

Procurement Logistics of Japanese Auto Manufacturers in Inland China - Intermodal Transport Utilizing the Yangtze River - *

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Abstract

The procurement of automotive parts efficiently from remote suppliers under poor logistics infrastructure conditions has become a critical issue for car manufacturers located in inland China. This study explores how Japanese auto manufactures located in Sichuan, China have established its automotive parts procurement network and improve its distribution system to cope with severe logistics infrastructure conditions in the area. An analysis on the viability of ship transport in the Yangtze River as a means for long-distance transportation was also performed.

Key Words : Procurement, Auto Manufacturer, Yangtze River, Intermodal

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I. Introduction

Auto manufacturers around the world are trying to strengthen their existence in the Chinese market which has expanded steadily compared to the sluggish market in advanced countries. Interests have been growing on the inland market where the domestic demand has rapidly expanded due to large developments in the West.

Although several state-owned automotive parts manufacturers exist in China, the production of high-tech parts which characterize today's car manufacturers is still limited. Therefore, foreign car manufacturers which had entered the inland market are obliged to procure large amounts of auto parts from China's coastal areas or from other countries. For Japanese car manufacturers, which have intrinsic policies to reduce inventories, procurement of parts more efficiently has become a vital issue in inland China where logistics infrastructures such as expressways and railways have not been well developed.

By taking up two Japanese car manufacturers (Sichuan FAW Toyota Motor Co., Ltd. (SFTM) and Chengdu Toyota Boshoku Automotive Parts Co., Ltd. (CTB)) located in Sichuan, Chengdu as case studies, this paper discusses how these firms have successfully established the parts procurement network and the type of distribution systems they have developed to cope with the difficult logistics infrastructure conditions in inland China. Furthermore, an analysis on the viability of the Yangtze River for long-distance transport is done using the results of field surveys conducted in August 2009.

II. Literature Review

The previous academic efforts concerned with 'procurement logistics of auto parts by inland waterway' could be found in two research fields; procurement

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