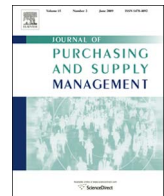


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Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/pursup

Editorial

Purchasing and supply management: From efficiency to effectiveness in an integrated supply chain

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Purchasing and supply management
 Supply chain integration
 Performance
 Value creation eco-system
 Efficiency
 Effectiveness
 Digitalization
 Blockchain technology

1. Introduction

For over a quarter of a century now, the International Purchasing and Supply Education & Research Association (IPSERA) conference has been dedicated to the progression of multidisciplinary Purchasing and Supply Management (PSM) knowledge. The goal of the Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management coincides with this mission. In addition to the discussion of past, present and future research projects, the conference has a lasting tradition of aligning the scholarly evolution of the PSM field with timely and practically relevant challenges. Given its strong focus on applied, interdisciplinary research, the Fraunhofer Institute for Material Flow and Logistics (IML) and the TU Dortmund University of Technology provided the perfect venue for the 25th anniversary IPSERA conference. Now that PSM has become an established academic discipline mainly responsible for generating cost efficiencies, the 2016's conference theme reached beyond this traditional imperative scope by discussing opportunities for PSM to contribute to overall supply chain effectiveness in the light of an increasing digitalization in Supply Chain Management (SCM). With more than 200 participants from 25 countries who presented and discussed their methodologies, research findings, practical experiences and management methods under the overarching theme “*Purchasing & Supply Management: From efficiency to effectiveness in an integrated supply chain*”, the conference was once again an international success.

As a response to rising competition and cost pressure in stagnating Western sales markets in the 1980s and 1990s, firms' PSM functions increasingly relied on generating cost efficiencies to enhance their profitability (Carter and Narasimhan, 1996). This primarily cost-focused strategy has driven outsourcing processes and an emphasis on total cost of ownership in purchasing tasks (Ellram, 1995), which ultimately lead to the emergence of globally dispersed supply chains which we are seeing today (Trent and Monczka, 2003). As a result, disaggregated value creation across multiple entities along supply chains has catalyzed the acknowledgment of PSM as an important contributor to sustained competitive advantage (Foerstl et al., 2016; Tchokogué et al., 2017).

Although the seminal work of Kraljic (1983) paved the way, PSM still struggles to be perceived as a strategic top- and bottom-line contributor to the organization. One explanation for this shortcoming might be PSM's enduring focus on the direct buyer-supplier interface rather than the supply or value chain as a whole. Scholars must also acknowledge that PSM decisions are embedded in a wider network and that PSM is affected by the decisions of other up- and downstream supply network members. The notion that “organizations are not autonomous, but rather are constrained by a network of interdependencies with other organizations” (Pfeffer, 1987, p. 26–27) goes back to resource dependency theory (RDT). In the context of SCM, “to understand the behavior of an organization you must understand the context of that behavior—that is, the ecology [here the supply network] of the organization” (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978, p. 1).

In order to contribute to supply chain effectiveness, scholars and practitioners must alter their way of thinking because networks are complex, almost chaotic, but certainly not a simple aggregation of linear buyer-supplier relationships (Kim et al., 2011). This non-linear thinking about supply chains only recently entered the scholarly PSM and SCM arena. In their recent article, Carter, p. 90 et al. (2015) advanced a theory of the supply

* Editorial: Special issue of the 25th annual IPSERA conference 2016.

chain, noting that “the supply chain is a network, consisting of nodes and links”, acknowledging that firm decision makers must consider their embeddedness in the overarching value-creation eco system or at least within a chained path within the network (Borgatti and Li, 2009).

The opportunities for PSM to contribute to supply chain and network integration and effectiveness are vast, particularly as internal functions become more permeable and external supply chain environments increase in complexity and dynamism (Eriksson, 2015). In these contexts, functions such as PSM, logistics, production and operations as well as marketing become more dependent on each other for effective supply chain decision-making (Mentzer et al., 2008). Of course, these functions have their own right to exist, but they also increasingly share overlap with functions of up- or downstream firms along the supply chain, which is why cross-functional collaboration becomes necessary to integrate and execute overarching supply chain strategies (Foerstl et al., 2013; Schoenherr and Swink, 2012). The value creation opportunities for PSM reach beyond mere efficiency (cost) improvements as the potential ways of contributing to the overall competitive position of the focal firm are manifold (Hartmann et al., 2012; Ramsay and Croom, 2008).

The purpose of this special issue is to illustrate how PSM decisions affect the supply chain as a whole and are in turn affected by it. Moreover, the special issue theme supports the decisions of practitioners and executives participating in the value creation eco-system (i.e., internal partners as well as (in)direct up- and downstream suppliers and customers) to decide on who to integrate with and the adequate level of supply chain integration intensity.

2. A brief overview of the 25th IPSERA conference

Historically, the support of early career scholars (PhD students in particular) and professional development have received concentrated attention at IPSERA conferences. The 2016 doctoral workshop and the educators conference were held as a pre-conference one day ahead of the official opening. The main conference was opened on Monday by Professor Michael Henke on behalf of the local organizing committee and Professor Helen Walker, the IPSERA president.

The conference then moved into its traditional format of competitive, working and practitioner paper sessions. Further, three practitioner sessions provided opportunities to learn about and to discuss managerial practices and methods for the PSM and SCM profession. During the last day, participants were offered a company visit in Dortmund to the KHS GmbH and the Fraunhofer Labs for applied research. These visits provided excellent examples of the attainable mutual benefits from answering practically relevant research questions with rigorous scientific methods. The contributions presented throughout the conference illustrated the width of the PSM domain, reaching from its ability to contribute to the multi-dimensional nature of supply chain effectiveness, to its potential impact on the grand societal challenges of our generation such as social and environmental issues as well as urbanization and digitalization. Specific topics ranged from sustainable procurement and procurement innovations in a globalized world to novel financial models of PSM's financial levers or the discussion of sector/industry-specific best practice examples.

Whereas the days were filled with research presentations and discussions, the conference participants had plenty of time for social gathering and networking activities during the breaks and particularly at the evening events. A visit to the Westphalia Stadium in Dortmund (Signal IDUNA Park) concluded the first day of the main conference. In the course of this night, Dr. Barbara Katharina Yilmaz (née Wichmann) from WHU – Otto Beisheim School of Management, Vallendar, was honoured with the first IPSERA Best Doctoral Dissertation Award 2015 for her thesis “Implementing environmental supply chain management initiatives: A social network perspective”.

The following evening on Tuesday marked the highlight of the 2016 conference honoring the quarter century anniversary of IPSERA with a wonderful gala dinner in the ballroom of Freischütz, Schwerte. During the dinner, the IPSERA Best Conference Paper, the IFPSM Best Paper with strong managerial implications, the NEVI Zorg Best Health Care Paper and the IPSERA Best Conference Reviewer were awarded. At the grand finale of the award ceremony, Professor Michiel Leenders was distinguished with the IPSERA Lifetime Achievement Award in appreciation for his extraordinary contributions to the advancement of PSM as an academic discipline.

3. PSM's impact on supply chain effectiveness and integration – a framework for further research

In order to contribute to the conceptualization of the relationship between PSM, supply chain integration and effectiveness, the following framework is suggested to guide future research (see Table 1). The framework incorporates the observational unit of analysis on the first axis. Potential research opportunities include the full spectrum from the individual level of the professional purchasing agent to the entire value creation network of firms. The second axis categorizes PSM's level of impact on the value creation network. This impact can range from an adaptation of intra-firm process flows to a societal impact in certain sourcing locations.

With this framework, a map is provided to help locate this special issue's articles based on their observational unit of analysis and their studied level of impact. To illuminate the vast research opportunities in the field of PSM and its impact on supply chain effectiveness through the various actors within value creation networks, the research framework is populated with illustrative research topics. This sample of topics is by no means intended to be considered mutually exclusive nor a cumulatively exhaustive list.

Moreover, many of the aforementioned novel research topics provide scholars opportunities for a refocused elaboration and use of traditional theories. While the number of PSM studies that applied grand theories was rather negligible in the past, in the last few years, there has been a trend to increasingly rely upon more solid theoretical bases (cp. Spina et al., 2016). Although the majority of these studies still rest upon transaction cost theory (TCE) and the resource-based view (RBV) of the firm – as these two are the paradigm theories for make-or-buy decisions – the sheer increase of theoretically-driven articles indicates that PSM has become more mature as a scholarly field (Spina et al., 2016). Yet, TCE and RBV share a rather narrowed focus studying PSM at the transaction and the firm level and thus provide less explanatory power on individuals, teams or networks. Therefore, we encourage enriching PSM research with theories from outside its traditional domain such as Information Processing Theory (IPT), Social Exchange Theory (SET) or Network Theory (NT). This seems necessary to ensure an adequate match between the new observational units of analysis (see Table 1) and the explanatory unit of analysis of the applied theories (for an extended overview of grand theories applied in PSM please refer to Spina et al. (2016)).

With the challenge of addressing more complex research topics, the methodological bar is also rising. The prominent case study and survey research techniques that were predominantly used in JPSM publications may not always be able to support the generation of meaningful and practically relevant findings (Meehan et al., 2016). For inspiration on how to tackle these methodologically challenging research topics, refer to the recent special issue on the application of novel methods in PSM published in this journal (Knight et al., 2016). The selected papers in this conference special issue also pay specific attention to the elaboration of particular theories to their respective research context and the rigorous application of

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