Lean Supply Chain Management: empirical research on practices, contexts and performance

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Abstract
This paper has two major objectives. First, we aim to provide a framework in order to define the exact practices and bundles that should be considered as pertained to Lean Supply Chain Management (LSCM). Although several authors have proposed definitions of LSCM, there is neither systemic nor comprehensive definitions of the bundles and organizational practices that encompass LSCM. Second, we aim at testing empirically the positive association between LSCM bundles and supply chain performance. There is little empirical evidence about the relationship and consequences of a systemic implementation of LSCM and its effect in the supply chain performance. Thus, understanding how the LSCM bundles affect supply chain performance becomes critical. The aforementioned relationships were determined and validated through a survey carried out with 89 Brazilian companies and their supply chain. Hence, it is provided an empirically validated instrument for assessing LSCM bundles and their impact on key supply chain performance indicators with no parallel in the existing literature. With regards to supply chain context, our study focuses on four variables: tier level, plant size, company’s experience with lean implementation and onshore supply. Two major findings are suggested. First, the identification and empirical validation of bundles of LSCM practices provides means to focus on the most popular and elementary practices among different industry sectors and supply chains. Further, the concurrent application of these bundles appears to make a significant contribution to supply chain performance. Second, supply chain context matters with regard to implementation of LSCM practices, although not all aspects matter to the same extent and effect. Besides its theoretical contribution to the body of knowledge on LSCM, this research provides managerial implications that may support leaders and practitioners to better comprehend the need and the advantages of a systemic lean implementation across organizations, helping to anticipate occasional difficulties and setting the proper expectations along the lean implementation.
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