

Triple Bottomline Managerial Dimensions and their Contributions to Supply Chain Management: A Research Note

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Abstract: *This research note provides a concise discussion and review of the fundamental concepts of supply chain management as viewed from the lens of sustainability and its influence on corporate value. It delves into the rich insights provided by the concept of the triple bottomline – a widely popular yardstick of social responsibility and sustainability – and how it can be effectively integrated into an organization's supply chain management practices. The implementation and integration of sustainability concepts within the supply chain are then elucidated using the managerial dimensions of legislation, ethics, and sustainability. Salient concepts and principles illustrating effective supply chain management practices under each dimension are also enumerated. Insights are also presented on how organizations can strategically implement supply chain management practices based on relevant and existing literature. Finally, recommendations are forwarded in terms of strategies that may be useful for supply chain management professionals as well as opportunities for future research directions.*

Keywords: Supply Chain Management, Supply Chain, Triple Bottomline, Sustainability, Research Note

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the most crucial components for organizations in the business sector is the supply chain. As is frequently the case, competition increases, forcing businesses to constantly set new goals in order to remain competitive. Therefore, implementing supply chain best practices across the organization is closely tied to supply chain strategy and its capacity to create business value not only locally but, more crucially, globally (Deloitte, 2022). Companies nowadays are therefore faced with the difficulty of keeping up with contemporary supply chain management trends in terms of pertinent global societal challenges in order to achieve this goal and ensure that corporate operations are not only effective but also sustainable and socially responsible.

Companies have a remarkable opportunity to work with the three dimensions of sustainability – profit, planet, and people – through supply chain management. How successfully these three dimensions are handled both upstream toward the supplier base and downstream with customers and consumers determines the extent of achievement of such noble goal. Managers must connect with all relevant key players in the supply chain, identify system boundaries for their activities, and relate fundamental causes to the impact of sustainable performance to be able to take actionable sustainability over their supply chain operations.

Supply chain professionals are in an "excellent position to influence sustainable practices" (Carter & Rogers, 2018). Companies nowadays must demonstrate that minimizing the negative effects of their supply chain operations on the environment and society is their top concern. This is because operational processes that focus on supply chain performance priorities such as flexibility and speed, which are often seen as key customer service criteria in supply chains, may have a direct and negative impact on economic, social, and environmental aspects known as the concept of the triple-bottomline (TBL).

Due to growing worries among conscientious consumers about environmental deterioration and the maintenance of social well-being, the concept of the triple-bottom line has grown popular in recent years. The triple bottom line increases the growing awareness of sustainability by capturing an extended spectrum of economic, social, and ecological values, in contrast to the traditional business paradigm which places emphasis on the financial prosperity of the organization and its shareholders. That is to say, the triple bottom line is founded on the notion that a sustainable organization is one that makes money for its shareholders, safeguards the environment, and enhances the lives of those with whom it interacts (such as suppliers, employees, and customers).

Therefore, to develop a more sustainable and actionable supply chain that promotes global corporate value, organizations need to look for new approaches to help convert their visions into actions. The challenge of developing sustainable supply chains that are responsive to the triple-bottomline concept requires a thorough and systemic understanding of relevant managerial issues that are contributory to an organization's corporate value and strategic reputation (Montabon et al, 2016). This includes looking at three (3) significant core operational aspects that directly influence supply chain operations and management: legislation, ethics, and social responsibility.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The legal dimension of supply chain management has become increasingly significant as organizations operate within more complex, interconnected, and globally dispersed business environments. Contemporary literature emphasizes that effective supply chain governance depends on clearly defined contractual responsibilities (Ulfbeck et al, 2019) that establish the rights, obligations, risk allocation, performance expectations, and dispute resolution mechanisms among suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, logistics providers, and other supply chain partners. At the same time, scholars note that new patterns of business activity (Fatnassi & Alardhy, 2024) including digital commerce, platform-based business models, cross-border transactions, outsourcing, strategic alliances, and data-driven supply networks, have introduced novel legal issues concerning intellectual property, cybersecurity, privacy, competition law, sustainability, and regulatory compliance. These developments have also contributed to modern paradigms of legal understanding (Nesmeyanova, 2018) wherein legal frameworks are no longer viewed solely as mechanisms for enforcing contracts but as strategic instruments that promote collaboration, resilience, ethical governance, stakeholder accountability, environmental responsibility, and long-term value creation across supply chains. Consequently, current research suggests that legal considerations have evolved from a reactive compliance function into an essential component of strategic supply chain management that supports organizational performance while addressing the growing complexity of contemporary business ecosystems.

The ethical dimension of supply chain management has gained increasing attention as organizations are expected to balance operational efficiency with responsible and sustainable business conduct. Simangunsong (2016) argues that managing supply chain uncertainty requires organizations to address emerging ethical issues including transparency, stakeholder accountability, responsible decision-making, and ethical responses to disruptions that may affect suppliers, employees, customers, and communities. Complementing this perspective, Castillo et al. (2018) emphasize the importance of supply chain integrity, describing it as the consistent application of ethical principles, honesty, fairness, compliance, and trust throughout interorganizational relationships to reduce opportunistic behavior and strengthen collaboration among supply chain partners. Expanding the discussion, Yawar and Seuring (2017) examined the relationship between social issues, organizational actions, and performance outcomes, highlighting how initiatives related to labor rights, occupational health and safety, diversity, community engagement, and human rights contribute not only to social responsibility but also to improved reputation, stakeholder trust, operational resilience, and long-term organizational performance. Collectively, these studies suggest that ethical supply chain management extends beyond regulatory compliance by integrating ethical governance, integrity, and social responsibility into strategic supply chain practices that enhance both organizational sustainability and stakeholder value.

The sustainability dimension of supply chain management has evolved from a narrow emphasis on environmental compliance to a broader strategic perspective that integrates economic, environmental, and social objectives throughout the supply chain. Rajeev et al. (2017) traced the evolution of sustainability in supply chain management, demonstrating how organizations have progressively shifted toward practices that balance operational performance with resource conservation, stakeholder well-being, and long-term value creation. Building on this foundation, Narimissa et al. (2020) examined the dimensions and aspects of sustainable supply chain management evaluation, highlighting the need for comprehensive assessment frameworks that measure sustainability across multiple criteria, including economic efficiency, environmental stewardship, social responsibility, resilience, governance, and supplier performance. Extending the discussion, Joshi (2022) synthesized the paradigms, frameworks, and future directions of sustainable supply chain management, emphasizing the emergence of systems thinking, circular economy principles, digital transformation, stakeholder collaboration, and integrated governance as key drivers of sustainable

supply chain development. Collectively, these studies suggest that sustainable supply chain management has developed into a multidimensional and strategic discipline in which organizations are expected to integrate sustainability principles into decision-making, performance evaluation, and long-term supply chain governance to enhance resilience, competitiveness, and societal value.

Taken together, the legal, ethical, and sustainability dimensions of supply chain management demonstrate that contemporary supply chain management extends far beyond the efficient movement of goods and services. The literature consistently portrays supply chains as interconnected systems that require robust legal governance through contractual accountability and adaptive regulatory frameworks, ethical leadership founded on integrity, transparency, and stakeholder responsibility, and sustainability-oriented strategies that balance economic performance with environmental stewardship and social well-being. As supply chains become increasingly global, digitalized, and complex, these three dimensions are no longer treated as independent considerations but as complementary elements of effective supply chain governance. Their integration enables organizations to strengthen resilience, manage emerging risks, foster stakeholder trust, and create long-term value while responding to evolving business environments and societal expectations.

III. METHODOLOGY

This paper draws its conceptual review discussions from selected relevant academic literature and peer-reviewed studies published in the last decade (2016 to 2025) identified thru Google Scholar, Scopus, and Regulatory and Industrial Publications using keywords such as "Supply Chain Management", "Supply Chain", "Triple Bottomline", and "Corporate Value". These academic literature and empirical studies were then further analyzed using the conceptual lenses of the managerial dimensions of supply chain management with focus on legal, ethical, and sustainability constructs. However, this conceptual approach also possesses inherent limitations. The focus on document analysis and the lack of actual empirical analysis limits the generalizability of findings, making the analysis more interpretive rather than predictive. In addition, employing a researcher-initiated or curated conceptual lens may be perceived as lacking academic provenance in comparison to more established frameworks resulting from more empirical and scientific studies.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

LEGAL DIMENSIONS OF SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

Every nation has a legal system in place to preserve freedom and order in human society. By enforcing different types of liabilities and bodies of regulations, the law can both prohibit some human acts or behaviors and help protect people from harm or malice. Generally speaking, law is a set of rules or directives established by the highest authority in a State, dictating what is right and prohibiting what is bad (Bigelow, 2013). Supply chain managers should become familiar with legislation since it influences crucial business choices as well as daily conduct, particularly contract law, tort law, administrative law, and international law, all of which may have a significant impact on supply chain operations.

Relevant Supply Chain Legislations

Supply chain activities such as freight shipment are often subject to legal terms and conditions defining the rights and duties of companies that initiated those activities for their trading partners and customers. Thus, companies that engage in supply chain activities should clearly understand the laws that govern those activities and plan those activities under legal restrictions. Some of these laws may be specifically designed to govern particular supply chain activities, such as transportation, warehousing, and purchasing, while others such as labor/employment law and tax law may be applicable to the entire spectrum of supply chain activities. Some laws with supply chain implications includes employment laws, competition laws, intellectual property laws, environmental laws, and commercial/business laws (Harbaugh, 2022).

The extensive complex of laws, court rulings, and rules known as employment law covers every aspect of the employer-employee relationship (Fallon, 2022). Employment discrimination, pay, benefits for the unemployed, pensions, workplace safety and health, child labor, and workers' compensation are a few of these topics. Competition laws, sometimes called as antitrust laws, were created to prevent noncompetitive behaviors such as monopolies and apply to both businesses and individuals (PCC, 2015). The motivation behind this type of law is that monopolies can stagnate the markets and prevent others from engaging in fair competition. Intellectual property law is the body of law that deals with protecting the rights of those who create original work (Rich, 2017). It covers everything from inventions, literary and artistic work, and trademarks. The main purpose of intellectual property laws is to encourage new technologies, artistic expression, and inventions, while promoting economic growth. Environmental laws include treaties and regulations intended to protect natural environments, prevent pollution, save endangered species, conserve water and energy, and mitigate the detrimental effects of human activities on natural environments (Campbell-Mohn, 2022). It also provides a

basis for measuring and apportioning liability in cases of its violations and the failure to comply with its provisions. Finally, business or commercial laws refer to the body of law that governs how business parties enter into contracts with each other, execute them, and remedy problems that arise in the process (Britannica, 2019). Commercial law covers the topics of agency, contract, bailments, labor relations, carriers, sales, product liability, partnerships, corporations, unfair competition, secured transactions, property, commercial paper, consumer credits, insurance, and bankruptcy.

ETHICAL DIMENSIONS OF SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

A method known as an ethical supply chain concentrates on the necessity of corporate social responsibility, working to manufacture goods and services in a way that respects both the environment and its people. By promoting an ethical supply chain, businesses may ensure that social, human, and environmental factors are taken into account across their global operations (Goldman, 2022). More than ever before, consumers now have higher expectations from the brands they purchase from, and the experience economy now demands an ethical supply chain. Shoppers are demanding that supply chains uphold ethical standards linked to environmental stewardship, sustainable sourcing, reduced waste, and improving working circumstances as they become more aware of concerns relating to the environment, sustainability, and labor. Therefore, establishing an ethical supply chain can assist a business in protecting its brand reputation, fostering long-term loyalty, and offering a better customer experience while also contributing to its financial bottom line.

Foundational Principles of Ethical Behavior in Supply Chain Management

In addition to generating higher brand and shareholder value, attracting the best and brightest personnel, fostering supplier and customer loyalty, and avoiding costly lawsuits, ethical businesses are deemed to be more profitable (Derry, 2020). Every activity within the supply chain has repercussions because the supply chain management profession has evolved into a strategic influencer. Due to this, supply chain management experts have the chance and duty to set an example for and promote ethical behavior throughout the whole supply chain. In view thereof, the Institute for Supply Management (ISM, 2020) has forwarded foundational principles for ethical behavior expected to be complied with by supply chain management professionals in the conduct of supply chain activities and operations within their respective organizations. These principles and guidelines are established to (1) encourage adherence to uncompromising ethical behavior, (2) increase awareness and acceptance of ethical conduct and (3) emphasize the role of ethics when formulating decisions. These ethical supply chain management behaviors include the following aspects:

Conflict of Interest, Influence, Reciprocity, Impropriety. Individuals in a supply chain deal with a variety of circumstances that could have serious repercussions. The supply management professional should be prepared to identify ethical problems and have a practical strategy for handling them as they arise (Karanja, 2021). Supply chain management experts should therefore steer clear of conflicts of interest, improper behavior, reciprocity, and power dynamics when dealing with these difficult scenarios.

Interactions with Others. Effective, value-driven relationships between practitioners and their employers, managers, suppliers, consumers, and other stakeholders are a key component of supply chain management. These partnerships frequently entail extremely complicated issues and many cultures which increases the likelihood of miscommunication (Chorley, 2022). The supply chain management professional must traverse a variety of ethical issues in these circumstances and must make sure that expectations and cooperation are reasonable and fair.

Regulatory Compliance and Standards. The majority of supply chain specialists are aware that following all relevant laws, regulations, and standards is an essential aspect of their work (Morley, 2020). It is crucial for supply chain management professionals to be up to date and educated of laws and regulations given the growing internationalization of the supply chain. Within the supply chain, social responsibility and sustainability need to be given more attention.

Professional Competency. Leadership in supply chain management nowadays consists of at least two elements (Braithwaite, 2022). The first is continual development, which entails utilizing knowledge, abilities, and education to develop into a professional who is forward-looking and value-driven. The second factor is that supply chain managers must work harder with fewer resources for their companies and the global economy. Through cost savings, brand building, and customer engagement, this type of leadership contributes to the value of enterprises.

Supply Chain Ethical Practices

The development of minimal standards for social and environmental responsibility within organizations has been widely adopted as a result of the increasing pressure from stakeholders and other parties to act responsibly. More

specifically, ethical supply chain practices have been identified as a potent strategy for enhancing organizational social and environmental consequences (Hall & Matos, 2010). Avoiding unethical acts is a major concern of supply chain ethics. As a result, there have been numerous attempts to establish rules that offer guidance on sensitive procedures involving ethical considerations (Carter, 2010). In order to be most effective, a company must carefully select the practices that best match its supply chain management strategy and strike a balance between the necessity for economic performance and the ethical requirements of its stakeholders. Explored in this section are some of these supply chain ethical practices.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The phrase "corporate social responsibility" (CSR) refers to an organization's commitment to conduct its business in a way that is both socially and ecologically responsible and takes into account the interests of all of its stakeholders (Ar, 2021). A company's embrace of CSR need not be a burden, as it may be a source of opportunity, innovation, and competitive advantage (Ivaniienko & Shypova, 2022). But it's crucial that these programs transcend beyond a flashy publicity campaign. For supply chain management purposes, a strategic and cohesive structure for CSR activities is advised.

Codes of Conduct. When supply chains engage in activities like outsourcing, especially in developing nations with relatively low governance, the need for codes of conduct becomes critical (Tulder et al, 2009). In order to apply their own standards of conduct, organizations should create voluntary codes in the absence of globally enforceable legislation for ethical trade programs. To maintain consistent ethical standards throughout supply chains and the entire organization, it is evidently crucial to employ such codes. Additionally, there is proof that creating a code of conduct is associated with more ethical behavior, and that developing one is the most efficient approach to put an ethical policy into practice and lessen ethical conflict (Hollingworth & Glieden, 2015).

Environmental Preservation. Businesses looking to boost their environmental performance are increasingly adopting green supply chain management (Testa & Iraldo, 2010). This entails making steps to reduce the detrimental effects that businesses and their supply chains have on the environment (Mollenkopf et al., 2010). This could also be included under sustainable development, and new definitions of the term have taken into account the need to balance economic viability and competitiveness with social and environmental concerns, or the "triple bottom line" (Wolf & Suering, 2010). Multiple attempts have been made to strike a balance between performance standards and environmental preservationist measures, with supply chain managers playing a bigger part in enhancing the social and environmental impacts of industrial systems (Hall & Matos, 2010). Additionally, the paradigm shift from firm level to supply chain level competitiveness is reinforced by the rise in environmental and ethical consciousness around the world, which presents a challenge and necessitates the incorporation of complete supply chain-wide sustainability goals (Gold et al., 2010).

Fair Trade. By using a fair trade supply agreement, fair trade seeks to promote community empowerment and development at the origin of supply chains. Fair trade agreements are implemented, monitored, and upheld to guarantee that minimal pricing and conditions are consistently met. Fair trade is a good practice since it balances supply chains and demonstrates that manufacturing and trade can be managed more sustainably (Fiedoruk, 2021).

Ethical Supply Chain Practices and Positive Organizational Performance

Researchers and managers alike have recognized the potential advantages that ethical supply chain practice has for corporate performance (Testa and Iraldo, 2010). By implementing ethical initiatives, businesses can also reap financial rewards, which serve as a powerful incentive for them to behave ethically. Some studies (Ozlen, 2013; Maramura & Shava, 2021) have also found that the implementation of ethical initiatives can result in immediate financial gains. Companies with social responsibility programs outperformed those without them in terms of return on equity, demonstrating that financial gains increase with improved social performance. These findings also support the notion that social responsibility and financial success are related.

The improvement of product quality has also been noted as a further advantage of supply chain ethics. According to Kandasami et al (2021), ethics fosters quality, leading to a favorable correlation between productivity, quality, and ethics. The manufacturing of high-quality goods is also ethical in and of itself, according to Aytan & Sayan (2019), whereas the sale of low-quality goods can have a detrimental influence on a company's market share, earnings, and all of its stakeholders. By exceeding the expectations of key stakeholders, improved product quality, corporate social responsibility, and other ethical activities may also serve to boost a company's image for dependability and integrity (Castillo et al, 2018).

The public's impression of a supply chain's ethical behavior is also very important because it has been shown that positive reputations are also associated with successful financial outcomes (Mbu & Nso, 2021). This demonstrates

how crucial ethical responsibility is to the perception of the supply chain function, which in turn has an indirect impact on supply chain performance. The moral behavior that establishes a good reputation can also increase customer loyalty and retention while serving as an effective tool for employee motivation (Akkucuk, 2019). Consequently, a positive reputation is a substantial intangible advantage of ethical supply chain management.

Finally, an organization can improve its working relationships along supply chains by operating more ethically. Strong relationships between a company and its distributors and suppliers are known to be crucial for creating a sustained competitive advantage. As a result, supply chain ethical behavior also has this advantage (Hohmann, 2022). Organizations can therefore avoid needless risks to their performance or reputation by operating more responsibly and ethically.

SUSTAINABILITY DIMENSIONS OF SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

The necessity to incorporate sustainability thinking into business operations and benefits is now being recognized by the global business community to a greater extent. Organizations are becoming more and more dependent on legitimacy from the general public to demonstrate accountability and societal involvement (UN Global Compact, 2013). Direct benefits for organizations actively seeking sustainability, innovation, and market potential have also been mentioned by several authors (Broman & Robert, 2017). The complexity of supplier networks and increasing internationalization have also boosted organizational interest in promoting sustainable performance in supply chain management.

Concept of Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM)

In order to meet the goals of the three dimensions of sustainability (economic, social, and environmental), which are derived from customer and stakeholder requirements, a sustainable supply chain is defined as the management of materials, information, and capital flows as well as cooperation between companies along the supply chain (Seuring & Müller, 2008). Sustainable supply chain management also refers to the voluntary integration of social, environmental, and economic factors with internal business systems to create coordinated supply networks. In order to satisfy stakeholder needs, increase profitability, and boost the company's competitiveness, it also entails designing them to manage materials, information, and capital flows effectively and efficiently. These factors are connected to the acquisition and distribution of goods and services (Ahi & Searcy, 2013).

It takes substantial work to implement SSCM and contribute to truly sustainable business management in general. This shift in perspective has its roots in organizational learning (Lozano, 2014). Learning is essential for any organization's sustainability performance since it underpins all progress (Natrass & Altomare, 2013). Its continuity is deemed essential to attaining sustainable development from a societal standpoint, where organizational learning and change are defined as crucial elements for long-term success on the route toward sustainability (Lozano, 2014). So it makes sense to say that organizational learning is a key component of SSCM implementation success.

It is also important to remember that SSCM is a step in the process of a company's strategic transformation. It must be emphasized that the organizational transformative process improves stakeholders' overall performance, sustainability, and integration. For the implementation of more sustainable supply chain management practices, it is also essential to maintain a holistic perspective on sustainability and pay close attention to procedural support.

Strategic Implementation of Sustainable Supply Chains

As part of a long-term plan for obtaining and maintaining competitive edge, modern organizations must acknowledge the elements and concepts of sustainable development and put them into practice along their supply chains. The interests of various stakeholders and the openness of interactions between supply chain participants also need to be taken into account when the complete supply chain is divided into legal, ethical, social, economic, and environmental dimensions (Bubicz, 2019). Environmental practice and strategy can be used to study the economic and environmental components, and social factors must be taken into account when developing and using social performance indicators. These metrics should be established in accordance with corporate social responsibility principles (Wichaisri & Sopadang, 2018). In addition to considering stakeholder needs and benefits into account, supply chain decisions should also take economic value, environmental protection, and stakeholder protection into consideration.

The new approach to sustainable supply chain management may also be fueled by innovation. This also relates to the context of supply chain integration and cooperation, which are seen as dynamic systems that progress in a continuous process toward more sustainable structures. This involves evolutionary and multidirectional adjustments. Therefore, it is crucial to take into account both drivers and barriers when analyzing the motivations behind the interest in this novel business approach incorporating sustainable supply chains.

It's also crucial to translate potential goals into realistic actions when implementing sustainability in global supply chains. By integrating, aligning, and re-conceiving such action plans, current methods can be eventually replaced

in order to achieve them. Therefore, it is helpful to utilize constant innovation and continuous improvement as a guide when addressing changes in the different attributes and structures of the organizational supply chain. Customers and service providers who increasingly view innovation as a crucial component of the effective implementation of supply chain sustainability are another source of motivation for this action plan. However, approaching this task can be viewed as a disruptive innovation as opposed to a simple incremental improvement of current methods, necessitating that organizations exhibit a strong desire for change and the capacity to handle issues and challenges that the triple bottom line concept may raise.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Increasing ecological and social performance among the relevant major players in the supply chain remains a challenge for many businesses and organizations, despite growing business interest in sustainability in general and in sustainable supply chain management (SSCM). To better understand sustainability in supply chain management and forthcoming changes in supply chain dynamics, there is a need for ongoing longitudinal interactions between all of the main participants in the supply chain and other stakeholders. Understanding and resolving the dynamic and complex nature of integrating legal, ethical, and social sustainability in supply chain management also requires further research into complex interactions, particularly those involving other stakeholders outside the supply chain. Therefore, in order to overcome the challenges of adopting a sustainable supply chain, businesses need to continuously innovate and improve, especially when faced with the changing dynamics of supply chain management. Additionally, strategies for overcoming supply chain and sustainability challenges as well as for facilitating collaborative organizational learning engagements with researchers and stakeholders are also required. Finally, further research is also needed in terms of finding new solutions for sustainability problems and in testing and building new theories in sustainable supply chain management that draws from rich empirical settings and its relevance to supply chain management practitioners.

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