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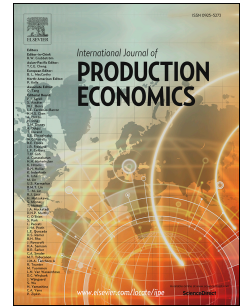
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The role of plants in manufacturing networks: a revisit and extension

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Abstract

Based on IMSS VI, this paper firstly revisits Ferdows' typology by simultaneously addressing multiple portfolios of its two dimensions, i.e. site competence and location advantage. It further complements this typology by developing a more objective, empirically derived taxonomy of plant role and accordingly proposes four new plant roles, i.e. Start Plant, Old School Plant, Expert Plant, and Replaceable Plant. These plant roles are different in terms of location advantages and site competences, as well as other characteristics, e.g. product, process, market, and location. Second, this paper extends our understandings on plant role by exploring the fit of a plant role with the differentiation of its management practices based on the developed taxonomy. It identifies three patterns regarding the fits between plant roles and their management practices and implies that plants that are strongly embedded in the manufacturing network are expected to play the high level of strategic role; plants with greater responsibility may sometimes correspond with less autonomy; plants in dilemma might have more motivation to coordinate with other plants and integrate with external customers; and plants managed in old styles might be more independent and thereby passive about coordination and integration with other partners. These results highlight that management practices need to be differentiated so that plants can pursue their roles effectively.

Keywords: Plant role, manufacturing network, revisit, extension

1. Introduction

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