



ELSEVIER



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



Customer Enquiry Management in global supply chains: A comparative multi-case study analysis

Marta Zorzini *, Mark Stevenson, Linda C. Hendry

Department of Management Science, Lancaster University Management School, Lancaster University, Lancaster LA1 4YX, UK

KEYWORDS

Customer Enquiry Management (CEM); Customization; Pricing decisions; Multi-case study research; Global supply chain management

Summary The Customer Enquiry Management (CEM) process is of strategic importance to non-Make-To-Stock companies but few empirical studies have explored the CEM practices adopted by firms in practice. A study on the Italian capital goods sector by Zorzini, Hendry, Stevenson, and Pozzetti (2008) provides the most comprehensive contingency-based framework to date. This paper builds on Zorzini et al. (2008) by conducting multi-case study research with seven global capital goods companies managing CEM in the UK. The evidence suggests that both high levels of coordination and formalization of the CEM process are linked to improved performance. In particular, cross-functional coordination and formalization impact jointly on the performance of companies characterized by a large-sized control problem. Two moderating factors are also identified: the proportion of slightly/highly customized orders and the availability of integrated information systems. Analysis of the impact of supply chain coordination and other globalization factors on CEM shows that CEM practices are: directly influenced by the complexity of the supply chain configuration; and, indirectly influenced by the types of relationships with supply chain partners. Two sources of complexity that result from operating in a global context are also identified: coordinating the activities of sales structures distributed around the world; and, managing global customers with different languages and cultures. In terms of managerial implications, the results indicate that coordination with partners along the supply chain is needed at the customer enquiry stage and constraints linked to global customers should be considered when structuring CEM.

© 2011 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

A responsive supply chain relies on the effective and efficient processing of orders and information across its various

channel members, especially in the initial stages of the customer order process. This can be particularly challenging when products are customized, decision-makers are dispersed and customers demand short lead times. As a result, Customer Enquiry Management (CEM) is fundamental for non-Make-To-Stock (non-MTS) firms and impacts the ability to provide quotations that are competitive, reliable and realistic (Hicks, Mc Govern, & Earl, 2000; Watanapa & Technitisawad, 2005). The term “non-MTS” refers to a

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +44 (0)1524 593868; fax: +44 (0)1524 844885.

E-mail address: m.zorzini@lancaster.ac.uk (M. Zorzini).

variety of production strategies, ranging from limited product customization to a completely new design for each new order (see, for example, [Stevenson, Hendry, & Kingsman, 2005](#) and [Hendry, 2010](#)). In such contexts, CEM can be defined as the multi-stage decision process which takes place between the receipt of a customer enquiry and the processing of a confirmed order, including: determining whether the company wishes to make a bid for the enquiry; preparing cost and lead time estimates; and, determining the price and lead time to bid ([Kingsman, Hendry, Mercer, & De Souza, 1996](#)).

Coordination among all the parties involved is often fundamental to CEM. With globalization and a generally decreasing degree of vertical integration in many manufacturing environments, coordination becomes more complex and critical to both organizational effectiveness and efficiency ([Gunasekaran & Ngai, 2005](#); [Meijboom, 1999](#); [Prasad, Tata, & Madan, 2005](#)). Globalization also results in negotiations between members of different nations; differences in language and culture play an important role in CEM (e.g., in pricing decisions) and should be considered at a strategic and tactical decision level ([Flint, 2004](#); [Meijboom, 1999](#); [Reynolds, Simintiras, & Vlachou, 2003](#); [Sambharya, Kumaraswamy, & Banerjee, 2005](#)).

Despite the importance and increasing complexity of CEM, few studies have explored the CEM practices adopted by firms in practice ([Ebben, Hans, & Olde Weghuis, 2005](#)). The few studies which have emerged have approached CEM from an internal cross-department perspective ([Jin & Thomson, 2003](#); [Kingsman & Mercer, 1997](#); [Konijnendijk, 1994](#); [Kromker, Thoben, & Wickner, 1997](#); [Zorzini et al., 2008](#)); however, research is now required which adopts a global supply chain perspective, i.e., which considers all the (potentially geographically dispersed) parties across the supply chain involved in the CEM process and the relationships between them.

This paper builds on the most comprehensive contingency-based study to date, by [Zorzini et al. \(2008\)](#), in which the authors: (i) developed a framework based on contingency theory for understanding how and why the CEM process varies between capital goods manufacturers; and, (ii) presented propositions to be tested in further research. Two of these propositions focus on the positive impact of cross-functional coordination and formalization during the CEM process on firm performance. However, those propositions were developed using evidence from Italian-based companies with primarily Italian-based supply chains; in addition, supply chain-related issues were overlooked. In order to overcome the aforementioned gaps, our study pursues two core objectives. Firstly, interviews with global capital goods firms managing CEM in the UK are used to assess whether the framework proposed by [Zorzini et al. \(2008\)](#), based on data from Italian firms, applies to global capital goods companies. Secondly, we adopt a supply chain perspective of CEM, considering all the parties involved across the supply chain and explore whether findings related to cross-functional coordination and formalization within a firm can be extended to global supply chains.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. A literature review is presented in "Literature review" before the research method adopted is described in "Research methodology". "Assessing the validity of previous theory

for global companies (RQ1)" then uses case study evidence to assess the applicability of the framework proposed by [Zorzini et al. \(2008\)](#). "Impact of supply chain and globalization factors on CEM (RQ2)" provides a global perspective of CEM based on issues that emerge from the case study evidence before possible refinements to the framework are considered in "Refining the contingency-based framework". Finally, conclusions are drawn in "Conclusion".

Literature review

CEM requires inter-disciplinary competences ranging from operational and planning and control to behavioral processes; as a result, most studies have approached it from a cross-department integrated perspective ([Jin & Thomson, 2003](#)). Key contributions from this perspective are presented in "The CEM process: A cross-department perspective", with particular focus on empirical studies. But given increasing competition, global markets, outsourcing and extended supply chains, CEM is of even greater importance but needs to be approached from a broader supply chain perspective, i.e., considering all parties involved in the process rather than only focusing on internal units within an organization ([Hicks et al., 2000](#)). Therefore, the impact of supply chain characteristics (e.g., configuration, defined by [Demeter, Gelei, and Jenei \(2006\)](#) as the "relationship structure of customers and suppliers") and globalization-related issues (e.g., global customers and suppliers) on coordinating modes and, specifically, on the CEM process are described in "The CEM process: A global perspective". The state-of-the-art is assessed in "Assessment of the literature".

The CEM process: A cross-department perspective

The CEM process often involves complex trade-offs (e.g., between price and delivery lead time), requiring inter-disciplinary expertise ([Jin & Thomson, 2003](#); [Kromker et al., 1997](#)). Setting Delivery Dates (DDs, i.e., the planned points in time at which specific orders will be delivered to customers) that are both competitive and reliable therefore requires ongoing coordination between the Sales and Production departments ([Kingsman & Mercer A., 1997](#)) and is a critical activity for Make-To-Order (MTO) companies ([Easton & Moodie, 1999](#); [Ebben et al., 2005](#); [Ivanescu, Fransoo, & Bertrand, 2002](#); [Moses, Grant, Gruenwald, & Pulat, 2004](#); [Wullink, Gademann, Hans, & Harten, 2004](#)). The challenge of managing trade-offs and conflicting objectives has been studied by several authors, e.g., [Crittenden, Gardiner, and Stam \(1993\)](#) and [Kate \(1994\)](#) and formalization in supporting cross-functional coordination has been discussed by [Javorsky and Kohli \(1993\)](#) and [Welker \(2004\)](#). Of the few empirical studies that have addressed cross-functional coordination in non-MTS firms, those by [Konijnendijk \(1994\)](#), [Hicks et al. \(2000\)](#), [Bramham, MacCarthy, & Guinery, 2005](#), [Parente, Pegels, and Nallan \(2002\)](#) and [Zorzini et al. \(2008\)](#) focus on industrial markets such as capital goods and are of particular relevance to this research. [Konijnendijk \(1994\)](#) explored the interdependence between sales and manufacturing in Engineer-To-Order (ETO) companies through a survey and case studies, proposing several

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات