

Evaluation criteria development and assessment of purchasing and supply management journals

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Available online 10 March 2006

Abstract

Although purchasing and supply management (PSM) is a business function that is critical to supply chain management, a direct examination of the academic journals representing leading PSM research outlets has not been available. Further, most prior studies that compare journals have relied on single-item measures of such evaluation dimensions as quality and relevance. In order to address these research gaps, a survey instrument targeted to purchasing and supply management academics was implemented to explore how they evaluate and rate journals considered important for advancing the field of PSM. The three highest-rated journals in this study that publish PSM research are the *Journal of Operations Management*, the *Journal of Business Logistics*, and the *Journal of Supply Chain Management*. Four journal evaluation constructs emerged: *Journal Quality*, *Journal Reputation*, *PSM Practitioner Relevance*, and *PSM Research Relevance*. The results provide guidance for PSM scholars with respect to journals that contribute to the knowledge base in PSM, as well as support an extended understanding of conceptual bases for how scholars evaluate the journals they read and in which they publish.

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Keywords: Journal evaluation; Purchasing; Supply management; Survey research

1. Introduction

Just as the academic discipline of operations management is advancing through various stages (Meredith et al., 1989), the purchasing and supply management (PSM) discipline is also evolving. PSM professionals are responding to such substantial environmental changes

as the advent of electronic commerce and the pre-dominance of cost competition due to globalization and customer price sensitivity by operating at a strategic level within their firms (Carter et al., 1998). They do so by working with other supply chain management functions, such as operations management, logistics, and marketing, to create sustainable competitive advantage within their firms and supply networks and to deliver superior value to their customers. Some firms are recognizing that, in order to accommodate the evolution of PSM to becoming a strategic corporate function (Kraljic, 1983; Nelson et al., 2001), professionals need to change their skill sets from completing transactions and expediting orders to managing their supply chains (Duffy, 2000).

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PSM scholars have also recognized the change in focus. For example, PSM strategy and its strategic impact is a prevalent subject in one supply management journal, comprising over one-third of its subject content (Carter and Ellram, 2003).

In addition to the evolving research focus toward strategic issues, PSM as an academic discipline is maturing. Following Meredith et al.'s (1989) research stages cycle (description, explanation, and testing), Carter and Ellram (2003) examine the frequency of articles published by type in the *Journal of Supply Chain Management*, which focuses on PSM research issues. Their results highlight the maturation of the supply management academic discipline. Over time, the frequency of articles devoted to exploratory research has decreased in a linear fashion, while the frequency of articles devoted to theory building and hypothesis testing has doubled.

Because they are an important educational resource for knowledge dissemination, academic journals play a strategic role in developing and communicating disciplinary knowledge (Fawcett et al., 1995). However, resource constraints limit the number of journals that libraries and firms can carry and that academics and managers can peruse (Gibson and Hanna, 2003). Further complicating the issue is that, similar to the operations management discipline (Barman et al., 1991), PSM articles are published in a wide array of journals. It can be challenging to locate all the relevant research. As a result, scholars conducting and publishing research in PSM need guidelines for identifying the journals that maximize their contribution to the field. While prior studies have investigated journal rankings in other supply chain management (SCM) functions, such as *operations* (e.g., Barman et al., 2001; Soteriou et al., 1999), *logistics* (e.g., Fawcett et al., 1995; Gibson and Hanna, 2003), and *marketing* (e.g., Hult et al., 1997), there have been no studies providing insight into journals that contribute to advancing research and practice in the academic discipline of PSM.

Another gap in the literature ranking supply chain management journals using perceptual measures is the lack of consistency in the criteria used. For example, Barman et al. (2001) and Soteriou et al. (1999) evaluate journal quality and relevance, while Fawcett et al. (1995) evaluate only quality. The preponderance of this research uses single-item constructs. However, the use of single-item constructs has its associated limitations when attempting to measure multi-faceted concepts (Churchill, 1979; Hair et al., 1998), including the development of scales for evaluating academic journals (Carter, 2002).

To address these issues, the purpose of this exploratory study is two-fold: (1) conduct a comparison of journals that publish research in PSM, and (2) create multi-item measures for understanding how academics evaluate journals. In order to examine how scholars rate journals that publish research in PSM, this paper will begin by providing a context of SCM research outlets in the literature review. The research method for conducting this investigation is then discussed. Research findings for comparisons of journals publishing PSM research and journal evaluation construct development are then presented, followed by conclusions and directions for future research.

2. Literature review

A recent paper published in the *Journal of Business Logistics* defines supply chain management as “the systemic, strategic coordination of the traditional business functions and the tactics across these business functions within a particular company and across businesses within the supply chain, for the purposes of improving the long-term performance of the individual companies and the supply chain as a whole” (Mentzer et al., 2001, 18). Key business functions responsible for the intra- and inter-corporate coordination necessary for managing supply chains include purchasing and supply management, operations, logistics, and marketing. There has been, and continues to be, extensive research conducted in understanding various practices for each of these functions. A primary vehicle for disseminating this new knowledge in SCM to the academic community is through journal publications. In order to better prioritize these journal outlets for SCM research, prior studies assessed journals in the fields of operations, logistics, and marketing. However, no studies to date have assessed journal outlets that publish research in PSM. A review of the previous studies in related fields was conducted in order to better understand the issues and appropriate techniques for assessing academic journals. A synopsis of some of these studies in the fields of operations, logistics, and marketing is summarized in Table 1 and followed by an examination for why such a study is necessary in the field of PSM.

2.1. Operations

Several studies assess operations management (OM) journal rankings. Barman et al. (2001), in an update of a study conducted 10 years prior (Barman et al., 1991), evaluated 21 mainstream production and operations

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