



## Review

## From a literature review to a multi-perspective framework for reverse logistics barriers and drivers

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## ABSTRACT

The emergence of stricter environmental regulations and the growing environmental consciousness of customers have forced industries to start thinking about environmental operations management with the help of reverse logistics application. In this process, influential factors such as drivers and barriers have to be examined, and stakeholders' different perspectives on RL implementation and development should also be considered. This paper presents a multi-perspective framework for reverse logistics implementation using the lens of stakeholder theory. The multiple stakeholders' perspective framework was developed based upon a structured literature review process. Fifty-four papers concerning these topical areas were thoroughly assessed and classified according to their structural dimensions and analytical categories. Two extensive lists of 37 drivers and 36 barriers, categorized and analyzed against the dimensions and categories, served as a basis for the development of the referred framework. Thereby, the overall contribution of this work proposes an understanding of the factors required for employing reverse logistics from multiple perspectives, including those of the company, society, government, and customer. Additionally, each perspective is discussed separately with the aid of previous works developed in the field. Most of the encountered barriers are placed in the firm's perspective; however, these barriers may be an effect from outside impediments. On the drivers' side, the factors must be acknowledged so managers can prepare for changes by exploring these positive influential factors. A consideration of the influential factors from multiple perspectives is critical for creating a comprehensive industry strategy to successfully implement product return.

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## 1. Introduction

Technological development, mass consumption, and a decrease in product life span have augmented production all over the world. As a consequence, more raw materials are extracted and more waste is created (Wassenhove and Besiou, 2013). In order to solve this increasing problem, the interest in closed-loop supply chains and reverse logistics has attracted not only the attention of companies and professionals but also the researchers (Flapper et al., 2012; Govindan et al., 2015; Nikolaou et al., 2013). Reverse logistics (RL) is the practice of moving products from their usual final destination with the purpose of recapturing value or correct disposal (Rogers and Tibben-Lembke, 2001). For that, reverse logistics includes all of the actions involved in managing, reducing, processing, and disposing of waste (hazardous or nonhazardous) from several stages in a product lifecycle, for instance: production and packaging, use phase, and processes of reverse distribution (Govindan et al., 2013; Rogers and Tibben-Lembke, 2001).

Important research has been done so far on RL topics, such as theory development (Dowlatshahi, 2000), network design (Srivastava, 2008; Pishvaei et al., 2010), and decision making (Ravi et al., 2005). Although RL is strategically valued (Alvarez-Gil et al., 2007) and the RL approach is achieving popularity in practice, the accessible body of literature on the strategic field is limited (Govindan et al., 2015; Narayana et al., 2014; Subramoniam et al., 2009, 2013).

In the body of knowledge, several drivers – namely legislation, economic interest, social accountability, stakeholder pressures, and ethics – have been presented as influential or motivational factors that compel firms to employ green activities (Andiç et al., 2012) such as RL. Internal pressures arise from employees (feel-good factors related to environmental practices), from the firm's strategy to reduce cost risks, or from the objective of guaranteeing the intellectual property of end of life (EOL) products. At the same time, external pressures from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government, community, clients, and even the media emerge in order to make industries cope with environmental policies.

However, RL is not a symmetric representation of forward supply chain (Fleischmann et al., 1997; Srivastava, 2008). Companies face internal and external RL implementation impediments from many stakeholders (Abdulrahman et al., 2014). Most industries still struggle to employ RL strategies as a result of a lack of interest of their supply chain (SC) partners (Bernon et al., 2013). In addition, some firms consider RL an underestimated part of the SC for a plurality of motives, such as its uncertain profitability, its lack of people technical skills, and its difficulties with SC partners

(Abdulrahman et al., 2014).

Given these impediments, it is still imprecise how internal and external factors interactively stimulate green initiatives (Sarkis et al., 2011), and how diverse are the many stakeholder perspectives engaged in the implementation process regarding these drivers and barriers. In this manner, research on the drivers and barriers that promote or hinder RL implementation, as well as on the stakeholders' influence, becomes essential. Failing to deal with the interests of many stakeholders may damage company performance (Avkiran and Morita, 2010).

With the aforementioned in mind, this paper aims to offer further insight into the domain of multiple stakeholders' perspectives for RL drivers and barriers. To accomplish this task, this research attempts to answer the question “what are the drivers and barriers according to each key stakeholder perspective?” Accordingly, this paper intends to:

- identify the most relevant papers related to RL, its barriers, drivers, and stakeholders;
- classify these articles in terms of methods, industry sector, country specific, stakeholders, drivers, and barriers addressed in the paper;
- present a summary of each previous paper's contribution relative to stakeholder and RL issues;
- provide a multiple stakeholders' perspective analysis for RL drivers and barriers and a research agenda based on the research gaps found during this study.

This research differs from previous works in the following aspects. Firstly, the paper focuses on the field of RL and stakeholders' influence where attention has quickly flourished but in which few papers have been published. Secondly, the chosen approach combines stakeholder theory with the concepts of barriers and drivers, and provides a concrete theoretical framework for the development of future research. Third, the originality of this research relies on the fact that no previous work was found in the field of multiple stakeholders' perspective for drivers and barriers for RL. To the best of the authors' knowledge, formal research dealing with barriers and drivers for RL implementation from a multiple stakeholder perspective is not exhaustive. Some previous studies have tried to identify either drivers (Ho et al., 2012; Kannan et al., 2014) or barriers (González-Torre et al., 2010; Ravi and Shankar, 2005; Shaharudin et al., 2014; Sharma et al., 2011) or both factors (Kapetanopoulou and Tagaras, 2011; Rahimifard et al., 2009) for RL by, mostly, one stakeholder perspective. This work attempts to bridge this gap by considering multiple stakeholders' perspectives,

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