

The Knowledge Manager's Role And Tasks For Supply Chain Management Success

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ABSTRACT:

This research addresses some emergent contradictions between theory and practice in recognizing Supply Chain (SC) manager's position, role, and responsibilities. The analysis of numerous pieces of secondary information contained in a number of empirical studies reveals that the SC manager seldom drives SCs. Although all the analyzed articles address SC management issues, SC managers rarely provide the required information during the data collection phase. If the theory broadly recognizes SC manager, this early information shows his rare presence in practice. Driven by this result, the current research develops qualitative and quantitative investigations to clarify this divergence. The qualitative analysis uses structured interviews. One main result emerges: Knowledge Manager (KM) is the only one able to manage successfully SCs. As this statement is quite new in the SC management literature, the current research analyzes the KM's roles and tasks and investigates his suitability for managing the entire SC. Moreover, it explores whether the firms' success increases when KM manages SCs. This research unifies the fields of knowledge and SC management, underlines some divergences between theory and practice, and develops both qualitative and quantitative analyses to come up with reliable contributions.

Keywords: *Supply chain, Knowledge manager, Knowledge management, Quantitative analysis, Qualitative analysis, Firm success*

1. Introduction

The literature on Supply Chain (SC) broadly investigates the links between SC implementation, management, and performance (Lamberton et al, 1998). Numerous studies show how SC integrates and coordinates firms' activities improving overall performance (Robb et al, 2007) and customer satisfaction (Li et al, 2005). Nevertheless, the central question concerning who should manage the entire "arc of integration" (Frohlich and Westbrook, 2001) remains unsolved. Role, task, and position of individuals responsible for SC management are still not definitely assessed. Although theoretical studies emphasize the importance of appropriate SC management (Christopher, 2000), the right person(s) suitable for this job has (have) not been recognized in practice.

The SC manager does not appear generally in the organization hierarchy. Nevertheless, a multitude of SCs have been effectively implemented and suitably managed. Apparently, the SC manager is missing in practice. His position is "occupied" and "undertaken" by other people. Those professional figures formulate the SC strategy that embraces hidden and dispersed information as well as wide-ranging knowledge.

This statement results when analyzing the information contained inside the table "*participants' profile*", frequently reported in empirical researches. Although SC management is supposedly the main topic investigated, the listed respondents include numerous management professionals but rarely SC managers. Some interesting questions need to be answered:

- ◆ Are the results and the conclusions of previous researches sufficiently reliable (as the SC manager does not provide any information)?
- ◆ Are there any professional figures eligible for the position of SC manager?
- ◆ Above all, where is the SC manager?

Starting from these unsolved questions, this research develops qualitative and quantitative analyses to clarify the contradiction between theory and practice. The qualitative analysis uses semi-structured interviews to explain why the SC manager misses the data collection phase, to verify whether the results obtained from previous empirical researches are trustworthy, and to find out who manages the SC in reality. The answers obtained show clearly that the right person for managing the SC is the Knowledge Manager (KM). He possesses the required information, power, competence, and knowledge. The possible similarities between SC and knowledge manager are addressed theoretically and explored quantitatively. Descriptive analysis supports the quantitative investigation, which explores whether the SC manager carries out the KM's roles and tasks and determines its effectiveness in terms of firm success.

This research is organized as follows. Section 2 investigates the gaps between theory and practice concerning the SC manager position and role by analyzing secondary information. Section 3 conducts a qualitative analysis by semi-structured interviews. Section 4 explores the literature for sketching the KM's profile, whereas section 5 has a two-fold purpose: exploring whether the SC behaves as KM as well as measuring the impact of this result on firm's success. Finally, the research ends by drawing conclusions from the findings and suggesting several managerial implications.

2. Where Is The SC Manager?

Numerous researches underline the critical role of SC manager (Storey et al., 2006) but most of the practices do not follow this theoretical direction. In particular, the SC manager's roles and tasks do not appear to be really and fully understood so far. Although firms succeed mainly when driven by the SC manager, this position appears only sporadically within the hierarchy. Moreover, the challenges concerning the person responsible for managing all SC activities remains an unsolved question.

This research investigates the contradictions between theory and practice in defining SC manager's roles, tasks, position, and responsibilities. The present research analyzes pieces of secondary information reported in the table "*respondents' profile*" generally reported by empirical researches. Those articles generally list the professional figures answering to the questionnaire as well as number and percentage of answers. Several figures usually appear, and the list mainly varies according to the article content.

The tables "*respondents' profile*" from 23 published articles have been analyzed. These studies, as listed in Table 1, concern both the overall SC as well as specific

Table 1: Articles Analyzed And Connected Areas

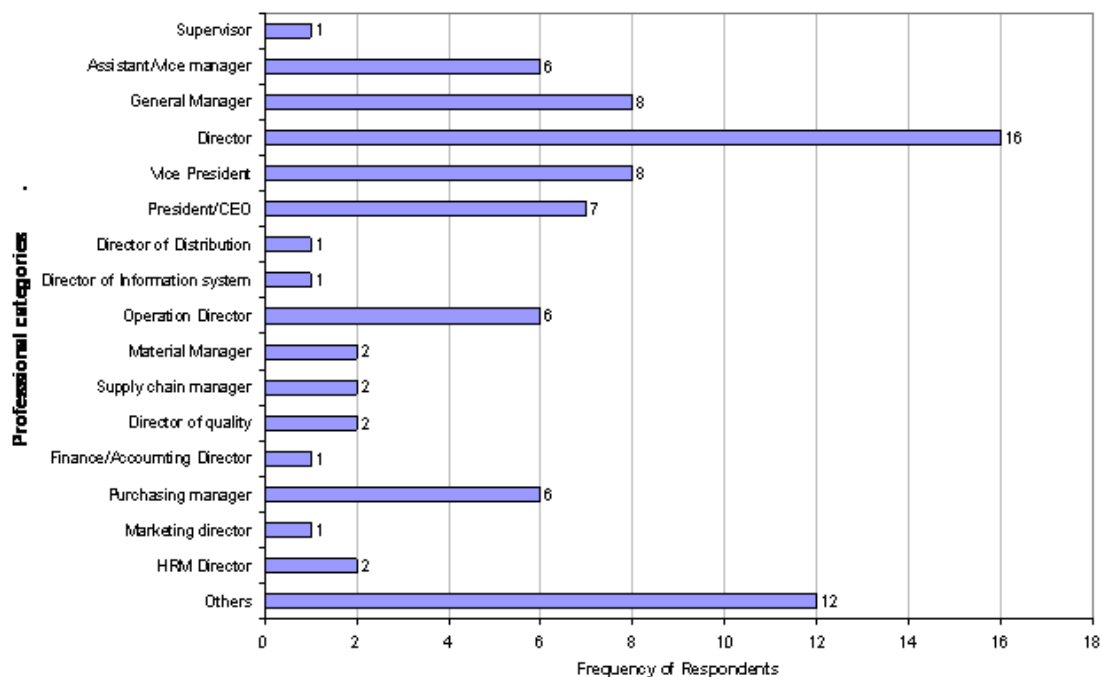
Areas	Recent Studies
Purchasing	Stanley and Wisner, 2001; Chen et al, 2004; Krause et al, 2001; Paulraj et al, 2006 ; Sánchez-Rodríguez et al, 2005
Quality	Lin et al, 2005; Koufteros and Marcoulides, 2006; Stanley and Wisner, 2001; Prajogo and McDerott, 2005; Lo and Yeung, 2006; Paulraj and Chen, 2005.
Overall SC	Škerlavaj et al, 2006; Koufteros et al, 2007; Lu and Yang, 2007; Robb et al, 2008; Yeung, 2007 ; Sanders, 2007 ;

	Vaaland and Heide, 2007; Green et al, 2006; Paulraj and Chen, 2007a,b.
Flexibility	Avittethur and Swamidass, 2007; Zhang et al, 2006 ;
Lead time	Christenses et al, 2007.

The initial expectation was to find a high percentage of information provided by the SC manager. As the responsible for SC management, he has thorough knowledge over whole chain for effectively replying to the questionnaire. He uses his vast knowledge for furnishing detailed and precise responses, increasing the reliability of the final results, and providing SC effectiveness both in theory and practice.

Against that initial expectation, very often a number of professional figures provided the needed information, except the SC manager. Storey et al, (2006) underline the scarce attention toward the SC manager. Even people having that title do not manage the whole chain but their job is confined to particular function and department. Storey et al (2006) assimilate the SC manager to be the manager handling both inward and outward logistics, but it could be hidden by several professional figures. Figure 1 reports the frequency of various respondents listed in the previously published articles.

Figure 1: Frequency Of Respondents



As shown in Figure 1, interviews generally involve people in the top of the hierarchy. This result is almost obvious. Since SC implies strategic and long term decisions, those people possess appropriate knowledge and information. Only the articles by Christensen et al (2007) and Vaaland and Heide (2007) report the SC manager inside the table “respondents’ profile”. Moreover, in both articles, the SC manager does not possess a clear position resulting mainly confused with that of the purchasing manager, director of distribution, and director of procurement.

Under the above circumstances, researchers and practitioners may pose the question whether the previous empirical results are sufficiently reliable. The quality of received information, in fact,

could be extremely poor as it is not provided by the SC manager. According to Phillips (1981), the respondents should not be chosen on a random basis, they should have some specific criteria such as particular status, specialized knowledge, or accessibility to the researcher. In this situation, survey respondents assume to have the role of a key informant providing aggregate information or organizational unit of analysis by reporting group or organizational properties rather than personal attitudes and behaviors. Two opposite tendencies emerge.

The first includes those professions strictly linked to the investigated area. Pauralaj et al. (2006), for instance, concentrate their research hypotheses on strategic purchasing and firms' performance. The purchasing manager gives 15% of the answers. Similarly, in the studies by Stanley and Wisner (2001), Sánchez-Rodríguez et al (2005) and Chen et al. (2004), the answers made by the purchasing manager are fundamental for providing reliable results, as the researches are concentrated on the role of purchasing for SC performance.

Other studies also show a similar attitude for various issues as product development practices (Koufteros and Marcoulides, 2006), organizational learning culture (Škerlavaj et al, 2006), market orientation (Green et al, 2006), or quality (Prajogo and McDermott, 2005), and for this purpose, information was collected from operation, HR, sales and quality manager, respectively. With the purpose to test the importance of various drivers of information-technology-related to performance, Power (2005) administrates a questionnaire to 3.356 managers in European Article Numbering member organization as the requested information become manager-specific.

The second tendency involves papers investigating specific issues, such as quality management (Lin et al, 2005), flexibility (Avittathur and Swamidass, 2007), operational practices (Robb et al, 2007), and investment evaluation (Lu and Yang, 2006). In this sense, directors and general managers provide the needed information. Moreover, numerous other researches devoted to general SC assessment interview mainly general managers (Sanders, 2007). In short, the professional figures listed are heterogeneous, including directors of marketing, finance, control, production, and information system. However, the SC manager does not appear frequently. Actually, practice does not recognize SC managers appropriately.

These two tendencies underline the absence of a unique and correct procedure for selecting the person who answers the questionnaire. Although the main topic of all the articles analyzed is SC management, seldom SC manager provides the needed information. In addition, as some researches have a specific orientation, e.g. quality management, the professional figures providing the information always change: sometimes answers are provided by the quality manager (Prajogo and McDermott, 2005), other times by top-level managers (Lin et al, 2005). Although the studies investigate the same issue, the source of information radically changes.

Some researchers collect the information quite carefully. Kim (2006), for instance, interviewed mainly SC manager. In case one missed (apparently quite frequently), top-level executives of sales, production, or planning responded. In the last cases, an expert of SC policy subsequently sorted through the provided answers. Sanzo et al. (2007) have conducted personal surveys, visiting all firms of the sample, interviewing the managers, and filling the questionnaire there. This procedure is surely more correct but also more expensive. Moreover, it does not help when looking for the SC manager. His individualization appears a very tough job.

3. The Hidden SC Manager.

Supply Chains present several theoretical and practical contradictions concerning the role of SC manager. All firms need SCs although their management is handled by professional figures not corresponding to SC managers.

Figure 2 reports the information concerning both the mean answers and the respondents' frequency summarized by the following index:

$$\frac{\text{Frequency of respondents}}{23} \times \text{Mean of answers (\%)}$$

The denominator represents the number of articles considered in this study. This index yields a measure (in percentage) of the mean answer provided by each professional figure, considering the total number of times each of them provides answers.

Figure 2: Aggregated Measure Of Frequency Of Respondents And Answer Mean

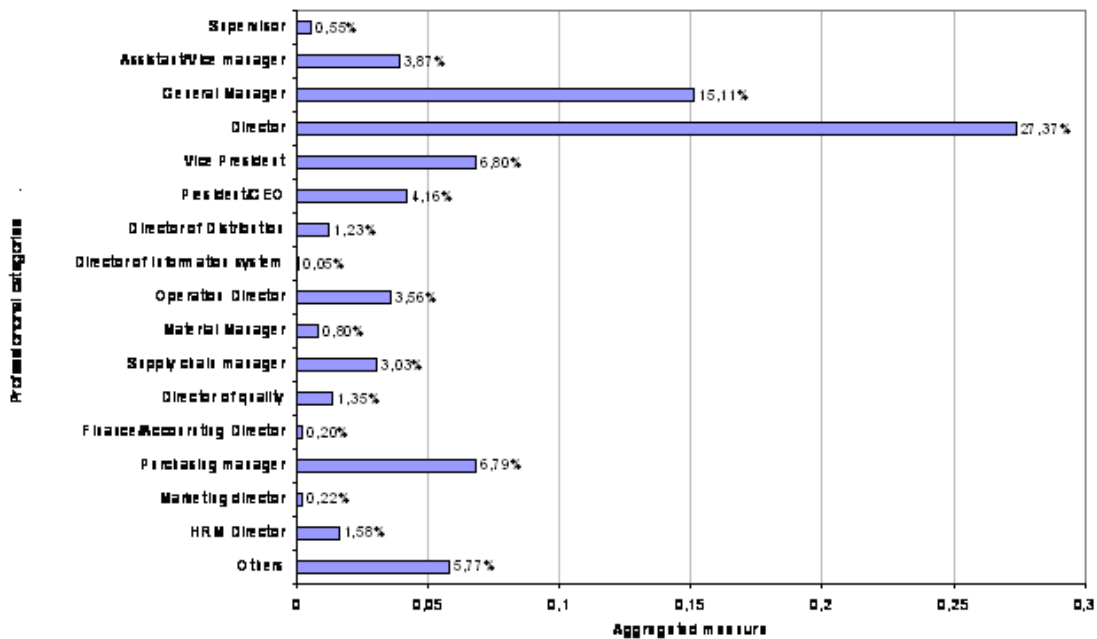


Figure 2 illustrates that the SC manager provides the mean value of 3.03% answers for each survey. The departmental and functional managers supply a discrete amount of information, while the residual category “Others” furnishes an average of almost 6%. The purchasing manager provides almost 7% of the information required. Compared to the other functional managers, he possesses much of the information concerning the SC. From this point of view, SC management still appears assimilated with and compounded by the purchasing department.

Considering the top of the hierarchy, the president/CEO and the vice-president appear to provide a discrete percentage of the answers, underlining their relevance in providing such type of information. Finally, the most important result concerns the general manager and the managing director. They frequently provide answers to the questionnaire, furnishing a larger part of the information required. Whereas functional and departmental managers answer marginally, the general manager and the managing director furnish respectively the 37.76% and the 34.21% of the information requested. According to Figure 1, both are present in almost all the articles investigated. Moreover, the general managers possess all the information within a firm. Therefore, researchers should contact them during the data collection phase to improve both quality and reliability of empirical results.

This research shows that several managers, mainly the general managers and managing directors, carry out SC manager’s roles and tasks. Prajogo and Mcdermott (2005) confirm that statement. They underline that practice does not recognize the SC manager, probably because it is hidden by other professional figures who fulfill his roles and tasks. This professional figure may either be the general manager, the managing director, or the senior manager.

Some important questions emerge in this regard. In particular, can a general manager and managing director behave as a SC manager? Do they possess all the information and knowledge required for answering the questionnaire concerning SC issue? Do they represent the SC manager of a firm? Definitely, they possess the information and power required to fulfill SC manager's roles and tasks, but this statement is not well clarified in reality. Qualitative investigation has been conducted in order to address appropriately the issue.

4. Qualitative Analysis

For the qualitative investigation three semi-structured interviews were conducted. The previous statement, in fact, has been obtained only by analyzing the secondary data collected from other studies. The qualitative analysis clarifies the reality. Three general managers replied to the interviews, requesting not to be named. The table 2 reports this analysis, including questions and summarized answers.

Table 2: Qualitative Analysis Results

Questions	General manager 1	General manager 2	General manager 3
What do you think about the results obtained in Figures 1 and 2? Why does the SC manager not appear so frequently in the interviews?	These results are not surprising. In our firm, the SC manager does not exist at all. We implemented SC Management some years ago, and now we have developed a Global SC Management, with an international emphasis. The SC manager does not exist in both situations. SC implementation is a difficult and strategic task. A professional figure possessing all the needed information for that job does not exist. Only individuals at the top of our organization decide concerning SC Management.	I think industrial practice has not identified the SC manager so far. Several managers can occupy that position. In our organization, although the logistics manager is the SC manager, the SC works quite well.	The SC manager is one of the most important figures in each organization. The results in Figure 1 and 2 are quite surprising for me. I think any organization cannot survive without a SC, but all of them can survive without a SC manager. His tasks can be carried out by other managers. In our firm, the CEO decides about the implementation of the SC, whereas the marketing managers manage it.
Do you think the results obtained in those publications are true, as the information is not provided by the right persons?	When CEOs, general managers, and directors provide the information, I am sure that the results are correct.	I think the results are reliable enough. Whosoever replied to the questions has the competence to do so.	Generally, only the people really knowing the theme reply. We never provide wrong information. I believe the provided information is accurate and right, although they are not provided by the SC manager.
Who should definitely manage the SC?	The person who has control, power, information and, above all, the knowledge concerning the whole organization should manage the SC.	The manager who possesses the knowledge related to the entire SC.	Only people holding adequate knowledge are able to manage the SC.

The results of the qualitative investigation partially confirm the previous findings. Practice does not recognize at all the SC manager. Other professional figures carry out his tasks and roles.

Nevertheless, SC management is effective in any case. Whereas firms do not explicitly need the SC manager, they require SC management. Although theoretically the SC manager should be the only one driving the whole SC, several other professional figures manage SC and have complete knowledge and information about it.

Nevertheless, the results of previous studies appear reliable enough. Professionals replying to the questionnaire always have the true information independently by the role fulfilled within the organization. In this sense, the last question investigates who fulfills the SC manager's roles and tasks. The answers are very general, but they share one common attribute: "*the individual possessing the knowledge concerning the entire organization*".

This result suggests a further and deep investigation about the relationships between knowledge and SC management. According to the qualitative analysis, SCs succeed only when driven by the Knowledge Manager (KM). The KM appears the right candidate for occupying the SC manager's position. To provide a clear picture of this statement, the next section draws the KM's profile. This allows to investigate his tasks and roles and to further extend the results obtained from the qualitative analysis.

4.1. The KM As SC Manager.

Knowledge management helps companies in creating, sharing, and using knowledge effectively (Gottschalk, 1999). Knowledge management is an increasingly important source of competitive advantage for organizations (Carneiro, 2000). Knowledge is information combined with experience, context, interpretation, and reflection (Davenport et al., 1998).

Knowledge management is no more an activity to support the business. Its function is to develop organizations' value (Border, 2006). There is no knowledge without someone able to manage it (Gottschalk, 1999). However, no clear strategic information regarding the creation, collection, and use of knowledge is available, and the question about the professional figure possessing the above information remains unanswered. In addition, to implement SCs, managers should effectively manage the knowledge sparse across the organization. Moreover, the SC manager should also handle and coordinate the knowledge belonging to several organizations.

Alvesson and Kärreman (2001) argue that several contradictions exist between knowledge and its management. It is an ambiguous, unspecific, and dynamic phenomenon, intrinsically related to meaning, understanding, and process. Therefore, its effective management is intricate. Nevertheless, knowledge management is extremely important for SC management.

The KM is responsible for the creation, distribution, and use of knowledge (Davenport and Völpen, 2001). He provides guidance, insight, and feedback to the entire organization (Swintzer, 2008). KMs plan, organize, and coordinate a mix of knowledge, information, data, and people or knowledge workers who own the expertise. KMs develop strategies, policies, and practices that optimize the knowledge resources (Asllani and Luthans, 2003).

Knowledge management is vital not only for achieving the much-emphasized systematic and strategic coordination within companies and across businesses within the SC (Mentzer et al, 2001), but also for the integration of key processes, from end users to original suppliers (Lambert et al, 1998). This also involves the management of all upstream and downstream relationships with both suppliers and customers to deliver superior customer value to the SC as a whole (Christopher, 1998). All these theoretical definitions can be effectively realized only if the SC manager possesses adequate knowledge.

According to previous theoretical results, the KM definitely possesses the right profile to manage SCs. In order to explore this statement, this study develops a descriptive survey. According to Pinsonneault and Kraemer (1993), the purpose of a descriptive survey is to ascertain facts rather

than to test hypotheses, by describing situations, attitudes, events, or situations occurring in a population. In this study, there is no hypothesis testing, but a questionnaire has been successfully prepared by considering the knowledge-management literature.

This research investigates whether professionals managing SCs carry out some of the roles and tasks generally executed by the KM. In particular, according to Pèrez-Bustamante (1999), KM executes several roles including:

- ◆ ascertaining the knowledge existing between firm boundaries;
- ◆ deciding the investments in communication infrastructure and the human-resource policy to be developed;
- ◆ controlling the flows of information to be exchanged with external entities and those that need to remain internalized;
- ◆ travelling freely around the organization in spite of organization boundaries and levels, developing knowledge creation.

Moreover, the KM possesses an integrative educational background of human resources, business strategy, and information technology (Pèrez-Bustamante, 1999). The professionals managing the SC should execute several tasks generally executed by the KM, in particular:

- ◆ develop knowledge and obtain the consensus of the top management for considering knowledge management as a weapon of competitive advantage;
- ◆ monitor policies related to human resources;
- ◆ provide communication infrastructure within and between the different departments of an organization and control the correctness of its use;
- ◆ individualize the people responsible for inflows and outflows of knowledge management;
- ◆ exploit and create opportunities for the internal dissemination of knowledge;
- ◆ determine a clear knowledge-management policy;
- ◆ be the chief manager and leader of technological gatekeepers;
- ◆ develop knowledge reservoirs and facilitate their access;
- ◆ incorporate into the financial statement an addendum containing information on the investments approved toward intellectual capital and knowledge-stock flows.

To analyze whether the SC carries out some of the KM's tasks and roles, this research has conducted a survey interview, investigating whether the firm success increases as the SC manager (whoever he is) executes the KM's roles and tasks.

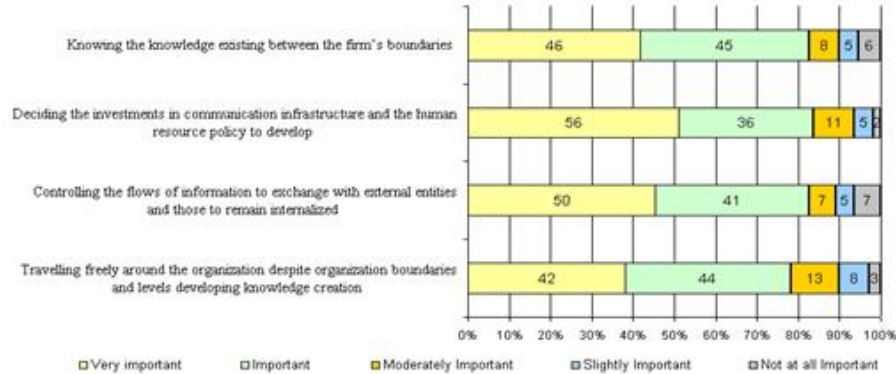
To investigate these statements, a questionnaire of 14 items was administrated to 600 French firms belonging to several sectors. Representatives of each firm were contacted by email. Of these 600, 110 firms participated in the survey, with a returning percentage of 18.3%. Each item was measured using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all executed by the SC manager) to 5 (always executed by the SC manager).

5. Quantitative Analysis

5.1. Descriptive Survey

This section reports the descriptive results related to the KM's roles and tasks executed by the SC manager. According to the qualitative analysis in section 2 and supported by the literature survey in section 3, the findings confirm the previous statement. As reported in Figure 3, the SC manager behaves as the KM executing all his roles.

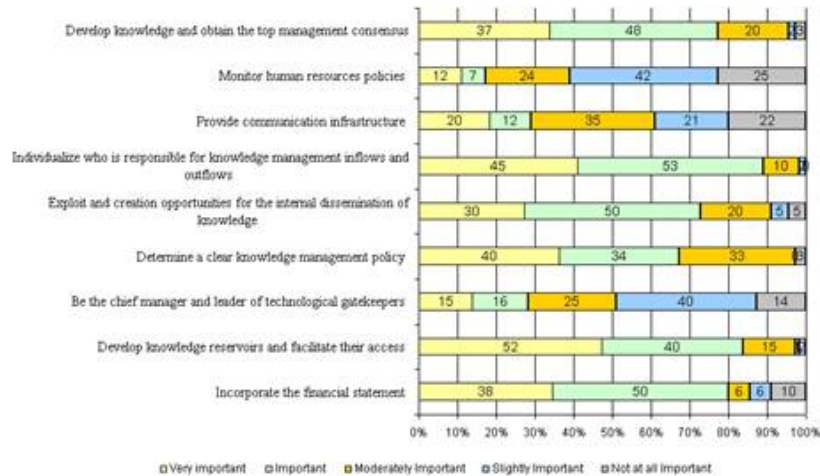
Figure 3: KM's Roles Performed By The SC Manager



In particular, more than 80% of the sample affirms that the SC manager should possess knowledge related to the entire organization and contained within its boundaries, decide both the human-resource policy to adopt for knowledge creation, communication and diffusion, and finally distinguish the type of information to be internalized and/or externalized. Almost 80% of the interviewed managers attribute to the SC manager the KM's roles regarding his capacity to move across the organization for creating knowledge without any impediments and difficulties.

Apparently, the SC manager carries out all KM's roles. This result is quite new in literature. Previous researchers have not investigated whether the SC manager's roles and tasks coincide with those generally executed by the KM. The confirmation of this statement implies that the SC manager carries out his role as a KM. This special position allows the SC manager to formulate a comprehensive strategy, including countless critical decisions and actions regarding a multitude of subjects and people using several sources of information and knowledge (Mentzer et al., 2001). The accomplishment of these roles involves a considerable complexity. The management of SCs needs managers holding appropriate knowledge and information for succeeding satisfactorily and executing adequately in a global sense. SCs, in fact, work and achieve a multitude of extensive objectives, improving downstream and upstream relationships along the value chain. A larger part of the sample agrees to have a SC manager who carries out all the KM's roles and tasks. This research tries to reinforce this statement by investigating whether the SC manager also executes the KM's tasks. Considering those listed by Pérez-Bustamante (1999), the Figure 4 describes the answers obtained.

Figure 4: KM's Tasks Performed By The SC Manager



As shown in Figure 4, the SC manager appears to execute only a few of the KM's tasks. To be precise, the SC manager does not monitor the human-resource policy, scarcely provides communication infrastructure, and is not the chief and/or the leader of technological gatekeepers. The first two results diverge with respect to the initial one. The SC manager acts as a KM in defining the human-resource policy, while monitoring functions is not a part of his job. Similarly, the SC manager acts as a KM in deciding the amount to be invested in infrastructure, while he does not provide any infrastructure within and between departments. Nevertheless, he assures their correct usage.

Notwithstanding these contradictions, the SC manager carries out the major KM's tasks. In particular, the survey shows that almost 80% of the SC managers develop knowledge along the chain and obtain the general consensus of the top management. This result shows that, in accordance with that of Mentzer et al. (2001), the management of SCs is mainly a strategy. The SC manager needs the consensus of the top management for satisfactorily executing his tasks. Moreover, the SC manager mainly develops knowledge concerning the entire SC. With respect to this last statement, the survey illustrates that the SC manager acts as a KM in identifying the person responsible for the inflow and outflow of knowledge. Almost 90% of the managers interviewed, in fact, answered positively to this question. This task guarantees a precise knowledge map that reports the accumulation of knowledge bases and their links both within the various firm's departments and between all organizations.

The previous results find confirmation from more than 70% of the answers when asking about the exploitation and creation of opportunities for the internal dissemination of knowledge. The findings show that the SC manager operates as a KM when exploiting the actual resources for disseminating knowledge and creating new opportunities for its diffusion. In this sense, he develops new communication and dissemination channels.

More than 70% of the answers indicate one of the most important and surprising results. The SC manager, in fact, determines a clear knowledge-management policy. This statement is quite unexpected, as that task is linked closely to the KM. If the SC manager executes it, practice and theory diverge when distinguishing between KM and SC manager. They appear very closely linked professional figures and this result opens up fascinating inspirations for future researches.

Almost 85% of the interviewed managers support this statement when answering positively to the question concerning development of a knowledge reservoir and its access. The SC manager acts as a KM in creating bases for accumulating knowledge and facilitating its access to all SC members.

Finally, almost 80% of the managers interviewed agree to incorporate financial results and targets within the knowledge-management policy framework. In this sense, the SC manager behaves as the KM since optimizing firm's performance. Knowledge management is an effective motivation for attaining this purpose. SC manager should carry out also this KM's task to adequately and effectively manage the entire SC.

Figure 5: Successful SCs Due To A SC Manager Performing KM's Roles And Tasks.



Finally, the quantitative analysis investigates whether SCs succeed as the SC manager behaves as a KM. Figure 5 shows that more than the 87% of the managers answered positively. In particular, whenever the SC manager performs KM's roles and tasks, firm's success increases. This result confirms the importance of KM for the entire SC. The SC success is an ambitious target because it is highly complex and intricate. Only the KM is capable of dealing with it. Whoever drives the SC should carry out KM's roles and tasks for a successful management.

6. Conclusion

Notwithstanding several studies underline the importance of SC implementation and management, a large gap between theory and practice exists concerning who is subject responsible for SC management. The SC manager appears to be not recognized in practice, although this position is highly required theoretically for an effective management of SCs.

Recent studies (Storey et al, 2006) advocate the need for a SC manager and highlight the lack of efficient professionals. This study analyzes the contents of various empirical research and investigates the secondary information contained inside the table *respondents' profile*. People belonging to the top of the hierarchy or to the functional/department levels mainly answered the questionnaire and provided information. The most surprising result was the absence of the SC manager.

As the main issue of the analyzed articles was SC management, the initial expectation was to find a large percentage of answers provided by SC managers. The results obtained have changed this expectation profoundly. Notwithstanding all the articles related to SC management, the SC manager scarcely provided answers, showing that this figure is not recognized in practice probably because his roles and tasks are hidden and undertaken by other professionals. The answers were provided by specific managers (e.g. quality manager) when the research question was specific to a particular topic (e.g. quality management) and extended to the entire SC. If the research question involved the overall SC processes, a major part of the answers was provided by the functional/departmental managers, CEOs, and presidents. In both cases, the general manager and the managing director frequently furnished the main part of the responses.

These two professional figures possess great power and adequate information. Both appear as the ideal candidates for the role of SC manager. To confirm this statement, this research develops a qualitative analysis by conducting three semi-structured interviews to managers belonging to different organizations. The results disconfirm the previous statement. The general manager and

the managing director do not appear as real alternatives to the SC manager, whereas the KM emerges as the right candidate for this position.

This research proceeds further to investigate KM's roles and tasks, with the purpose to identify his suitability for SC management. The analysis of literature shows several similarities between SC and KM. Nevertheless, neither empirical nor quantitative analyses have investigated these similarities previously.

To fill this gap, the current study develops a survey interview. A descriptive analysis shows that the SC manager carries out all the KM's roles, in particular:

- ◆ identifying the knowledge existing within the firm's boundaries,
- ◆ deciding the investments in communication infrastructure and the human-resource policy to develop,
- ◆ controlling the flows of information with reference to exchange with external entities and those intended to remain internalized, and
- ◆ travelling freely around the organization in spite of organization boundaries and levels, developing knowledge creation.

The SC manager executes the major part of KM's tasks. In particular, he behaves as a KM in developing knowledge and obtaining the consensus of the top management for considering knowledge management as a weapon of competitive advantage, individualizing the person responsible for inflows and outflows of knowledge management, exploiting and creating opportunities for the internal dissemination of knowledge, determining a clear knowledge-management policy, developing knowledge reservoirs and facilitating their access, and incorporating the financial statement into the knowledge-management structure.

This study shows that the SC manager is not recognized in practice. The KM has the right characteristics for carrying out all the required roles and tasks for managing SCs. The survey results show that the SC manager (whoever he is) should act as a KM in executing his roles and tasks and adequately managing the SCs. Moreover, when the SC manager carries out KM's roles and tasks, firms are able to increase their success. Only the KM possesses the necessary competency, ability, and skill for successfully and satisfactorily handling the complexity of SC management.

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