted the assessment of the satisfaction of enterprises when using three groups of services: international transport services, logistics and other services.



Source: Summary of survey results

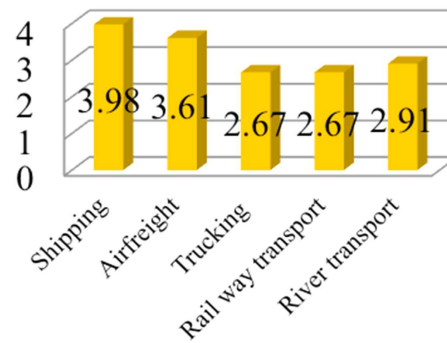
**Figure 6:** Satisfaction level for international transport service

Base on results of figure 6 and figure 7, it can be seen that rail transport services have not been highly appreciated by companies in Cao Bang province about

domestic transport as well as international transport due to the limited facilities; therefore, these service have not met the needs of import-export companies. This is shown by average point of railway transport as 2.61 on international transport services and 2.67 on domestic transport services. Seaway, road and air transport services are well appreciated by businesses. In addition to other services, businesses are highly valued for the quality of warehouse / distribution services.

*About selecting criteria of logistics service providers:* With the Likert scale 5 from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important), the results of survey have shown the importance of each criterion, which are introduced in figure 8 for selecting logistics service provider. The importance of the criteria can be arranged as service quality (4.25), image, good brand/reputation (3,81), price (3.77), experience and innovation (3.69), qualified staff (3.68), scope and area of operation (3,67), diversification of services (3.46), appropriate culture and quality (3.37), and ability of supporting to expand business (3.28).

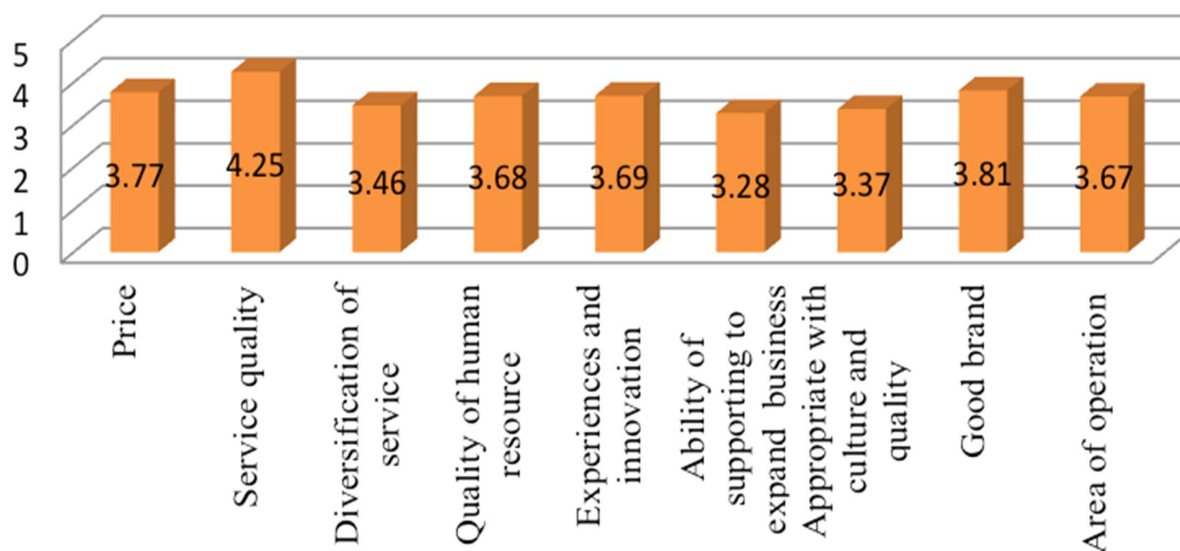
The figure 8 showed that price is not really the biggest concern when choosing logistics service providers; the most important thing is the quality of service, and the reputable suppliers, which are always the first choice of import-export business. However,



Source: Summary of survey results

**Figure 7:** Satisfaction level for domestic transport service

these outsourcing logistics services did not meet the expectations of users, 72.80% of surveyed enterprises were not satisfied and very dissatisfied with the quali-



Source: Summary of survey results

**Figure 8:** Evaluating criterion of choosing Logistics service supplier

ty of services of logistics services providers. The respondents satisfied with the criteria of "delivery on time" (average score was 3.7).

*Regarding difficulties in the operation process of logistics enterprises:*

The logistics service providers have not really met the expectations of businesses, which used logistics services can be explained by many different reasons. The survey results of logistics enterprises and using logistics services enterprises (Figure 9) suggested that the difficulties in the operation process of these enterprises are mainly to meet the special requirements, specifically meet requirements from the state management agencies (average score of 2.50), staff qualifications (average score 2.08) and loading / unloading services (average score 2.07). When it is required to assess the compatibility (shown by the effectiveness of the partnership) with other logistics operators, logistic firms consider that their compatibility with road transport companies is the highest with average score as 3.06, followed by forwarding companies (average score as 2.85).

In addition, 26.64% of surveyed enterprises said that the high cost (transportation, distribution and storage costs) made them to face to many difficulties in

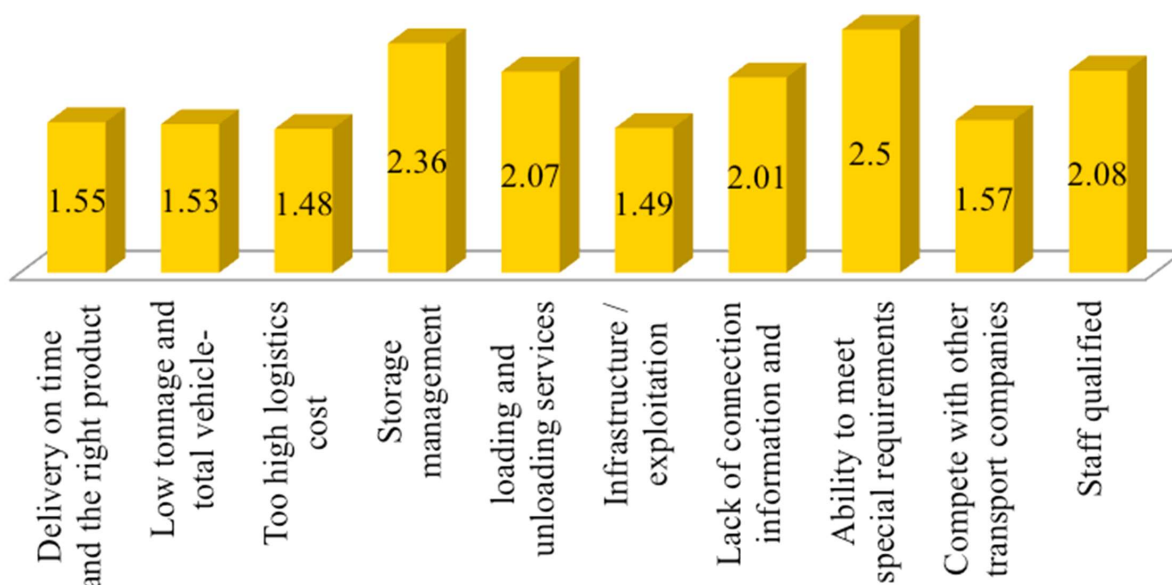
competing and maintaining customers in the market. Also, businesses had to face to other difficulties such as complex market requirements, lack of capital, lack of technology...

#### 5. Some suggestions

- Development of infrastructure system in the Cao Bang province should focus on improving the infrastructure system to develop import-export logistics. In order to develop infrastructure services and managing local infrastructure services, Cao Bang province should pay more attention to infrastructure development planning, tend to the needs of local socio-economic development, especially the orientation of logistics development in the province.

- Improving institutions, especially Cao Bang should actively overcome the situation in which the authorities proactively propose irrationalities in the implementation of policies and legal documents issued by the central government. In addition, the improvement of administrative procedures, which relate to border gate logistics need to be implemented in a positive and synchronous manner.

- Improving the import-export activities and using logistics in the province. The concerned units should pay more attention to control the cost of providing



Source: Summary of survey results

**Figure 9:** Evaluating disadvantages of logistics companies

logistics services to promote the enterprises that have demand of using logistics services to outsource these services. In addition, logistics enterprises need to develop logistics services equally and tend to professionalism and modernity to improve service quality. Furthermore, it is necessary to build a logistics network, which has higher connection, more modern and more professional; tend to 3PL and 4PL models. Improving more and more the limitations of logistics services providers in the province such as meeting the special requirements of customers, the level of staff as well as adding and upgrading loading and unloading services.

- Improving the quality and efficiency of logistics operations in the province. Cao Bang should support logistics companies and using logistics services companies to solve difficulties in the operation process of these enterprises mainly to meet the special requirements of customers, the level of staff and loading and unloading service.

- Developing commercial activities in the province, Cao Bang should pay more attention to investment and development of the local trading system to improve the

efficiency of logistics for import and export activities at the border gates in the province; especially the province should focus on improving wholesale and retail network, and commercial infrastructure because these factors are currently under-appreciated by businesses.

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### Summary

Trong những năm gần đây, dịch vụ logistics cửa khẩu đã góp phần đảm bảo hoạt động sản xuất kinh doanh của doanh nghiệp, cắt giảm chi phí cũng như nâng cao chất lượng sản phẩm dịch vụ, từ đó cho phép doanh nghiệp tạo lập lợi thế cạnh tranh trên thị trường. Tuy nhiên dịch vụ logistics tại khu vực cửa khẩu vẫn còn rất nhiều bất cập và chưa thực sự được khai thác hết tiềm năng. Bài viết nghiên cứu thực trạng logistics đáp ứng nhu cầu xuất nhập khẩu qua khu kinh tế cửa khẩu tỉnh Cao Bằng dựa trên kết quả khảo sát thực địa với nhóm các doanh nghiệp xuất nhập khẩu hàng hóa, vận tải và dịch vụ logistics và các cơ quan quản lý nhà nước. Trên cơ sở đó đề xuất một số kiến nghị phát triển dịch vụ logistics nhằm đáp ứng nhu cầu xuất nhập khẩu qua các cửa khẩu tỉnh Cao Bằng trong thời gian tới.

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