

Supply chain management

Discuss the methods used by organisations to integrate their supply chain

As the twenty-first century gets underway, supply chain management (SCM) has gained increasing recognition as a significant strategic tool for firms striving to improve quality, customer service and competitive success (Tan, Lyman and Wisner, p. 614). However, whilst the growing importance of SCM practices is generally acknowledged, this increasing recognition is compounded by contemporary heterogeneity in theoretical approaches to SCM (Mentzer et al., p. 12).

Notwithstanding the importance of SCM in contemporary business practice, the literature remains diverse, with SCM been discussed both as a management discipline (Croom, Romano and Giannakis, p. 67) as well as a commercial marketing practice (Lambert and Cooper, 2000, p. 65).

In the way of addressing this disparity between theory and practice arguably endemic in much of the academic business discourse, current approaches in the SCM literature acknowledge the importance of strategic approaches to good SCM practice (Tan et al., 2002, p. 614). This particularly pragmatic approach to SCM has a number of advantages in furthering contemporary understandings of effective SCM practice. Strategic concerns of SCM help delineate current debate, with work specifically focusing on the adequate implementation and integration of the supply chain, versus simply the management of the supply chain (Cooper and Ellram, 1993, p. 13). In this way, discourse may grow focused on the effective identification of respective industries which may particularly benefit from systematic and thorough SCM practices: such as the relevance of adequate SCM practices in the European construction industry (Vrijhoeff and Koskela, p. 169). However, considerations pertaining to the implementation of effective SCM practices must be borne in mind. These more pragmatic concerns, seeking to translate business acumen into effective outcomes, are highlighted in the literature addressing sufficient integration of SCM practices (Power, 2005, p. 252).

In an effort to continue pragmatic concerns of SCM, literatures also note the importance of differentiating SCM from comparable channel relationships (Cooper and Ellram, 1993, p. 16). In this way, logistical and purchasing approaches to commercial activity help focus debate specifically on SCM procedures and practice.

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