

THE IMPACT OF GREEN SUPPLY CHAIN PRACTICES AND E SUPPLY CHAIN IN ACHIEVING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

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ABSTRACT

Putting into practice of green supply chain and E-supply chain intended to increase an organizational performance that ultimately effects competitive advantage. Businesses and academics are becoming more interested in the relationship between green supply chain practices and competitive advantages whereas, E-supply chain emerged as trending strategy by matching with technological era to recognize organizational demands meeting the end user. Despite the theoretical claims that adopting environmentally friendly practices provided businesses a competitive edge, this research is providing qualitative method after a deep research on proposed variables. The absence of few arguments in the relationship enable to provide a clearer understanding of the literature, this study takes a thorough investigation to assess the situation.

Keywords: *Green Supply Chain, E-Supply Chain, Competitive Advantage.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The environmental sustainability is one of the hottest topics in the supply chain nowadays [1]. Industries all over the world are now implementing and accepting green supply chain strategies because their effects are vast and effective in eliminating wastes and improving productivity [2]–

[5]. This research has discussed the green supply chain and e-supply chain strategies and how they contribute towards a sustainable competitive advantage to an auto industry [6], [7]. Eliminating greenhouse gas emissions is a top aim for companies adopting green initiatives, which leads to a short time consumption increasingly a cost effective business. E-supply chain facilitated the e-commerce businesses that are in high demand now. It also focuses on the improved cooperation with suppliers, improved quality assurance, and optimizing shipping a firm with more agility [8]–[10]. Moreover, the advantages of these two strategies also explained along with the relationship between the dependent and independent variables and a well cited literature review from authentic resources i.e. articles, newspaper blogs, journals etc. because the implementation of these practices is not new in auto industry.

1.1. Problem Statement

The emerging trend of e-commerce has a great emphasis on time effective and cost effective business operations. Whereas, need of e-supply chain and green supply chain increasingly effecting the organizational performance [11]. Numerous studies have looked into the function of green supply chains, however this research needs to look at some inconsistencies that have never been found in the past literature. This research is identifying the e-supply chain and green supply chain practices implementation to get sustainable competitive advantage.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Green Supply Chain

Green supply chain implementation enhances the financial performance of the automobile companies and industries in general [12]. This is due to the fact that when the industry has made the implementation of green strategy mandatory, the investors do find the industry attractive and thus they invest their capital in it [13]–[15]. This is because of the reason that while implementing a green supply chain strategy, a company shows that it is paying back to the society and thus it's a very attractive feature played by an industry [16]. The corporate social responsibility and triple bottom line sustainability explain that businesses are not for profits only but they have to keep three things in mind: people, profit and planet [17]–[20]. Planet means the environment and this is the reason a lot of industries have made it mandatory to publish sustainability on a regular basis

[21]–[24]. This is important because sustainability reporting provides a clear picture of the company's policies and steps taken regarding green supply chain management and how it has achieved its objectives overtime [25]–[27]. For this reason, the relationship between green supply chain and competitive advantage is too strong.

2.2. E – Supply Chain

E-supply chain management has become a new era of business as firms have started exploring avenues to operate businesses over the internet [28], [29]. E-supply chain management system is related to supply chain management activities being carried out through internet [30][31]. The main drives of this game are information and financial analysis. E-supply chain provides a competitive edge because this is the era of digitalization and if companies do not adopt digital practices, they do not prosper in market and against their competitors [32]–[34]. For this reason, e-supply chain has become a norm in auto industry [35]. Think of Tesla. It has adopted an enormous amount of digital practices and thus its solar truck is completely digital and thus the e-supply chain management system is playing its role for Tesla [36], [37]. Supply chain has a direct link with competitive advantage for the auto industry around the globe [38]. Other variables of the research within itself which will be described in next paragraphs. These variables are information flow, product flow and financial flow and these three play a dominant role for auto industry in providing a competitive advantage [39]–[41] or edge to companies against their competitors in the market i.e. Tesla. Both e-supply chain and green supply chain are the need of time for industries.

2.3. Competitive Advantage

[42], [43] stated that competitive advantage can only be achieved if firms are align with green supply chain strategically. In order to sustain firms must have the resources which are inimitable, rare and unable to substitute because in order to be competitive the firm must have unique strategic capabilities which help them to keep the environment sustainable [44]–[46]. The wastes are reduced with the help of green supply chain management which increases the efficiency of a company [47], [48]. For this reason, the costs are reduced too. For example, if an auto manufacturer regularly publishes a sustainability reporting, this will allow the efficiency to increase because it will come to know the wastes in production cycle and how to reduce them [49]. Since

environmental hazard is one of the biggest wastes itself, implementing a green strategy is at the need of time [8], [50], [51]. If the costs are reduced, the profits rise automatically and this allows an industry or a company to develop a competitive edge for itself [52]. Since implementing a green supply chain strategy is not an easy itself, this is the reason it has a competitive edge significance [53], [54]. The production of detrimental substances is reduced with the help of green supply chain management and this is the reason the companies save themselves from being heavily fined by the environmental protection agencies [55]–[57]. This allows them to increase their profits because a non-recurring expense goes down with the help of implementing a green supply chain strategy at the workplace during the production cycle.

2.4. Operational Definition

2.4.1. Green Supply Chain

Businesses that care about the environment frequently consider an important question: What are green supply chain practices, and what is the first step in creating a more sustainable strategy? Sustainability principles are incorporated into conventional supply chain management through green supply chain practices [58]. The objective is to support businesses in minimizing waste and carbon emissions while increasing revenue [59]–[62]. There is space for green improvements throughout the whole supply chain, from manufacturing and purchasing to distribution, warehousing, and transportation [63]. Moreover, in the operational terms green supply chain strategy can be defined as a concept of ecofriendly integration in the supply chain management where the aim is to improve the sustainability of the environment through practicing green approaches like green distribution, green manufacturing, green purchasing and green processes to reach the customers [64], [65].

One of the important reasons why organizations go green is because of the sustainability of resources. In comparison to a green organization, a non-green organization has troubles gathering its resources and to be stable in the market [66], [67]. This is because of the reason that go green supply chain management provides a competitive edge to the companies which allows the industries or companies to easily gather its resources [68]. The suppliers are also going towards go green supply chain management strategies and for this reason they prefer to work clients who are implementing the green supply chain strategy [69]. According to research provided by Oxford

University in UK, the implementation of green supply chain strategy itself is a competitive edge [70], [71]. The utilization of all the available resources gets done through green supply chain management strategy and that's why the step is adopted by nearly all the industries in the world including auto industry [72]. The entire business decision making process is related to green supply chain and that's why processes were never smooth than before. The environmental friendly processes are taking the industries by storm. The recent of solar truck designed by Tesla is a big example of how companies are moving towards environmental sustainability and for the future.

2.4.2. E – Supply Chain

Operationally, E supply chain can be defined as a system of supply chain which is operated virtually. Under the concept of e- supply chain the aim is to maintain the décor of supply chain system while operating in seamless environment which is highly integrated with the colossal businesses network [73]. This seamless business environment is highly connected with internet and highly rely on advance communication facilities [74], [75]. The product flow is the process where goods flow from customers to suppliers or from suppliers to customers. This is possible with the help of e-supply chain management strategies because it enhances the process and thus the efficiency of the system increases [76]–[78]. For example, for Tesla, the product flow plays a vital role because it increases its utilization level which in turn increases the efficiency of the company and this is how they have a competitive business in market [79].

2.4.3. Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage is the advantageous position a business wants to outperform its competitors in terms of profitability [80]. An organisation must be able to communicate to its chosen target market that it has a higher comparative or differential value than its rivals in order to establish and retain a competitive advantage [81]–[87]. For instance, a business is likely to have a competitive advantage if it advertises a product at a lower price than a similar product from a rival [88]. The same holds true if the marketed item is more expensive but has special characteristics that buyers are ready to pay for [89]. Green supply chain management always provides a competitive edge over the competitors by smoothing the production and delivering the products to the end users [90].

Consider Tesla which has recently manufactured a solar truck for reducing the environmental hazard and to increase the greenhouse effect [91], [92]. This is a perfect example of product differentiation and this allows new customers to visit the company and buy the product [93].

Within the launch of few minutes of solar truck by Tesla which is a prototype, the company was able to attract a huge number of clients from around the globe who were willing to put their money into a solar truck [12], [94], [95]. The brand image gets strengthened in the market i.e. recent example of Tesla and the stocks go up. New investors rush to the company like they did to Tesla and the company makes millions of profits with just a single launch. This is the reason literature reviews have provided a thorough research on the direct link between green supply chain management and competitive advantage to the companies.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

[96] Stated Green supply chain implementation enhances the capabilities of supply chain of the automobile companies [97]. Sustainable green supply chain strategies help companies manufacture quality products. The example of Tesla is there because it manufactured one of the most quality products in the world i.e. solar truck. It's highly efficient and plays a fundamental in reducing the environmental complexities [98], [99] because it does not have to release fuel or gas while moving on road [100]–[103]. This is the reason sustainable green supply chain management helps play a competitive role for companies and industries around the world and thus they become highly competitive against their competitors [104]–[106]. Therefore, Tesla adopted go green strategy too.

[107] stated competitive advantage can only be achieved if firms are align with green supply chain strategically [108]. Green supply chain management allows companies to save themselves against anti regulations in the market and this enables them to reduce the extra waste and cost in the manufacturing procedure [109], [110]. Those industries which do not follow the norms are often heavily fined and thus the green supply chain management companies provides an efficient manufacturing procedure in the market over their competitors [111]. A lot of industries have been following and implementing SOPs around the globe regarding sustainability and corporate social responsibilities [112]–[114]. This has remained a competitive strategy for organizations around the world and this has led the companies do enormous profits and growth in their industries against their competitors [115].

[116] stated E - supply chain enhances the performance of the operations which help in achieving competitive advantage [117], [118]. The e-supply chain management helps companies to keep an

efficient track of order and all the invoices and that's why the information flow is very dissolute [119]. This is the reason a lot of companies have implemented e-supply chain management system at the workplaces and this is turning out to be a blessing for them because it has provided a competitive edge for them against their competitors [120], [121]. The orders are being tracked on time and thus no redundancy is there in the system. E-Supply chain management involves a great deal of keeping tracks of invoices and orders [122]. The financial flow is very smooth and easy with the help of e-supply chain management it helps to reduce extra cost and make manufacturing in cost effective way [123]–[125].

Furthermore, since the times are changed, companies are changing their strategies too and that's why they have implemented such practices at their workplaces to be more productive and efficient [126]. The perfect example is Tesla. It has implemented green and e-supply chain management strategies that enabled that to become competitive and gain sustainable competitive advantage in the rivals [127]–[129]. Since competitions are rigid in auto industry, these tactics help companies be better off. Effective management of customer supplier relationship is there too because of implementing such strategies [130]. This is a helpful practice for businesses around the globe because this helps them be productive in the market [131]. Tesla has become one of the biggest companies in the world because of its effective green policies and it has kept and maintained perfect relationship with its suppliers [132]–[135] as well because suppliers are aware of the expected outcomes will be profitable in future [136]. This variable has explained that it has a direct link with competitive advantage for any industry.

3.1 General Research Model

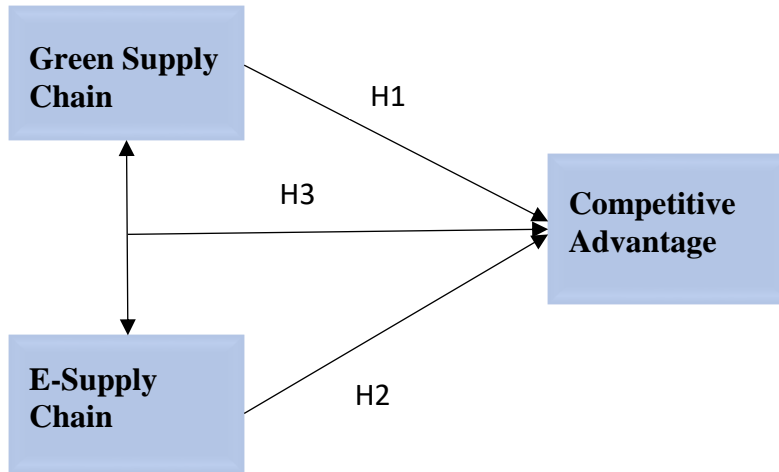


Figure 1: Conceptual Research Model

4. DISCUSSION

Business executives are aware of the significance of a green supply chain and E-supply chain in the effective execution of environmental measures. Practices as a vital component of maintaining competitiveness in the future on the global market. There have been a lot of investigations into the relationship between green supply chain practices and competitive advantage, and the results indicate that the nature of the influence has varied [137], [138]. Only a small number of studies have looked at the causes of these discrepancies and the scenarios regarding the e-supply chain implementation to attain sustainable competitive advantage. Additionally, decreased expenditures for overhead and inventories reduces risk factors, and also emphasize on improved cash flow of the organization. Our theoretical review findings encouraged the prior literature arguments that agrees with the implementation of e-supply chain and green supply chain benefits the organizational effectiveness.

5. CONCLUSION

The attempt to investigate theoretically about the green supply chain practices and e-supply chain implementation encouraged the business management to acquire advanced criteria for the need of development. A thorough research authenticate the missing elements of e-supply chain that assist in achieving competitive advantage. The factors of e-supply chain and green supply chain affecting

the organizations such as, price, cost, quality, delivery reliability, time to market, and product innovation are all factors that green supply chain techniques use to affect an organization's performance and competitive advantage.

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