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Supply chain perspective on competitive strategies and green supply chain management strategies

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SUPPLY CHAIN PERSPECTIVE ON COMPETITIVE STRATEGIES AND GREEN SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Abstract

Due to strategic motivations and pressures from various stakeholders, firms are adopting green supply chain management (GSCM) practices to extend environmental sustainability objectives to suppliers. Although it seems that an increasing number of firms is seeing environmental sustainability as a source of competitive advantage, there is a large gap of research focusing explicitly on the connection between competitive strategy and GSCM. It is also necessary to examine GSCM practices in several operational contexts. This article refines the competitive strategy approach and examines external GSCM strategies along the tiers of supply chain from the perspective of logistics users and providers using a dataset of 128 manufacturing, 110 trading and 144 logistics firms operating in Finland. The results reveal a connection between competitive strategy and GSCM strategy. Marketing differentiators and firms pursuing hybrid strategies tend to use more advanced GSCM strategies to manage the environmental performance of their suppliers. For them, GSCM seems to be a way to differentiate products and services, and to minimise the risk of potential losses resulting from poor environmental performance by suppliers. The results highlight the need to understand the role of competitive strategy in GSCM adoption, both in academia and in business.

Keywords Strategy; Green supply chain management; Buyer-supplier relationships

1. Introduction

The role of firms in the society and their responsibility in minimising the environmental impacts has received increasing attention. Green supply chain management (GSCM) has emerged as a way to combine environmental management and supply chain management (Srivastava, 2007). While firms are becoming more and more reliant on their suppliers to gain competitive advantages (Yeung et al., 2008), managers are increasingly forced to deal with social and environmental issues. Firms might be held responsible not only for their own but also for the environmental and social performance of their suppliers (Seuring & Müller 2008). As a response to pressures from various stakeholders, such as regulators, customers, competitors and NGOs, firms have introduced supplier evaluation schemes that integrate environmental and social criteria (Seuring & Müller, 2008) and
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