Benchmarking: An International Journal

A content analysis of global supply chain research
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Received 7 April 2013
Revised 3 December 2013
Accepted 3 December 2013

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to use content analysis to review the extensive supply chain literature to summarize its past and current trends, and uncover existing gaps and opportunities for future global supply chain research.

Design/methodology/approach – Since the study uses content analysis, several dimensions of the literature were analyzed: research purpose, year of publication, journal name, methodology, theory building or verification, country of study, sample industry, global or non-global issues, and article classification.

Findings – From a methodological point, the literature mostly consists of empirical and descriptive studies with few exploratory articles. The review shows that global supply chains area relatively "immature" or "new phenomenon" research topic that is gaining interest from practitioners and academics.

Research limitations/implications – It is hoped that by critically examining the extant literature, the authors can clearly identify the challenges and state of global supply chain research to provide supply chain researchers with a precise summary of the literature and directions for future studies.

Practical implications – This study also allows managers to recognize the methodologies and tools that can be used to enhance their supply chains. It is believed that various strategies could be adopted to create a robust global supply chain. In this respect, different industry sectors may require different global strategies and different global practices.

Originality/value – The findings show that there is a shortage of empirical studies on global supply chain strategies and outcomes, and most research focusses on supply chain practices and customer or supplier relationships.

Keywords Literature review, Content analysis, Global supply chain

Paper type Literature review

1. Introduction

Globalization has restructured the business world and introduced the concept of a global supply chain. Large and small companies alike have exploited their opportunities to source from low-cost countries and sell internationally to reduce production costs and expand revenue growth (Ruiz-Torres and Mahmoodi, 2008). To respond to new market trends and demands, perceptive firms are increasingly pursuing global supply chain strategies and operations to reduce costs and increase productivity simultaneously (Reyes *et al.*, 2002). Manuj and Mentzer (2008a, b) and Tracey *et al.* (2005) suggest that active participation and seamless integration in a global supply chain provide a source of competitive advantage that amounts to the difference between the overall values created in the industry when the local firm operates in the global market and to the values if the local firm operates independently.

In order to be competitive, companies must overcome the immense challenges of the current global trading environment, which raises the question concerning how these

Benchmarking: An International Journal
Vol. 22 No. 7, 2015
pp. 1429-1462

1463-5771
DOI 10.1108/BIJ-04-2013-0038

companies can use their competitive advantage in a global supply chain to compete efficiently and effectively. In keeping up with the increased competitive pressure, companies must find ways to improve their global supply chain operations. In other words, globalization has restructured the business world and introduced the concept of a global supply chain. Prasad and Sounderpandian (2003), and Balan *et al.* (2006) define a global supply chain as a series of firms networking and outsourcing throughout the globe. Balan *et al.* (2006) also propose a supply chain management (SCM) index and contend that countries that are below average in their SCM index should extensively exploit the opportunities that are available for global supply chain implementation to reduce the gap and improve their SCM index. Therefore, meticulously managing a global supply chain is a vital strategy to remain viable in an intensely competitive global market. Consequently, the study of global supply chains and how they can be exploited to improve competitive advantage are becoming increasingly attractive to academics and practitioners alike.

Although numerous articles on global supply chains have been published over the last two decades, none have thoroughly reviewed the literature base to summarize the stage of global supply chain research to provide future research direction on this crucial topic. Thus, the purpose of this paper is twofold. First, this study intends to extend previous work on global supply chains by providing a comprehensive literature review that is greater in breadth and depth than previous studies. Within this objective, this study specifically focusses on the SCM literature using Mentzer *et al.*'s (2001) definition – SCM is the systematic and strategic coordination of traditional business functions internally within an organization and externally across businesses within the supply chain, for the purpose of improving the long-term performance of all the business entities along the supply chain. The second goal is to analyze the existing literature as it pertains to past and current trends to reveal existing gaps in the literature. We hope that by summarizing the literature and identifying the gaps, it provides supply chain academics and practitioners a clear knowledge of where the field currently stands and the type of research that is needed to advance global SCM.

This paper comprises five sections. The introductory section provides a general idea about the research topic and gaps of the study. Section 2 reviews the literature related to global supply chains, structures, and different types of supply chain. Section 3 addresses the methodology and Section 4 discusses the findings of the data analysis. Finally, Section 5 presents the conclusions and implications, and provides questions and suggestions for future research.

2. Literature review

2.1 Global supply chains

Over the last few decades, globalization has continuously raised the competitive pressure on manufacturers and service providers (Gereffi *et al.*, 2005). In this interdependent global market, multinational corporations have become the dominant driving force of economic growth. In an attempt to cut costs, many multinational corporations have outsourced their production functions. Although there are undesirable implications of globalization, participation in global supply chains is a necessary step for organizations to cut costs, acquire new technology, and/or expand their market share (Gereffi, 1999). Globalization can help manufacturers from a developing country enter foreign markets, earn foreign currency, diversify exports, and, most importantly, they can acquire new technologies and capabilities. However,

failure to effectively manage global challenges can lead to dire consequences (Gunasekaran *et al.*, 2008). For example, participants in a global supply chain must carefully manage the various factors, such as, among others, tariffs, duties, trade barriers, currency exchange rates, and corporate income taxes. In addition, with the globalization of the world economy, the diversity and environmental issues that influence a firm's global strategy and approach must be addressed (Kale, 2007).

The growth in globalization and the added management challenges it brings have motivated the interest of both academics and practitioners in global SCM. Prasad and Babbar (2000) observe that there is an increased interest in global supply chain research among leading operations management and logistics journals. SCM is not simply a domestic management philosophy; it transcends national boundaries to impose unique challenges on managers who design supply chains for existing and new product lines (Meixell and Gargeya, 2005). Accordingly, the following subsections discuss global supply chain issues.

2.2 Domestic vs global supply chains

The scope of SCM should include all value-added activities, including the extraction of raw materials, sourcing, transportation, transformation processes, distribution channels, and delivery to the end customers (Tan, 2001; Li and Lin, 2006a). Li and Lin (2006a) propose a generic global supply chain model that does not differentiate global sourcing and distribution from domestic sourcing and distribution. Vidal and Goetschalckx (1997), however, emphasize that domestic supply chains are confined within a single country but that factors affecting global supply chains, such as international trade rules, tariffs, corporate income taxes, and location issues, must be addressed. The authors also distinguish between domestic and international strategic production-distribution in terms of a single country or a unified group of countries on the one hand, and multiple countries, on the other hand, in relation to selecting vendors, locating plants, and warehouses. Similarly, Sajadieh (2009) highlights the differences between domestic and global supply chains in that the latter involves a company's worldwide suppliers; large geographical distances in a global context; increased transportation costs; and, last but not least, complicated logistics because of the increased lead time in the supply chain, dissimilarities in the culture, language, laws, and currency.

Global supply chains are inherently more complex and difficult to manage than domestic supply chains (Dornier *et al.*, 1998; MacCarthy and Atthirawong, 2003; Sajadieh, 2009; Wood *et al.*, 2002). Consequently, global supply chains are riskier than domestic supply chains (Manuj and Mentzer, 2008b) because the former comprises different taxes, duties, exchange rates, customs clearance, trade barriers, transfer prices, and complex international transportation issues (Vidal and Goetschalckx, 1997). Furthermore, other qualitative factors, such as government stability and the infrastructure of a particular country are critical for global supply chains. Similarly, Babbar *et al.* (2008) note that a global supply chain is too complex for a single firm to manage the flow of materials and value-added activities along the entire supply chain. In order to be viable in a supply chain, firms tend to compete in terms of cost, quality, customer responsiveness, flexibility, and agility. Furthermore, firms must interact and integrate with suppliers and customers. Their products must be conducive to being shipped across wide geographical and national boundaries. Firms that are able to manage their global supply chains successfully gain inimitable benefits, such as increased financial performance, international network, market share, and operational efficiency to extend their brand names in terms of products and services (Asree, 2010).

2.3 Structure of a global supply chain

The existing global supply chain literature shows that research on leading factors, practices, strategies, and global supply chain performance is still scanty (Asree, 2010; Ghemawat and Hout, 2008; Manuj and Mentzer, 2008b; Rudberg and West, 2008). Cagliano *et al.* (2008) claim that although global supply chains have evolved over the last two decades, there is a lack of credible evidence in the literature. Although the term global supply chain has emerged in several reputable international journals, its definition differs among them; however, the consensus is that the term refers to a supply chain in the global context of today's business landscape. Klassen and Whybark (1994) define a global supply chain as a network of factories and material sourcing on a worldwide basis, while others, such as Reyes *et al.* (2002), define the term as synchronizing demand with supply across the supply chain to reduce uncertainty. Motwani *et al.* (2000) define global SCM as an "integrating process, used to create and sustain competitive advantage based on the delivery to the customer of basic and unexpected services." It is a strategy to optimize the flow of information and purchased raw materials to the delivery of finished goods along the supply chain with the goals of achieving a high level of productivity and quality (Muller, 1993).

The central role of global buyers is to procure high quality raw materials and components at the lowest total cost. Global buyers are the intermediaries between global consumers and local manufacturers, thereby inserting local industries into the global supply chains (Kaplinsky and Readman, 2005). For many Asian firms, these buyers were their key contacts to participate in global supply chains to acquire new skills, knowledge, and technology (UNIDO, 2004). Global buyers not only assist local firms to obtain the credit needed to expand their production, they also supply the required technology in various forms like blueprints and specifications, information on competing goods, production techniques, and guidance on design and quality. Meanwhile, Motwani *et al.* (2000) stress that global supply chains play an important role for organizations to achieve competitive advantage. Kale (2007) also notes that global supply chains play a key role in a firm's global competitiveness because of its expanded global market and macroeconomic forces. In addition, changes in a company's traditional operations to meet global and functional integration provide new opportunities to compete in the global markets (Lee, 2000).

Fawcett *et al.* (2008) claim that factors shaping the global environment and driving global operations of multinational firms fall into four categories: global market forces, technological forces, global cost forces, and political and macroeconomic forces. A well-implemented global supply chain can capture these four forces to minimize cost or delivery lead time in international trading (Motwani *et al.*, 1998). Vidal and Goetschalckx (1997) highlight that the rapid change in the global economy leads to the homogenization of international scenarios and trade agreements, such as NAFTA, EU, and ASEAN, which facilitate this process. Such agreements and trading unions facilitate the implementation of global supply chains that are more effective and less problematic. Vidal and Goetschalckx (1997) also explain that flows of cash and information in a global setting are more difficult to coordinate than in a single country situation. Consequently, new qualitative and quantitative tools must be designed for the global setting. International logistics systems are easier to develop under stable and uniform economic conditions. Indeed, Pontrandolfo *et al.* (2002) note that multinational firms are good examples of global logistics systems that combine their production systems with the added complexity of a global supply chain to connect several nations with different currencies, import tariffs and fiscal systems. Another benefit of

integrating with a global supply chain is the ability to improve the negative consequences of globalization, such as sweatshop labor and the cutthroat pricing practices of large corporations (Mefford, 2006).

3. Review methodology

Li and Cavusgil (1995) suggest that there are three basic approaches to investigate the state of knowledge in a field. The first approach is the Delphi method through which experts who are familiar with the area are surveyed. The second approach is meta-analysis in which empirical studies on the subject are gathered, combined, and statistically analyzed. The third approach is content analysis or a research method for systematic, qualitative, and quantitative description of the manifest content of literature in an area. This study uses content analysis to identify research gaps in the global supply chain literature. Content analysis includes three major steps: analysis of articles, definition of content within each category, and identify research gaps in the literature. We summarize the content analysis steps undertaken in this study in Figure 1.

In step 1, this study searched for relevant supply chain articles in academic journals. Our search focusses on journals in the areas of supply chains, logistics and transportation, operations management, business/marketing, and general management

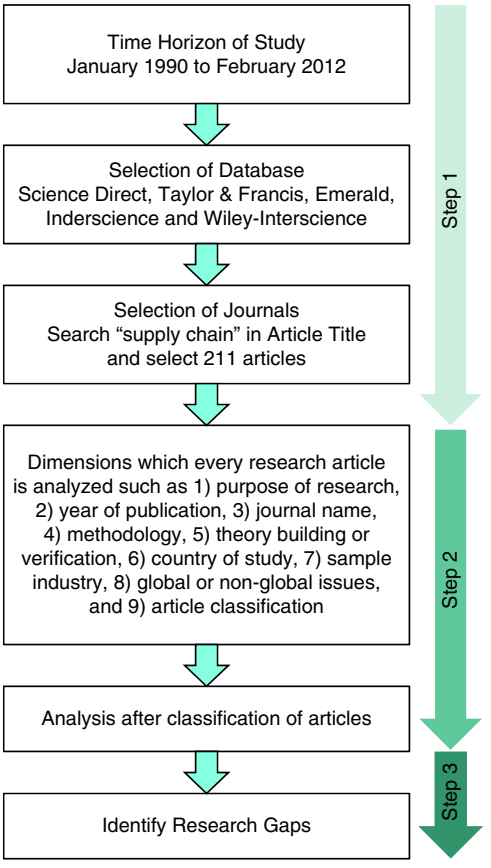


Figure 1.
Steps in content analysis

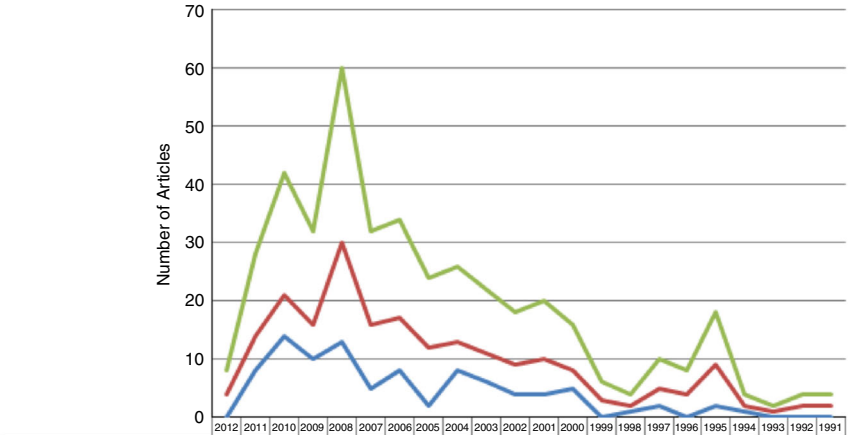
from January 1990 to February 2012 using the key words "supply chain." The full text of each article was reviewed to remove articles that were unrelated to supply chains. Burgess *et al.* (2006), utilize a similar approach for selecting articles in their studies.

Articles were collected from Science Direct, Taylor & Francis, Emerald, Inderscience, and Wiley Interscience (or Blackwell Synergy), as the majority of well-refereed articles on industrial management are found in these databases. The choice of these outlets was based on previous studies that identified and ranked these journals as making the highest contribution to the supply chain and logistics discipline (e.g. Fawcett *et al.*, 1995; Ferguson, 1983). This study discarded those articles not belonging to the abovementioned journals as well as prefaces, editorial notes, book reviews, conference proceedings, public reports, master's theses, doctoral dissertations, and textbooks. While it is not possible to guarantee that this search is exhaustive, we believe that the journals selected and articles reviewed comprise a reasonably representative and comprehensive body of the research being accomplished on supply chains. Our search yielded 211 articles pertaining to supply chains. Since the study uses content analysis, several dimensions of the literature were analyzed: research purpose, year of publication, journal name, methodology, theory building or verification, country of study, sample industry, global or non-global issues, and article classification. Vallet-Bellmunt *et al.* (2011) reveal that most of the content analyses done on SCM were used to detect the methodology and scientific level of supply chains as a discipline and were based on analysis of leading journals. We analyzed the 211 articles identified in this study based on these dimensions.

4. Results of literature review

Since a major purpose of this study is to examine the growth of global supply chain research, the sample of 211 articles was separated into global and non-global supply chain research based on the purpose of study. This broad classification provides a preliminary clue on the growth of global supply chain research. Research growth in an area can also be traced by using frequency analysis of articles published yearly. Out of the 211 articles reviewed in this study, less than half (93 articles or 44 percent) of the articles researched global supply chain issues. Hence, it is clear that global supply chain research is not as predominant as local or domestic supply chain studies. Indeed, since 1991, the number of non-global studies exceeds that of global supply chain articles. Nonetheless, interest in global supply chain research has increased steadily since 2005 (Figure 2).

As shown in Figure 2, the number of supply chain articles has been increasing steadily since 2000. Sachan and Datta (2005), and Soni and Kodali (2011) notice a gradual surge in supply chain research since 2000. In total, 51 supply chain articles were published from 2000 to 2004, and another 91 articles were published in the next five years from 2005 to 2009. Non-global supply chain studies peaked in 2008 but declined noticeably over the next three years while global supply chain studies continued to rise until 2010. Since 2012 contains publications for two months only, it is premature to comment on whether the trend continues to rise or decline. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to infer that interest in global supply chains did not start until 2000, as there was almost no publication in the preceding years. A probable reason is that scholars began to take notice of global supply chain challenges after the September 11, 2001; incident that almost crippled many global supply chains. Since then a series of terrorist attacks, natural disasters, industrial disputes, and wars have provided frequent reminders that supply chain managers must be able to deal with



	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996	1995	1994	1993	1992	1991
Number of Jounral Published	4	14	21	16	30	16	17	12	13	11	9	10	8	3	2	5	4	9	2	1	2	2
Non Global Issues/Local Issues	4	6	7	6	17	11	9	10	5	5	5	6	3	3	1	3	4	7	1	1	2	2
Global Issues	0	8	14	10	13	5	8	2	8	6	4	4	5	0	1	2	0	2	1	0	0	0

Figure 2.
Global and non-global supply chain-related articles (1991-2012)

disruptions to their supply chains, as well as the day-to-day risks from routine supply chain failure. The September 11 terrorist attack in the USA, for instance, heightened awareness of supply chain risks and the vulnerability of the transportation and logistics systems. Since then, the issue of supply chain risks has become a major concern for many multinational corporations. Consequently, numerous journals published a series of special issues on supply chain risks to provide policy implications and future research directions in the context of supply chain risk management.

We summarized the journals for the 211 articles in Table AI, for detail refer to Appendixes. The primary publication outlets for supply chain studies are the *International Journal of Production Economics*, *International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management*, *International Journal of Logistics Research and Applications*, and *Supply Chain Forum an International Journal*, which, collectively, published about 50 percent of the total number of articles. The considerable number of articles published in the *International Journal of Production Economics*, is partially due to a special issue on global supply chains published in 2010. Other prominent operations management, business logistics, and management journals lagged behind in publishing supply chain studies. We used Olsen and Ellram's (1997) scheme to classify the methodologies of the 211 supply chain studies along two widely adopted dimensions. The first dimension separates the articles by theoretical or empirical focus, and the second dimension separates the studies by prescriptive or descriptive emphasis. These dimensions have been adopted by other literature review research (e.g. Croom *et al.*, 2000; Luo *et al.*, 2001) because it allows for a reasonably comprehensive assessment of the research approaches taken in the current body of literature concerning the subject by highlighting both the basic methodology and the objective of the studies.

Malhotra and Grover (1998) state that there are six major research methodologies: perspective, conceptual, descriptive, empirical, exploratory cross-sectional, and exploratory longitudinal. Perspective research draws conclusions based on the perceptions of the authors, and conceptual research describes the basic or fundamental concepts of a subject area. Descriptive research describes, formulates, and makes a model of the research topic. Empirical research is a methodology in which data are taken from a survey, case study,

literature review, and taxonomy or typology approach. Exploratory cross-sectional research collects data at a single point in time whereas exploratory longitudinal research collects data at two or more points over time from the same subject to monitor its response before and after an experiment.

Researchers began to concentrate on global supply chain research over the last two decades. Our literature review reveals that numerous global supply chain studies were published in the last 15 years. Many global supply chain issues and challenges have been discussed in the literature in the forms of conceptual, empirical, and descriptive papers. This observation is consistent with Malhotra and Grover (1998) who further conclude that different quantitative methods have been used in the literature to discuss global supply chain issues. Our summary in Table I shows that empirical survey and exploratory cross-sectional study (40 percent) are the most widely used research methodology in global supply chain studies, followed by conceptual paper (22 percent), exploratory case study (19 percent), and empirical modeling (8 percent). The exploratory longitudinal method is undoubtedly the least popular research method in this area. This is not surprising as longitudinal study is innately difficult and costly to conduct, especially in a business setting. Three papers in our sample of 211 studies used more than one research methodology.

While less than 20 percent of the studies used a case study approach, case studies can be a very useful and appropriate instrument for research on relationships as they allow for in-depth, multi-perspective analysis to consider not only the perspective of the research subjects within the study but also the interaction between subjects (Frankel *et al.*, 2005). Despite a relatively large number of supply chain articles published in this area, papers providing comprehensive analysis that outline future research directions are still limited.

Next, we analyze the contribution of each article to determine whether it is a theory building or theory verification study. Flynn *et al.* (1990) differentiate theory building from verification in that theory building studies propose new theory based on hypothesis testing whereas theory verification studies use existing theory to validate the results of a research. The latter includes studies that propose and then verify the proposed theory. We summarize the results in Table II. Out of the 211 articles, 44 are theory building studies and 107 are theory verification studies. The remaining 60 articles are mostly anecdotal research that did not use any theory. The small ratio of theory building supply chain research indicates that the research topic is a relatively

Methodology	Number of papers GSC	SC	Total number of papers
Conceptual	25	22	47
Descriptive	3	2	5
Empirical (modeling)	11	7	18
Empirical (survey/exploratory cross-sectional)	24	61	85
Explanatory (exploratory longitudinal)	1	1	2
Exploratory (case study)	21	19	40
Perspective	5	6	11
Review	5	1	6
Total	95	119	214[a]

Note: [a]Three articles used mixed mode methodologies

Table I.
Summary of research methodology

young field compared to other business disciplines. Hence, there is a need to encourage conceptual and theory building research in this area.

Various theories ranging from the popular resource-based view to the relatively unknown customer value theory have been used to explain supply chain research. Halldorsson *et al.* (2007) develop a theoretical reference to explain SCM based on total cost analysis, network theory, and the resource-based view. They argue that established theories are useful for explaining structural and management issues in supply chains. We summarize the theories used in our sample articles in Table III. It is clear that most articles do not use any established theory to justify their research framework. The most widely used theories are contingency, resource-based view, and transaction cost. However, Melén and Nordman (2009) note that internationalization theory is gaining popularity in supply chain research, especially for marketing-related topics.

Research on supply chains has been done in almost every part of the world, but it appears that the bulk of the studies are in advanced countries. Hence, it is imperative to identify the under-researched countries or regions to encourage more studies in the areas to improve supply chain strategies and practices. We summarize the results in Table IV. An interesting observation is that earlier supply chain studies focussed on developed regions, such as the USA, Europe, and Australia, whereas more recent research in this area shows more effort to provide insights into global supply chain practices in developing regions, particularly in Asia. The most frequently researched countries in Asia are China, India, and Taiwan. The least researched region is Africa with a single study since 1991. Some comparative analyses have also been undertaken to offer a cross-country view of global supply chains. A breakdown of this comprehensive analysis by geographical focus is provided in Table IV.

Our next observation is that supply chain research appears to spread across many industrial sectors (Table V). Although global supply chains are mostly applied in the consumer industries, such as electronics, automotive, and telecommunications, applications of global supply chains have also been used in other sectors, such as agricultural, construction, marine transport, and the retail segment. Applications of global supply chain practices are mostly by large, multinational corporations rather than small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Finch (2004) believes that firm size plays a key role in determining a firm's business model and supply chain practices. Table V shows that both global and non-global supply chain studies are not restricted to any particular industry, but that the consumer electronic industry has attracted a large proportion of the research. A credible reason is that most of the large consumer electronics manufacturers, such as Apple Inc., Dells, and Intel, have outsourced their manufacturing overseas. An effective and efficient global supply chain is needed to move raw materials and sales information to overseas manufacturing facilities and ship finished goods back to the consumers.

Theory building/verification	Number of journals
Theory verification	107
Theory building	44
None or not specify	60
Total	211

Table II.
Summary of theory building/verification papers

Theory	Number of papers GSC	SC	Total number of papers
None or not specified	61	84	145
Resource-based view	8	6	14
Contingency theory	2	6	8
Transaction cost theory	3	4	7
Organizational theory	1	4	5
Agency theory	1	4	5
Game theory	2	2	4
Internationalization theory	3	–	3
Value chain theory	1	1	2
Social capital	1	1	2
Theory of quality management	1	1	2
Theory of swift	1	1	2
Network theory	2	–	2
Institutional theory	–	2	2
Organizational learning theory	1	1	2
Social network theory	1	–	1
International economics	1	–	1
Strategy-structure-performance	1	–	1
Political economy paradigm	1	–	1
Traditional agency theory	1	–	1
Theory of constraints	–	1	1
Theory of limited rationality	–	1	1
International marketing	1	–	1
Option pricing theory	1	–	1
Social-technical systems theory	1	–	1
Duality theory In programming	1	–	1
Classical decision theory	–	1	1
Economic incentive theory	1	–	1
Theory of competence	–	1	1
Theory of organizational capability	–	1	1
Cluster theory	1	–	1
Strategic choice theory	–	1	1
Multi-attribute utility theory	–	1	1
Customer value theory	1	–	1

Table III.
Summary of theories used in study

Notes: GSC, global supply chain; SC, non-global supply chain. 12 articles used more than one theory in the study

Geographical area	Number of articles	Percent
Africa	1	0.47
Asia	41	19.43
Australia	3	1.42
Europe	30	14.22
Global	33	15.64
USA	42	19.91
n/a	61	28.91
Total	211	100%

Table IV.
Geographical distribution of articles

No.	Industry sub-sector	Frequency of industry cited GSC	SC	Total frequency
1	Medical/medical equipment	4	7	11
2	Telecommunications/communication equipment	6	6	12
3	Rubber and plastic	3	9	12
4	Textiles/fiber/fashion industry	6	9	15
5	Transportation and transport equipment manufacturing	6	9	15
6	Food/beverage manufacturing	7	10	17
7	Chemical	5	12	17
8	Global third-party logistics service providers (G3PLs)/3PL	2	10	12
9	Metals/metal refinery and stamping	7	11	18
10	Automotive industry	5	13	18
11	Machinery manufacturing	7	14	21
12	Computer/electronic equipment	9	13	22
13	Product/component/manufacturing industry	8	22	30
14	Electrical/electronic equipment and electronic parts	19	25	34
16	Others	39	63	102
15	None or not specified	32	38	70
	Total	165	271	436[a]

Notes: GSC, global supply chain; SC, non-global supply chain. [a]Total frequency exceeded 211 because most studies addressed multiple industries

Table V. Classification of industry sectors

4.1 Description of content classification scheme and results

Global supply chains are complicated network, as various members from several countries are involved. Hence, global supply chains involve cross-border, inter-organizational relationships among suppliers, government, intermediaries, local traders, and customers. Given this complex view of global supply chains, our content analysis focussed on crucial aspects of the literature to highlight these intricate relationships. More specifically, the selected dimensions of global supply chains delineate why, how, and the consequences of each study (Marasco, 2008). In order to clarify, organize and analyze the global supply chain dimensions in the literature, this study adapted the contingency relationship model developed by Ginsberg and Venkatraman (1985). The authors suggest that contingent relationships within a system comprise three elements: input, process, and output. Input is the context of the literature; process consists of global supply chain strategy and practices; and output is the outcome of the study.

Context describes the environment within which the global supply chain operates. It includes internal and external contextual factors. Internal context includes organizational characteristics like operations and supply chain capabilities, human capital, and financial resources, whereas external context is the macroeconomic environment, such as infrastructure, competitiveness of the industry, political development and stability, and currency exchange. Global supply chain strategy describes the overall corporate plan and policy used to manage transnational sourcing, manufacturing, and logistics functions. A firm's global supply chain strategy can vary widely depending on several attributes, such as the scope of activities involved, continuity, complexity, symmetry, and degree of formalization. Global supply chain practices are the tactical level day-to-day activities that a firm engages in to execute its global supply chain strategy. Outcome reflects the results of a global supply chain. Global supply chain outcomes can be divided into internal outcomes

observed by supply chain participants directly involved with the activities and external outcomes perceived at the supply chain level.

We summarized our content analysis of the literature by separating the articles into each of the four groups in Table VI. The decision criterion for placing articles into a specific group was primarily based on the key purpose or objective of the articles. During the classification process, some articles were found to be multifaceted in that they addressed multiple dimensions (i.e. context, strategy, practices, and outcome) simultaneously. Hence, a fifth category, comprehensive, was added to cover the "comprehensive" articles. Marasco (2008) also categorizes his review of third-party logistics literature into five groups – context, structure, process, outcomes, and comprehensive. Subsequently, Maghsoudi and Zailani (2012) classify their literature review of humanitarian supply chain articles into five categories based on Marasco's (2008) framework.

The distribution of articles by content in Table VI shows that supply chain studies that address context-related issues have drawn considerable attention among researchers. In total, 17 of the 211 articles (8 percent) are devoted to the analysis of influential factors affecting the internal and external contexts of a firm. Specifically, these studies explore issues that affect the internal characteristics of an organization, such as the strengths and weaknesses of top management, processes, technology and capabilities, and resources, among others. Some common external contexts examined in the literature include issues distinctive to the consumer electronic and automobile industries. Several country characteristics, such as political stability, infrastructure, and currency exchange were also addressed by the context-related studies. The next group in Table VI addresses the implementation of supply chain strategy. Although academics and practitioners alike have been stressing for years that a firm's supply chain must be managed strategically to enhance competitive advantage, only 8 percent of the articles in our sample researched this important topic. However, supply chain practices have been widely studied (70 percent), perhaps because data on practices are easier to collect than information on strategy. Although, very often, top management teams are reluctant to disclose their strategies, the practices are readily available to mid or lower-level managers who are prime survey targets. Less than 10 percent of the studies examined the outcomes of supply chain strategy and practices. The most common outcome measure is supply chain performance. Lastly, 11 articles or about 5 percent of our sample examined supply chains on multiple dimensions of our content analysis. Next, we proceed to identify gaps in the literature.

5. Discussion

A thorough literature review of a specific topic serves several important functions: to provide a foundation or to situate research in reference to the larger body of existing work in the field; to differentiate new research from what has been done; to identify gaps in theory, methodology or results in the literature; and to demonstrate a high level of scholarship by analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of a topic (Hart, 1998). While not exhaustive, the 211 articles from 99 scientific publications reviewed in this study were a good representative sample of the literature base. Our study is relevant to those stakeholders who are interested in global supply chain research. There are seven main findings of our content analysis: the evolution of supply chain and global supply chain, methodologies, theories, industry focusses, regions and that related issues of context, strategy, practices and outcomes.

First, we conclude that global supply chain studies lag behind non-global or domestic supply chain studies. While our separation of the literature into global vs

Group	Journal classification by content	Articles	Number (percent)
Context	Organization characteristics, industry characteristics, and country characteristics	Days (1994), Gunasekaran and Lyu (1997), Hong *et al.* (2006), Hung (2011), Li (2011), Motwani *et al.* (1998), Ritchie and Brindley (2002), Sanders (2007), Sila and Ebrahimpour (2003), Simatupang and Sridharan (2005, 2007, 2008), Vonderembse *et al.* (2006), Walker *et al.* (2008), Walters (2008), and Youn *et al.* (2011)	17 (8%)
Supply chain strategy	Responsive strategy, lean strategy, and others	Acar *et al.* (2010), Basnet *et al.* (2003), Cao *et al.* (2010), Cassivi *et al.* (2008), Christopher *et al.* (2011), Cirtita and Glaser-Segura (2012), Dreyer *et al.* (2009), Easton and Jarrell (1998), Biles *et al.* (2007), Grant (1996b), Hameri and Hintsa (2009), Li and Lin (2006b), Lummus *et al.* (2008), Mehra and Inman (1992), Min *et al.* (2005), Park *et al.* (1996), and Vanichchinchai and Igel (2011)	17 (8%)
Supply chain practices	Global logistics, collaboration, TQM/JIT, information sharing, risk management, integration, visibility, technology, and others	Ahn *et al.* (1999), Arnold *et al.* (2010), Arntzen *et al.* (1995), Auld (2010), Babbar *et al.* (2008), Balan *et al.* (2006), Barratt (2004), Barry (2004), Bartlett *et al.* (2007), Bayo-Moriones *et al.* (2011), Beresford *et al.* (2005), Bernard (1996), Bernardes and Hanna (2009), Bhatnagar and Teo (2009), Bhatnagar and Viswanathan (2000), Bhattacharyya *et al.* (2010), Biehl (2007), Cagliano *et al.* (2008), Cao *et al.* (2008), Chan and Qi (2003), Chen *et al.* (2007), Christopher *et al.* (2006), Chu and Lee (2006), Closs and Mollenkopf (2004), Closs and Xu (2000), Cohen and Mallik (1997), Corsten and Felde (2005), Cruz *et al.* (2006), Danese *et al.* (2012), Davis (1993), De Vries *et al.* (1999), Demirbag *et al.* (2006), Ellinger (2000), Elmuti *et al.* (2008), Enyinda and Gebremikael (2010), Fawcett *et al.* (2007), Fawcett and Scully (1995), Flint (2004), Forker *et al.* (1997), Foster *et al.* (2011), Frohlich and Westbrook (2001), Fullerton and McWatters (2001), Germain *et al.* (2008), Green and Inman (2005), Grover *et al.* (2004), Gunasekaran and Irani (2010), Gunasekaran *et al.* (2001), Hackman and Wageman (1995), Hafeez *et al.* (2002), Hale (2003), Harvey and Richey (2001), Hertz and Alfredsson (2003), Hesse and Rodrigue (2004), Hoegl and Wagner (2005), Horvath (2001), Hsieh and Chen (2007), Huang and Keskar (2007), Ismail (2007), Janhonen (2008), Jiang *et al.* (2009), Kakuro (2004), Kaleka (2002), Kaplan and David (1992), Kim and Lee (2010), Kim *et al.* (2006), Kuei *et al.* (2001, 2008, 2011), Kumar *et al.* (2008), Lai *et al.* (2002), Lee and Wilhelm (2010), Lee and Billington (1995), Levy (1995), Li and Lin (2006a),	148 (70%)

(*continued*)

Table VI.
Classification of articles by content

Table VI.

Group	Journal classification by content	Articles	Number (percent)
		Liargovas and Skandalis (2008b), Lockamy and James (1991), Manuj and Mentzer (2008a, b), March (1991), Mazany (1995), Meixell and Gargeya (2005), Moberg *et al.* (2002), Mollenkopf *et al.* (2010), Morash and Lynch (2002), Morgan *et al.* (2004), Motwani *et al.* (2000), Nahm *et al.* (2006), Narasimhan and Mahapatra (2004), Narasimhan *et al.* (2008), Neely *et al.* (1995), Olorunniwo and Li (2010), Pandey *et al.* (2010), Park *et al.* (1996), Powell (1995), Prasad and Sounderpandian (2003), Premus and Sanders (2008), Rabinovich *et al.* (1999), Reyes *et al.* (2002), Ritchie and Brindley (2000, 2007), Rudberg and West (2008), Rugman *et al.* (2009), Sanders (2007), Shamsuddoha *et al.* (2009), Shang and Marlow (2005), Shore (2001), Soltani *et al.* (2011), Song and Panayides (2008), Song and Chatterjee (2010), Soosay *et al.* (2008), Sousa *et al.* (2005), Spencer *et al.* (1996), Srikantha Dath *et al.* (2010), Sriparavastu and Gupta (1997), Stank *et al.* (2005), Steinle and Schiele (2008), Stewart (1995), Stock *et al.* (2000), Tan *et al.* (2006), Tan (2001, 2002), Tavasszy *et al.* (2003), Thatte *et al.* (2008), Thomas and Barton (2007), Thun (2010), Trkman and McCormack (2009), Tsai *et al.* (2009), Tsai and Lin (2009), Tyan *et al.* (2003), Van Hoek (2001), Vereecke and Muylle (2006), Verma and Tiwari (2009), Vidal and Goetschalckx (1997, 2001), Wagner and Bode (2008), Wang *et al.* (2010), Whitten *et al.* (2012), Wu (2008a, b), Xu and Nozick (2009), Yeniyurt (2003), Yeniyurt *et al.* (2005), Yoon and Sil (2004), Youngdahl and Loomba (2000), Yusuf *et al.* (2007), Zailani *et al.* (2008), Zeng and Rossetti (2003), and Zhou and Benton (2007)	
Outcome	Supply chain competitiveness and supply chain performance (financial/operational performance)	Agus and Hajinoor (2012), Andersen and Skjoett-Larsen (2009), Bassett and Gardner (2010), Bhatnagar and Sohal (2005), Chen *et al.* (2010), Dowlatshahi (2011), Gavirneni (2006), Mefford (2006), Modarress *et al.* (2000), Morash and Lynch (2002), Pazirandeh (2011), Rao and Young (1994), Rouse and Putterill (2003), Schoenherr (2010), Sheu (2008), Yigitbasioglu (2010), You *et al.* (2009), and Zailani *et al.* (2009)	18 (9%)
Comprehensive	Mixed content	Foroughi *et al.* (2004), Fynes *et al.* (2004), Jao-Hong (2011), Kumar *et al.* (2010), Madsen (2009), Matopoulos *et al.* (2007), Min and Guo (2004), Pontrandolfo *et al.* (2002), Stratton and Warburton (2006), Tse and Tan (2011), and Tyan *et al.* (2003)	11 (5%)
Total			211 (100%)

non-global supply chain studies is subjective, this study provides a robust insight into the dynamic evolution of global supply chain research since 1991. We also notice that non-global supply chain studies peaked in 2008 and have declined gradually since then. However, it appears that interest in global supply chain studies continue to rise. Another interesting finding from Table AI is that the period 2005-2009 has the highest number (91 articles) of supply chain research published.

Second, having considered the importance of methodology, this study distinguishes articles that make conceptual contributions from those that make empirical contributions. Similar to previous literature review studies in the field (e.g. Malhotra and Grover, 1998; Burgess *et al.*, 2006), we discover that empirical or survey-based studies dominated supply chain research. A large portion of these empirical studies examined supply chain practices. To some degree, this prevailing trend reflects not only the relatively strong desire to uncover operational-level supply chain practices but also the state of knowledge in the area, which has been characterized as being relatively exploratory. In addition, the dominant research methods in supply chain research are case-based and empirical modeling analyses that highlight the challenges of managing global supply chains. The lack of theoretical contribution in the area, especially at the strategic level, echoes a need to stimulate more supply chain strategy studies that are useful for practitioners operating in a global environment. It is the strategy that guides implementation of practices.

Third, there exists a large gap between theory building and theory verification studies. The ratio of theory verification studies (51 percent) far exceeds the theory building research (21 percent). Empirical supply chain research is growing rapidly, especially during the period from 2005 to 2009. Theory verification research is the most popular among supply chain researchers although theory building inquiry is also on the rise; percent wise the rise is slow and gradual. Wallenbergburg and Weber (2005) show that despite the tremendous progress in supply chain research, studies on theory building and methodology still lacks focus. They argue that theory building would advance, as evidenced in marketing research, through a rigorous empirical research approach. However, a discipline can only mature if there is a balance between theory building and theory verification studies because new theories should be generated and existing theories must be verified (Soni and Kodali, 2011). Since supply chain research is a growing discipline, there is insufficient evidence in the literature that highlights the importance of theory building in SCM. Nevertheless, at some stage in the lifecycle of a discipline, the ratio of theory verification studies should mark the maturity of that discipline.

Fourth, there are many theories in supply chain research that can help to develop appropriate theoretical references to explain SCM based on total cost analysis, network theory, and resource-based view, among others. Our analysis in Table V shows that a wide range of theories has been applied in supply chain research over the last two decades. However, it should be noted that each theory was applied in the context of the individual study. We also conclude that most supply chain studies are anecdotal and do not use any theoretical framework. In studies where theories were used, contingency, resource-based view, and transaction cost are the common theoretical frameworks.

Fifth, Table V summarizes the industry sectors examined in the literature. Consistent with observations in prior SCM literature reviews (e.g. Croom *et al.*, 2000; Burgess *et al.*, 2006), this study reveals that most global supply chain research focusses on a single industry instead of comparing supply chains across different industries. Table VI shows that non-global supply chain research has focussed primarily on consumer-oriented industries (such as food, drink, and textiles) and producer-oriented

sectors (automotive, machinery manufacturing, basic manufacturing, electrical and electronic parts, computer equipment, and chemicals). The evidence suggests that the orientation toward sectors where final consumers are key stakeholders is shared to a considerable extent by global supply chain research. Specifically, 59 percent of the literature focusses on consumer-oriented sectors including the food and commodity sectors, whereas only 12 percent of the articles focus on producer-oriented sectors. The remaining 29 percent of the articles address a combination of the two sectors.

Sixth, empirical SCM research is mostly done in developed regions of North America and Europe while only 4 percent of the research is conducted in developing countries. However, as China and India are outsourcing hubs for global supply chains of apparel, automobile, and electronic consumer goods, there is a pressing need to examine and develop appropriate global supply chain models for these countries. Balan *et al.* (2006) argue that a major reason for the lack of supply chain research in developing countries is the lack of SCM knowledge among practitioners in the region. However, this proposition is circumstantial and has not been scientifically proven. Finally, the distribution of articles by content in Table VI shows that context, strategy, practices, and outcome-related issues have attracted considerable attention among researchers, resulting in significant contributions to global supply chain arrangements.

In this paper, we review the global supply chain literature using dimensions related to emerging issues in supply chain globalization. We conclude that while the research community has tackled some key global supply chain issues, few studies have addressed global supply chain strategies and outcomes. Thus, we propose that global supply chain research should address multiple supply chain design issues by extending models to include strategies and outcomes.

5.1 Global supply chains as a competitive tool

Supply chains focus on all the value-adding activities to acquire raw materials and subassemblies, to transform raw materials into finished goods, and then to transport the finished goods to end users. SCM looks at every step, from raw materials acquisition to distributing finished goods to end users, and includes disposing of the packaging and recycling. The ultimate goal of SCM is to deliver maximum value to the end user with the least possible total cost. Kotler *et al.* (2003) define value as the ratio of what the customer gets to what he gives. Very similarly, Porter (1985) defines value as the amount a buyer is willing to pay for what a firm provides him, and suggests the supply chain is a guide for a firm to examine all the activities that it performs. In analyzing the sources of competitive advantage, it is necessary to analyze how these activities interact with different functional areas within a firm, and how they interact with the processes of supply chain members. An effective global supply chain requires that the processes of supply chain members are integrated across national borders to remove non-value-adding activities. In addition, demand and members of the supply chain to reduce the bullwhip effect must share forecast information. Wal-Mart, Toyota, and Dell are good examples of how well-implemented global supply chains can be used as an imitable strategic tool to gain competitive advantage in the marketplace (Hult and Ketchen, 2006).

Since a firm's activities are linked within the firm and to the activities of its suppliers and customers, it is important for managers to understand that SCM contributes strategically to a firm's performance. Indeed, Porter (1985) states that value can be created through linkages of a firm's supply chain with the supply chains of external organizations to drive down cost and improve performance.

Gereffi and Korzeniewicz (1994) develop a global supply chain model to tie the concept of a value-added chain directly to an organization. Their work not only stresses the need to integrate across firm boundaries, but also the growing role of global supply chain buyers. Increasingly, many studies realize that global supply chains are aimed at waste reduction and value creation, through cross-boundaries integration (Lee, 2000). Creating value for customers is difficult if the focal firm and its supply chain members fail to integrate. Usually, the best value supply chains are the most likely to prosper within today's competitive global market.

6. Conclusion and limitations

Our research methodology has some limitations. Although our findings are based on data that were collected from academic journals, we have excluded practitioner publications. Next, although 211 articles were examined in this study, our sample is by no means exhaustive and exclusive. However, we believe that this study is comprehensive and we have reviewed all the major supply chain articles. The third limitation is that we have used a 12-year time frame from 1991 to 2012. We believe that very few supply chain articles were published prior to 1991. A fourth limitation is that we have used the term "supply chain" to search the databases. It is likely that some relevant articles have used a different term to describe the same phenomenon.

This study presents a review of global and non-global supply chain articles based on Malhotra and Grover's (1998) classification scheme. Our review shows that global supply chains area relatively "immature" research topic that is gaining interest from practitioners and academics. From a methodological point, the literature mostly consists of empirical and descriptive studies with few exploratory articles. Since global supply chains are still a relatively new phenomenon, we expect to see more research in this area. In particular, as recommended by Atkinson (2004), Giunipero and Eltantawy (2004), Tang (2006), and Wilson (2007), the use of technology, such as RFID and ERP, is becoming an important facet of global supply chains. More research should be conducted to learn how technology could be used to expedite transactions in global supply chains. In addition, as risk can initiate from any stage in a supply chain, it is imperative to include collaborative risk management in a firm's global supply chain. Future research should then be expanded to explore how collaborative risk management can be integrated in a global supply chain. Another important aspect relates to the various strategies that could be adopted to create a robust global supply chain. In this respect, different industry sectors may require different global strategies and different global practices. Global supply chain research that attempts to compare strategies and practices throughout the chain is still limited, and, hence, more effort should be directed accordingly.

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Appendix

Table AI. Number of supply chain articles published by journals

No	Journals	Pre-2000	2000-2004	2005-2009	2010-Feb 2012	Total
1	*Administrative Science Quarterly*	1				1
2	*Agent and Multi-Agent Systems: Technologies and Applications*			1		1
3	*AIChE Journal*			1		1
5	*Total Quality Management & Business Excellence*			1		1
6	*Business Process Management Journal*			2		2
7	*Chinese Management Studies*			1		1
8	*Communications of the ACM*			1		1
9	*Computer Aided Chemical Engineering*			1		1
10	*Computers & Chemical Engineering*				1	1
11	*Computers & Operations Research*			1		1
12	*Decision Sciences*	1			1	2
13	*Decision Support Systems*			1		1
14	*International Journal of Forecasting*				1	1
15	*European Journal of Information Systems*				1	1
16	*European Journal of Operational Research*	1	1	3		5
17	*European Journal of Purchasing & Supply Management*	1	1			2
18	*Growth and Change*		1			1
19	*Harvard Business Review*	1				1
20	*Journal of Manufacturing Technology Management*				1	1
21	*Industrial Management & Data Systems*				1	1
22	*Industrial Marketing Management*		6	1		7
23	*Integrated Manufacturing Systems*		2			2
24	*Interfaces*	2				2
25	*International Business Review*			2		2
26	*International Federation for Information Processing-Pub.-IFIP*			1		1
27	*International Journal of Business and Economics Perspectives*				1	1
28	*International Journal of Business and Social Science*				1	1
29	*International Journal of Computer Integrated Manufacturing*				1	1
30	*International Journal of Commerce and Management*			1		1
31	*International Journal of e-Collaboration (IJeC)*			1		1
32	*International Journal of Information Management*				1	1
33	*International Journal of Integrated Supply Management*		1	1		2
34	*International Journal of Logistics*				1	1
35	*International Journal of Logistics Management*			1		1
36	*International Journal of Logistics Systems and Management*				1	1
37	*International Journal of Operations & Production Management*	3	2	2	1	8
38	*International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management*	2	5	6	3	16
39	*International Journal of Production Economics*		1	5	1	7

(*continued*)

No	Journals	Pre-2000	2000-2004	2005-2009	2010-Feb 2012	Total
40	*International Journal of Production Research*	3	5	4	13	25
41	*International Journal of Productivity and Quality Management*			1		1
42	*International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management*		1		1	2
43	*International Journal of Service Industry Management*		1			1
44	*International Journal of Services and Operations Management*			1		1
45	*International Journal of Supply Chain Management*			1		1
46	*International Journal of Systems Science*			1		1
47	*International Journal of Technology Intelligence and Planning*			1		1
48	*International Journal of Value Chain Management*			4		4
49	*International Marketing Review*			1		1
50	*Journal of Asia-Pacific Business*			1		1
51	*Journal of Business*	1				1
52	*Journal of Business Logistics*			3		3
53	*Journal of Cleaner Production*				1	1
54	*Journal of Enterprise Information Management*			2		2
55	*Journal of Global Information Technology Management*		2			2
56	*Journal of International Business Studies*	1				1
57	*Journal of International Management*		1			1
58	*Journal of International Marketing*		1			1
59	*Journal of Latin American Geography*			1		1
60	*Journal of Management*			1		1
61	*Journal of Management Studies*			1		1
62	*Journal of Manufacturing Technology Management*			2	1	3
63	*Journal of Marketing*		1			1
64	*Journal of Marketing Management*	1				1
65	*Journal of Modeling in Management*			1		1
66	*Journal of Operations Management*		4	6		10
67	*Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management*		1	2		3
68	*Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*			1		1
69	*Journal of Supply Chain Management*		1		2	3
70	*Journal of the Chinese Institute of Industrial Engineers*				1	1
71	*Journal of the Operational Research Society*		1			1
72	*Journal of Transnational Management Development*		1			1
73	*Journal of Transport Geography*		1			1
74	*Logistics and Transportation Review*			1		1
75	*Logistics Information Management*	2	1			3
76	*Management Decision*		1			1
77	*Maritime Policy and Management*			1		1
78	*Marketing Intelligence & Planning*		1			1
79	*Naval Research Logistics (NRL)*			1		1
80	*Omega: The International Journal of Management Science*		1	2		3

(*continued*)

Table AI.

No	Journals	Pre-2000	2000-2004	2005-2009	2010-Feb 2012	Total
81	*Operations and Supply Chain Management: An International Journal*			1		1
82	*Operations Management Research*			1		1
83	*Organization Science*	2				2
84	*Production and Operations Management*	1				1
85	*Production Planning & Control*	2		1		3
86	*Review of Business Research*			1		1
87	*S.A.M. Advanced Management Journal*			1		1
88	*Sloan Management Review*	1				1
89	*Strategic Management Journal*	1				1
90	*Supply Chain Management: An International Journal*	1	5	5	2	13
91	*Technology in Society*			1		1
92	*Technovation*			1		1
93	*The International Journal of Logistics Management*			2		2
94	*The International Journal of Production Research*	1				1
95	*The Journal of Environment & Development*				1	1
96	*The Journal of Marketing*	1				1
97	*Total Quality Management*			1		1
98	*Total Quality Management & Business Excellence*			1		1
99	*Transportation Research Part E: Logistics & Transportation Review*		1	1		2
	Grand total	30	51	91	39	211

Table AI.

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