

SUPPLY CHAIN ORIENTATION: LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH AGENDA

Dhaigude Amol S.¹, Rohit Kapoor² and Sumit Kumar Ghosh³

Abstract: This paper provides a critical review of literature on the construct 'supply chain orientation'. The study aims at edifying the evolution of the construct, research approaches/methodologies adopted, and issues and solutions for attainment of higher performance in the highly competitive business environment. This study includes all the articles on the SCO construct published in top notch management journals and detailed examination has been carried out as to the location of the study, methodologies, focus, approaches, contribution and industries studied etc. Findings reveal that supply chain orientation in the context of operations management and overall general management is an important but little investigated area of research. Future scope for research is identified relating to refining the theory of supply chain management, scale development, framework development, cross-industry and cross countries research, action based research and effects of intervening variables. The main contribution of the study is the development of the taxonomy, detailed description along with concise explanations and treatment of the various research methodologies followed and motivation for future research.

JEL Classification: C44, D21, L60, M16.

Keywords: Supply Chain Management, Supply Chain Orientation, Literature Review, Content analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Supply Chain Management (SCM) is crucial for achieving competitive advantage and higher business performance (Li *et. al.*, 2006; Ross 2013). For example, Amazon.com has achieved competitive advantage and superior business performance by leveraging its supply chain capabilities (Patel *et. al.*, 2013). Firms planning implementation of SCM must have supply chain orientation (SCO), as SCM is nothing but SCO implementation across firms' suppliers and its customers (Mentzer *et. al.*, 2001). SCO is the precursor of SCM and is the supply chain

¹ Corresponding Author, (OM and QT) Indian Institute of Management Indore, Rau-Pithampur Road, Indore. E-mail : f12amold@iimidr.ac.in

² Associate Professor (OM and QT), Indian Institute of Management, Indore. Email: rohitk@iimidr.ac.in

³ Professor (OB and HRM), Indian Institute of Management, Indore. Email: skghosh@iimidr.ac.in

members' predisposition towards working in a holistic way in the supply chain and accomplishing the individual as well as supply chain goals (Hult *et. al.*, 2008). Min and Mentzer (2004) advocated that supply chain oriented firms should build and maintain cultural elements like trust (credibility and benevolence), commitment, cooperative norms, organizational compatibility, and top management support with its supply chain partners. SCO affects not only single firm performance within the supply chain but also the overall performance of the supply chain.

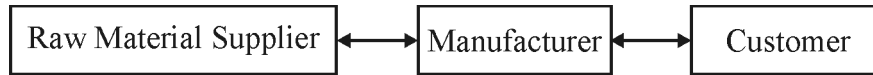
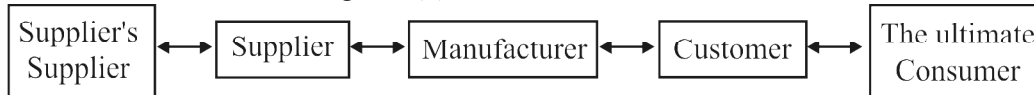
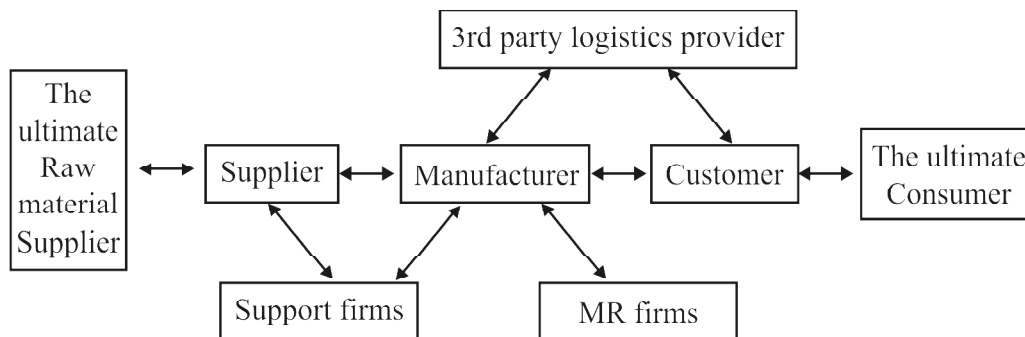
In spite of being the driving philosophy behind the SCM, research on SCO is very limited. Schulze-Ehlers, Steffen, Busch, and Spiller (2014) pointed out that SCO is an important but largely unexamined topic. There is very limited published research on SCO (Schulze-Ehlers *et. al.*, 2014). This paper is an attempt to conduct extensive literature review on SCO to understand the development of the field and lay scope for future research. Objectives of the study are listed below:

1. To provide a systematic review of literature to understand SCO as a separate research stream falling under the domain of operations management.
2. To understand descriptive dimensions of the reviewed literature like year, journal of publication, methodologies used and theoretical foundation.
3. To understand the evolution of SCO.
4. To lay scope for future research.

The present study fills the gap by putting together descriptive dimensions of the studies and answering the following questions related to SCO. It is an attempt to consolidate the diverse literature presently available in the area of operations management.

1. Which dimensions of SCO are focused by published literature?
2. What academic research is done in the area of SCO?
3. What are the theoretical foundations used for these SCO studies?
4. What are the modifications required in traditional OM practices for making it more efficient and effective in today's highly competitive marketplace?

The study is useful to OM researchers as well as to OM practitioners in the area of purchasing, sourcing, inventory management, project management, quality control, revenue management and supply chain coordination. The paper is a good starting point for research in the field of SCO as it presents analysis for a large range of variables associated with SCO. It gives a broad idea of the why, what and how of SCO which may act as a foundation to build future research

Figure 1(a) : Direct/1st order SC**Figure 1(b) : Extended/2nd order SC****Figure 1(c): Ultimate/*n*th order SC**

addressing specific aspects of SCO. Further, this study can be helpful to managers and OM practitioners in terms of understanding of various aspects of SCM, enabling them to build suitable strategies to achieve their own objectives. This study will be a ready reference to them for formulating various policies like which practices to follow, which are the methods and tools to be used so that overall objectives of the entire supply chain can be taken care of etc.

Organization of the Paper

The paper has been organized in different sections. Section 2 conceptualizes the topic and provides related definitions. Section 3 presents the methodology followed in the study for collecting the articles and analyzing the content. Section 4 gives detailed analysis and provides summary of the review. Section 5 concludes the study as well as lays the path for future research.

DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTUALIZATION

SCO is defined by Mentzer *et. al.* (2001, p.11) as “the recognition by an organization of the systemic, strategic implications of the tactical activities involved in managing the various flows in a supply chain.” Hult *et. al.* (2008, p.527) defined SCO as “the extent to which there is a predisposition among chain members toward viewing the supply chain as an integrated entity and on satisfying chain needs in an integrated

way.” According to these definitions a firm possesses SCO if it can visualize the implications of management of the upward and downward flows of products/ services, information and finances from the source to the destination. If any firm sees the systemic and strategic implications only in one direction, then that company does not have a SCO. For example, in Figure 1.a the firm in the middle of the direct/1st order supply chain may have SCO, but the two firms on both ends do not.

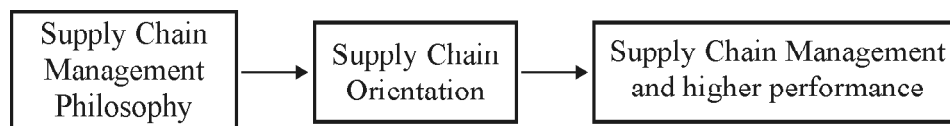
A single firm within the supply chain having SCO does not lead to SCM and superior business performance. It requires SCO across the various firms involved in the SCM as shown in figure 1(c). Without SCO there will be no coordination among the supply chain partners and individual firms may exercise disjoint processes/practices, resulting in a lot of inefficiencies (Min *et. al.*, 2004). Mentzer *et. al.*, (2001) in their seminal paper on defining supply chain management, argued that “*threats and opportunities that originate from the supply chain are better managed by adopting supply chain management as a philosophy rather than considering supply chain activities solely as functional activities focused exclusively on meeting operational objectives*”.

SCM philosophy advocates that a firm can improve the supply chain performance by adopting –

1. System approach: Viewing supply chain as a whole.
2. Strategic affinity: Strategic affinity towards collaboration and developing objectives that are consistent with each other.
3. Customer focus: Focus on creating value for the ultimate customer.

Supply chain related threats and opportunities can be aptly managed by embracing the SCM philosophy (Gibson *et. al.*, 2005; Ellram, Lisa, and Cooper, 2014). Dissemination of the SCM philosophy among the various supply chain members is the crux to improve the entire supply chain performance. And according to the seminal paper of Min and Mentzer (2004), implementation of the SCM philosophy is SCO. So in a nutshell SCM philosophy is the basic foundation of the supply chain management literature, implementation of SCM philosophy leads to SCO and SCO leads to SCM and higher business performance. This is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: The SCO linkages



METHODOLOGY

For providing a detailed methodology for the present research we analyzed methodologies used in the reported literature related to literature review studies. In particular we have looked for Arzu and Erkan (2010), and Shukla and Jharkharia, S. (2013). We propose the following analysis based on the review of methodologies on SCO in reported literature.

DATA COLLECTION

Unit of Analysis and Delimiting

Research paper in English language peer-reviewed journal is established as the basic unit of analysis. This includes empirical works, conceptual papers, analytical modeling and case studies. The review excludes papers which are published in other languages, conference papers, dissertations (both master and doctoral), text books, working papers, news articles and reports.

Search for Literature

A structured key word search is done using keywords like supply chain orientation, holistic supply chain management and supply chain coordination. The search was done in data bases of major publishers like Elsevier/Science Direct, Emerald, Wiley Inter Science, Taylor and Francis. Online library databases like, EBSCO, ABI Info and J-STOR were also searched. More than thousand titles were found with the initial keywords search. These articles were checked for relevance, initially based on the titles and when the scope was not clear by the title keywords, abstracts were analyzed for judging the relevance of papers. If the scope is not clear through abstracts then a quick scanning of the article was also done.

As already discussed, literature on SCO is scarce; the selection of papers became very straightforward i.e., the census survey. All the papers dealing with SCO were included in the study; a total of 25 papers were selected for review (see References). Almost all the papers were published in topmost operations management journals.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Chronological Distribution

There is an increase in the number of papers dealing with SCO published in the last decade. The first paper published on SCO was in year 2001 and the same paper has defined SCO and SCM. The trend shows that there is increase in interest in the SCO concept by scholarly community.

Category Selection, Classification, and Data Analysis

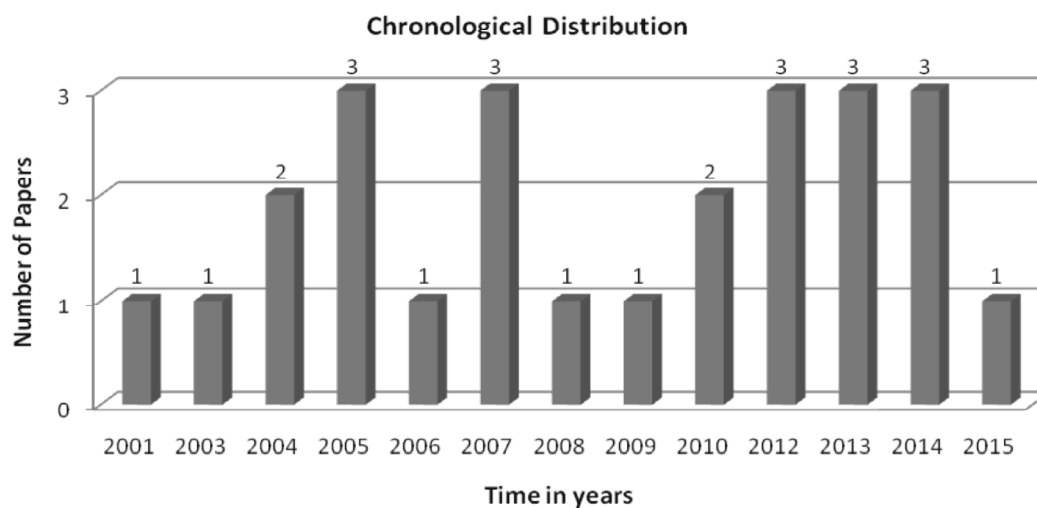
Table 1
Classification Framework

Variable	Value
Time of publication	Year of publications
Journal of publication	Name of journal
Unit of analysis	Individual, One to many, Many to many, Mixed
Operational context	Supply chain management, Product development, Project management, Quality, Production, Inventory, Revenue management, Auction, Supply chain contract, Product design, Queuing theory
Methodology	Experiment-decision task, Survey, Qualitative, Conceptual, Archival, Analytical modelling, Case study, Decision support modelling
Theoretical foundation	Theory of SCM, Leadership Theory, Theory of distribution management, Resource-based theory, The Theory of Planned Behaviour, Theory of power and conflict, Prospect theory,
Industries studied	Manufacturing, Services, Mix

Source: Created by authors

As per Liao, Hong, and Rao (2010), the impact of SCM on firm performance has increased and will continue in future. Intense competition, heavy dependency on outsourcing and global sourcing resulted in special attention for SCM (Davis, 1993; Straub *et. al.*, 2008). As firms' dependence on the supply chain is increasing, more research is required for managing the threats and opportunities that emanate

Figure 3: Chronological distribution of papers



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Table 2
Distribution across journals of publication

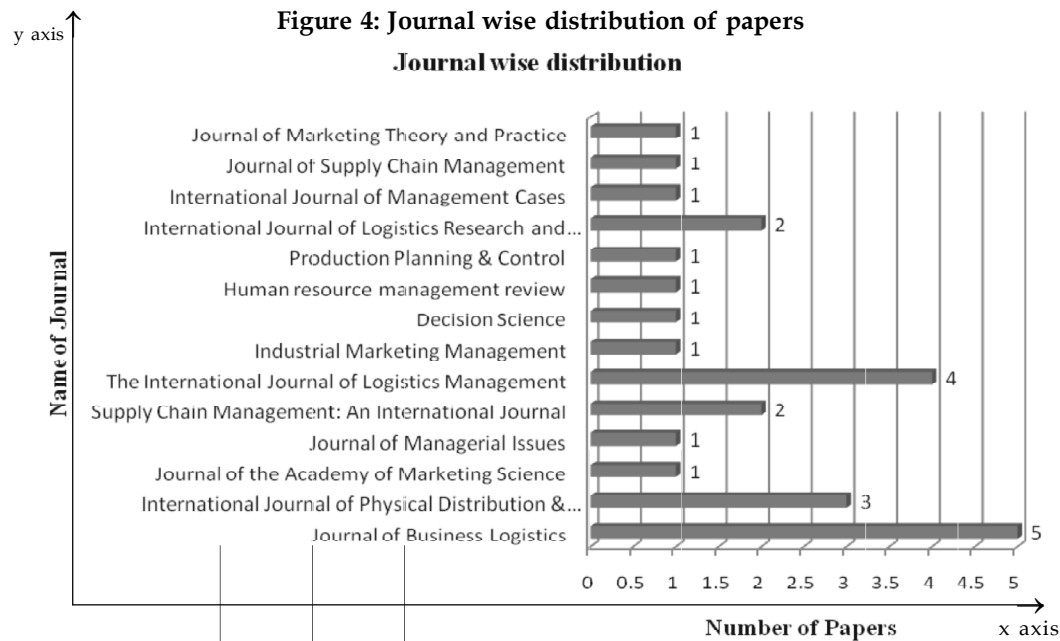
Sr. No.	Journal Name	Number of papers
1.	Journal of Business Logistics	5
2.	International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management	3
3.	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	1
4.	Journal of Managerial Issues	1
5.	Supply Chain Management: An International Journal	2
6.	The International Journal of Logistics Management	4
7.	Industrial Marketing Management	1
8.	Decision Science	1
9.	Human Resource Management Review	1
10.	Production Planning and Control	1
11.	International Journal of Logistics Research and Applications	2
12.	International Journal of Management Cases	1
13.	Journal of Supply Chain Management	1
14.	Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice	1

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from SCM. So the number of papers will continue to increase as can be seen from Figure 3.

DISTRIBUTION ACROSS JOURNALS OF PUBLICATION

The papers reviewed were mainly from top operations management journals as shown in Table 2. 65% of the papers have been derived from operations management journals, 14% the papers have been taken from marketing management journals, 14% papers belong to general management journals and 7% of the papers fall under human resource management journals. The inter-disciplinary nature of the journal portfolio has helped to cover the multifaceted nature of the SCO concept. Journal of Business Logistics, International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management, Supply Chain Management: An International Journal, The International Journal of Logistics Management have contributed 56% of the papers considered for this study. Since the beginning of the concept SCO (Mentzer *et. al.*, 2001) the journal continues to dominate SCO literature with contribution of 20% to the sample papers. The journals dealing with logistics management such as The International Journal of Logistics Management and the International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management follow Journal of Business Logistics and stand at ranks 2 and 3 respectively. Since 2010 *Supply Chain Management: An International Journal* with its empirical focus has gained momentum in publishing SCO papers. The figure 4 shows journal wise distribution of papers in a pictorial form.



Source: Created by authors

Methodologies Used

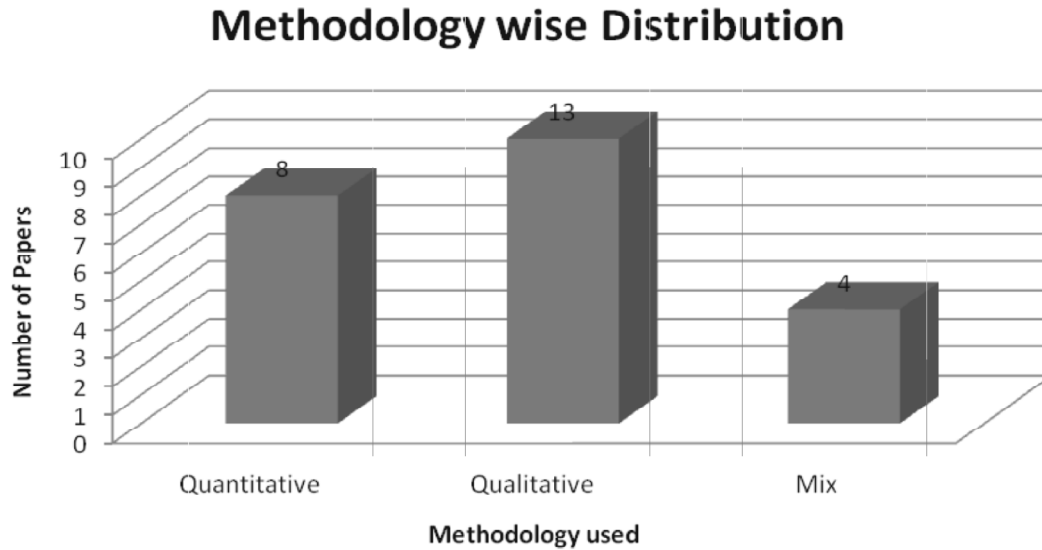
Figure 5 shows the distribution of the papers along the methodology used. As SCO is a continuously evolving concept inclination towards qualitative type of research is more than the qualitative studies. There are 52% qualitative papers, 32% are quantitative papers and 16% are mixed type of research papers. Of the qualitative type of research, grounded theory is the most widely used (47%), followed by content analysis (38%) and lastly the case study.

Approach (15%). In terms of the quantitative studies, majority of the papers have used structural equation modelling as the data analysis tool (50%), followed by PLS (30%) and lastly the SPSS (20%). 6 out of the 8 quantitative papers used the 7 pointer Likert scale, whereas the remaining two papers used 5 pointer and 10 pointer Likert scale. The mix method studies used a combination interviews and the questionnaire for collection of the data.

Location of Study

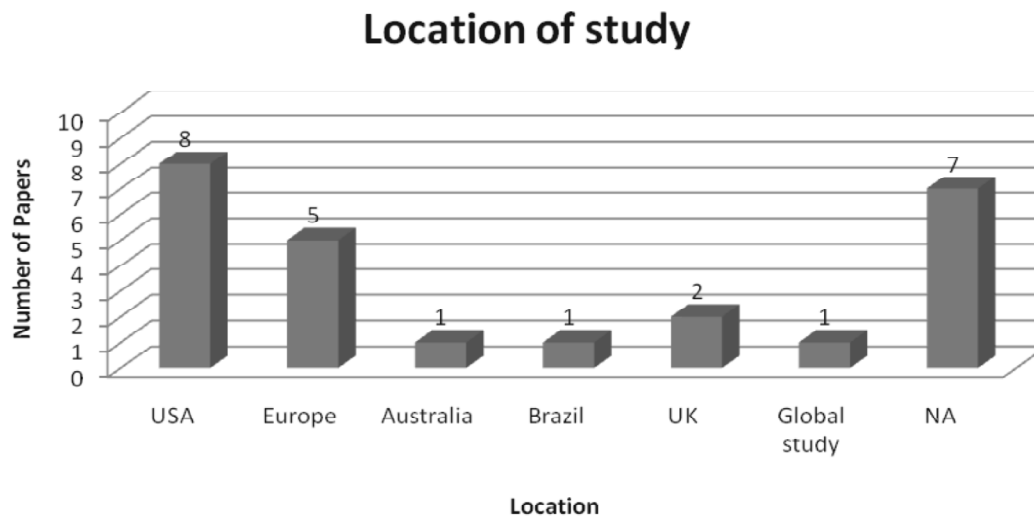
Figure 6 shows the distribution of the papers across geographical location. It is clear from the figure that the concept of SCO is being intensely studied in the developed countries. SCO has been extensively studied in the USA, contributing to the highest number of papers (32%), followed by Europe (20%). There is one

Figure 5: Methodological distribution



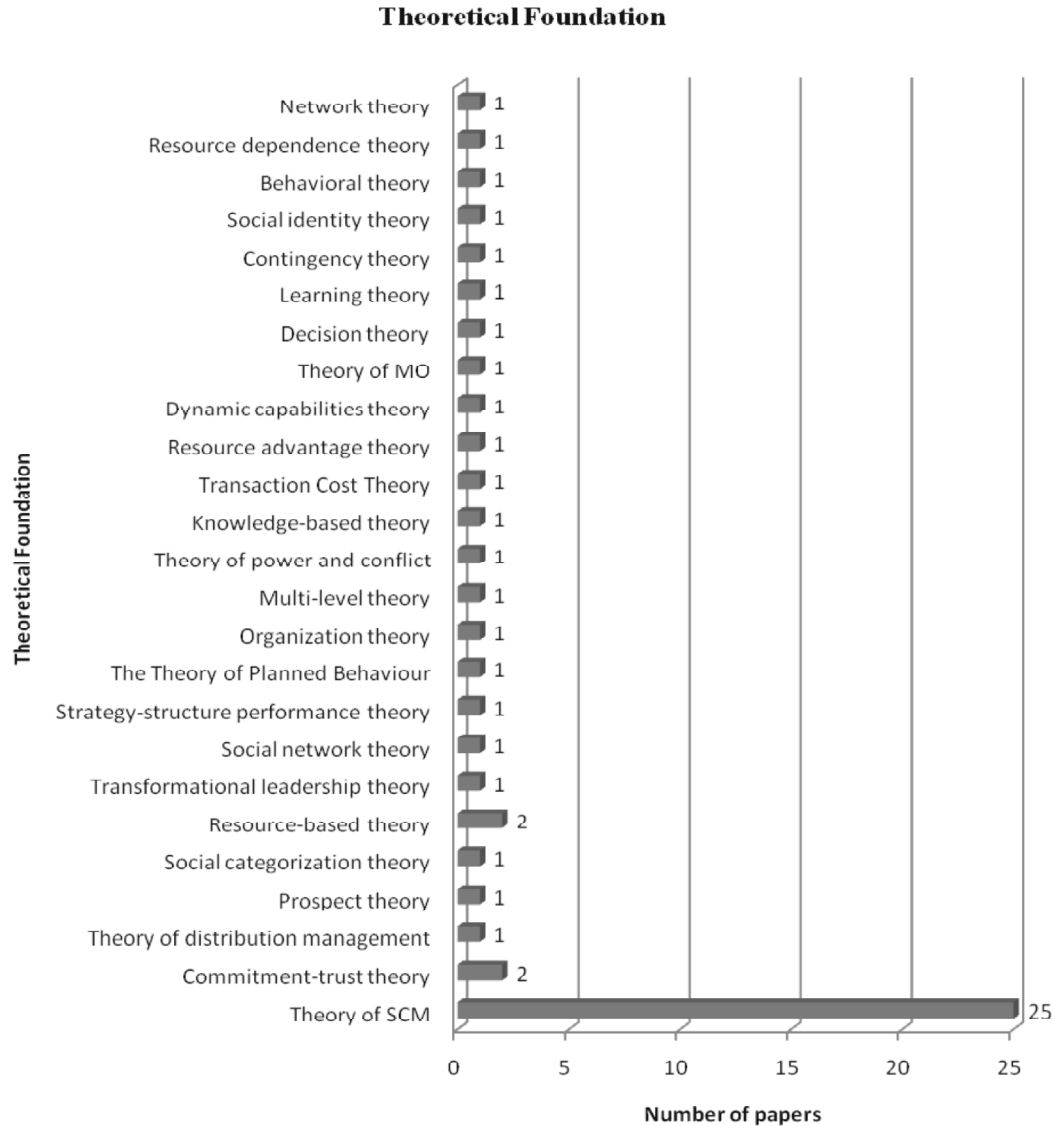
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Figure 6: Distribution according to location of study



Source: Created by authors

study conducted by (Signori, Flint, and Golobic, 2015) which has taken the global view of the term SCM. The authors have conducted the study in global wine industry covering 88 organizations spread across 9 wine regions in USA, Australia, New Zealand and Italy. Lastly there are 7 conceptual papers whose location is not specified.

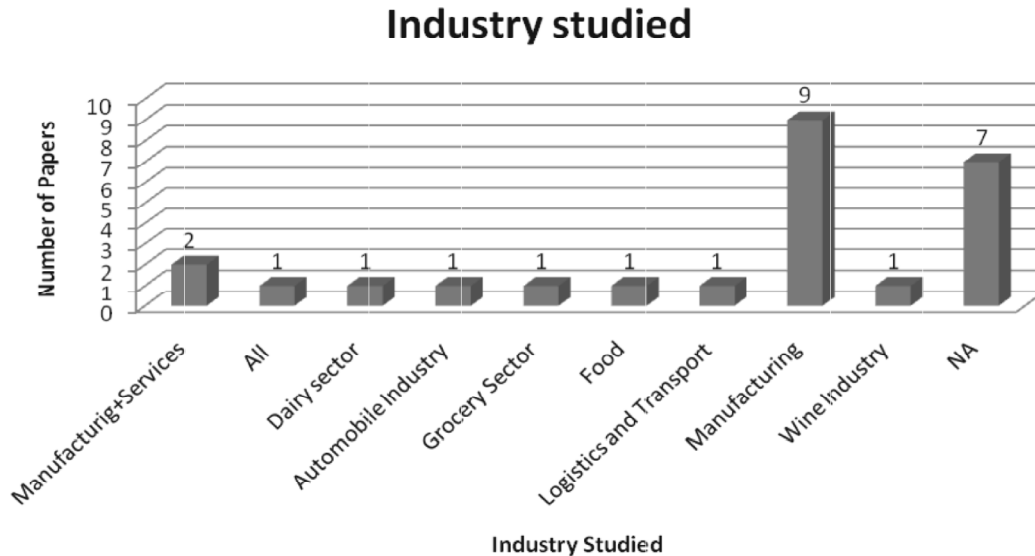
Figure 7: Theoretical distribution

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Theoretical Foundation

SCO is the underlining philosophy of SCM, so all the papers contribute to the theory of SCM. Other than theory of SCM, almost all the papers are based on one or more theories. The distribution of the papers based on the theoretical foundation is shown in Figure 7. Resource based theory (Clifford Defee Brian S. Fugate, 2010; Hult *et. al.*, 2008) and the commitment-trust theory (Mello and

Figure 8: Industry studied



Source: Created by authors

Stank, 2005; Uta Jüttner, 2005) are the second most used theories in the chosen sample space. As the concept of SCO is dealing with the systemic, strategic implications of the various activities of the supply chain flows across the players of the SCM, dependence on theories from streams like economics, psychology, and sociology is inevitable.

Industry Studied

Supply chain is an integral part of business. At the minimum, a business can have supply chain as shown in Figure 1(a). The complexity of the supply chain increases as the business expands. OM research community has always favoured the manufacturing sector as the primary sector for research. SCO is no exception to this trend. 36% of the papers belong to pure manufacturing sector. Couple of papers have studied the manufacturing and service sectors together, contributing to 8% of the sample. Other than 36% of the mixed manufacturing sector research, few researchers have conducted their studies on specific manufacturing sectors, for example, wine industry, dairy sector, automobile sector etc. There is a paper by Min and Mentzer (2004) that has included all the industries in the sample space. The authors have taken 302 forms falling under manufacturing, services, distribution and public service sectors. The distribution of the papers across the industries studied is shown in Figure 8.

The Why, What and How of SCO

Table 3 shows classification of the papers according to focus and contribution. All the papers have the focus of either building or testing the theory of supply chain management. The contribution of the selected papers is important as shown in Table 3.

CONCLUSION AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has critically evaluated the published literature and put forward the evolution and importance of the crucial and little investigated concept of SCO which is the backbone of SCM. It has broadened the understanding of the holistic supply chain management. The structural and strategic dimensions of SCO along with the structure-strategy fit are highlighted in the study. The descriptive dimensions of the SCO studies like methodology used, industry studied, theoretical foundation etc. have also been clearly laid out. The study revealed that SCO is having high potential for research and very unique supportive evidences have been identified for the need of future research on SCO while conducting the review process. The scope for future research is listed below:

- Further research is needed on the integrated measurement techniques/tools for achieving SCO for the virtual and e-commerce business platforms; also research on advances of the clear-cut frameworks and the validation of these measurement techniques/tools empirically; action based research.
- Empirical validation and testing of developed measurement techniques/tools, determining the KPI's for internal, supplier, customer and overall supply chain integration.
- Almost all the papers have investigated SCO of developed countries. The SCO research on supply chain of developing countries will bring new dimension and will open new threads of research. There is also need for cross country studies.
- SCO studies are restricted to the manufacturing sector only. Future research should integrate the service sector, as the supply chain of service sector is much more challenging than the manufacturing sector and can bring in new insights.
- SCO is the holistic management of resources across the entire supply chain including human resources. Traditionally the human resource management area is restricted to boundaries of the organization. So there are innovative research opportunities in the human resource management dimension of SCO.
- It has been found that SCO leads to higher performance and competitive advantage. But the mechanism is still a black box. The role of intervening

Table 3
Taxonomy with respect to aim and contribution of the study.

S. No.	Author	Year	Title	Aim	Contribution
1.	Mentzer <i>et al.</i>	2001	Defining Supply chain Management	Defining SCM and SCO	First paper on SCO and defined the concept of SCO and SCM. Comprehensive review and classification of literature.
2.	Cristina Giménez Eva Ventura,	2003	Supply Chain Management as a Competitive Advantage in the Spanish Grocery Sector	SCM as a competitive advantage in terms achieving better <i>via</i> reduction of stock lead out costs and time reduction Online way of doing business	Internal integration and external integration leads to superior performance and sustainable competitive advantage.
3.	Hung M Nguyen and Norma J Harrison	2004	Electronic supply-chain orientation and its competitive dimensions		Proposed the framework of online business with integration of SCM. Proposed and empirically tested the taxonomy of firms' strategic positioning.
4.	Soonhong Min and John T. Mentzer	2004	Developing and Measuring Supply Chain Management Concepts	Defining SCO and scale development	Refined the SCO definition and extended the Mentzer <i>et al.</i> , 2001 paper. Proposed the first scale for SCO and successfully tested the scale.
5.	John E. Mello Theodore P. Stank	2005	Linking firm culture and orientation to supply chain success	Organization culture and SCM	The importance of culture orientation for successful implementation of SCM practice is established.
6.	Brian J. Gibson, John T. Mentzer, Robert L. Cook	2005	Supply Chain Management: The Pursuit of a Consensus Definition	Defining SCM agenda for future	Refined the definition of SCM and put forward the SCM understanding.

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|-----|--------------------------------------------------|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7. | Uta Jüttner | 2005 | Supply chain risk management | Supply chain risk management from a practitioner perspective. | Practical application of supply chain risk management and given the structure for an integrated approach for the same. |
| 8. | Fugate <i>et al.</i> | 2006 | Supply Chain Management Coordination Mechanisms | Coordination of the supply chain | Established the linkages between SCO and supply chain coordination. SCO is positively related to non price coordination mechanism and does not work in the flow coordination mechanism. |
| 9. | Janaina D. A. S. Diniz and Nathalie Fabbe-Costes | 2007 | Supply Chain Management and Supply Chain Orientation: key factors for sustainable development projects in developing countries? | Design and implementation of projects for enhancement | Lack of SCO and SCM leads to failure of the sustainable development of business models. The necessity of SCO and SCM in the context of cooperative structure is highlighted. |
| 10. | Mollenkopf, D., Russo, I., and Frankel, R. | 2007 | The returns management process in supply chain strategy | Returns management | Provided the framework for managing returns as a supply chain strategy. |
| 11. | Soonhong Min, John T. Mentzer and Robert T. Ladd | 2007 | A market orientation in supply chain management | Market orientation in the context of SCM | Tested the association between the market orientation, SCO, SCM and performance. MO through SCO affects performance. |
| 12. | Hult <i>et al.</i> | 2008 | Supply Chain Orientation and Balanced Scorecard Performance | Role of SCM for achieving competitive advantage | Comparison between SCO and Balance scorecard. Established the relationship between the SCO, balance scorecard and firm performance. |
| 13. | Clifford Defee Terry Esper Diane Mollenkopf | 2009 | Leveraging closed-loop orientation and leadership for environmental sustainability | Development of closed loop SCO | Established the role of SCO for development of closed loop SCO. Also stated the supply chain leadership requirements for implementation of SCO. |

14. C. Clifford Defee
Brian S. Fugate
2010 Changing perspective of capabilities in the dynamic supply chain era
Dynamic supply chain capabilities for achieving sustainable competitive advantage
For achieving the long term competitive advantage firm needs to focus on capabilities across the supply chain networks and that too in a continuous fashion.
15. Terry L. Esper
C. Clifford Defee
John T. Mentzer
2010 A framework of supply chain orientation
Synthesize the SCO literature
Inclusion of the strategic and structural view in SCO; extended the SCO concept to areas like organizational design, human resources, information technology and organizational measurement.
16. Dario Miocevic,
Biljana Crnjak-Karanovic
2012 The mediating role of key supplier relationship management practices on supply chain orientation – The organizational buying effectiveness link
Organization buying effectiveness & key supplier relationship
Key supplier relationship management mediates the SCO–organization buying effectiveness relationship.
17. Dario Mio Ėeviae
and Goran Dedi
2012 Exploring the Supply Chain Orientation: The Case Of Croatian Manufacturing Companies
Organizational buying effectiveness
SCO is an important organizational capability and is positively and directly related to organizational buying effectiveness.
18. Lengnick-Hall *et al.*
2013 Strategic human resource management and supply chain orientation
Human resource requirements for SCO
Expanded human resource management beyond the firm boundaries; also provided the framework for understanding the linkage between SCO, HRM and firm performance
19. Omar *et al.*
2012 Exploring the` Complex Social Processes of Organizational Change: Supply
Organizational Change
Creation of theory from the individual unit of analysis to explain the transition to SCO through interrelated concepts and categories, and emphasizing the underlying characteristics and dimensions.

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|-----|----------------------------------------------|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 20. | Patel, P. C., Azadegan, A., and Ellram, | 2013 | Chain Orientation From a Manager's Perspective
The Effects of Strategic SCO and firm and Structural Supply Chain Orientation on Operational and Customer-Focused Performance
The role of marketing in creating a supply chain orientation within the firm | Empirically tested the components of SCO <i>i.e.</i> , strategic and structural SCO relationship, with each other and on firm performance. Also found the moderating role of environmental dynamics on SCO - performance link. |
| 21. | Uta Jüttner and Martin Christopher | 2013 | Marketing supported SCO
Supply chain orientation in SMEs as an attitudinal construct | Structural SCO, strategic SCO and structure-strategy fit were tested with the marketing concept and found marketing-supported SCO impacts the performance directly and positively.
Introduction of SCO as an attitudinal construct; Established importance of SCO in small and medium firms in terms of managing the supply chain. |
| 22. | Schulze-Ehlers <i>et al.</i> | 2014 | Supply Chain Management: It's All about the Journey, Not The Destination | Extensive compilation of SCM literature from an academic point of view; also set out the direction for future research in SCM. |
| 23. | Ellram, L. M., and Cooper, M. C. | 2014 | Supply Chain Management: It's All about the Journey, Not The Destination | SCO has effect on buying centre members' new technology satisfaction. |
| 24. | Howard Forman | 2014 | Buying Centres and the Role of Supply Chain Orientation on New Information Technology Satisfaction in the Automotive Industry | |
| 25. | Paola Signori Daniel John Flint Susan Golcic | 2015 | Toward sustainable supply chain orientation (SSCO): mapping managerial perspectives
Profiling of perspectives on sustainable SCO | Introduction of the concept of sustainable SCO (SSCO); creation of ten profiles for the SSCO, and creation of pathways for achieving the desired profile. |

variables like, supply chain integration, supply chain agility, innovativeness in the supply chain etc., is a valid research thread.

- The refinement of the theory of supply chain management with SCO as a construct has good research potential.
- The inclusion of various research methodologies like experiments, analytical modelling, case studies etc. needs to be researched.
- The scale for SCO is still evolving as the scale proposed by Mentzer *et. al.* 2001 and used by Schulze-Ehlers *et. al.*, 2014 shows drastic variation. So research on scale development of SCO is a requirement for the future.

In a nut shell, 'supply chain orientation excellence' is a lucrative area for future research.

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