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**Embedding Sustainability into Supply Chain Management: A  
New Zealand Perspective**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of

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# **Embedding Sustainability into Supply Chain Management: A New Zealand Perspective**

## **Abstract**

Sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) refers to the integration of social, environmental and economic practices into supply chain management (SCM). Despite its increasing prominence both in academia and practice, there is a paucity of empirical research on SSCM. In particular, SSCM has not been adequately explored in New Zealand. To address this knowledge gap, this study empirically investigates why and how companies are integrating sustainability practices in their SCM. The study is positioned within an interpretive paradigm using a qualitative case study design, primarily drawing on the interview data from 23 New Zealand-based companies.

This thesis comprises three empirical chapters. The first chapter examines the factors that motivate and inhibit companies to adopt SSCM strategy. The findings indicate that financial and operational efficiency, reputation/risk management, customer pressure and top management support are prime motivators for companies to embrace SSCM strategy. Conversely, economic difficulties, strategic/structural constraints, suppliers' related issues, and inadequate customer demand are key obstacles encountered by companies in the successful implementation of SSCM strategy.

The second chapter explores how companies govern their SCM activities with the aim of improving SSCM performance. The findings suggest that a company's choice of an appropriate mechanism is determined by context-dependent factors such as perceived level of risk with suppliers, regulatory regimes and cultural differences. Based on the empirical findings, this chapter proposes a sustainable supply chain governance (SSCG)

model that classifies companies' SSCM progression into five stages based on two dimensions – corporate pro-sustainability orientation and SSCM maturity.

The third chapter investigates how companies manage their green supply chain management (GSCM) issues. The findings indicate that the current focus of companies is on developing internal environmental performance that relates to their mid-stream SCM practices. At the external (upstream and downstream) SCM level, the implementation of environmental practices is relatively limited, and few companies are actively collaborating with supply chain partners in terms of developing their SSCM performance.

Overall, the empirical findings of this study reveal that SSCM is relatively new but is evolving rapidly in New Zealand. This study contributes to theory by offering new insights regarding the integration of sustainability into SCM, suggesting that diligent and prudent management of SSCM can possibly lead to achieving competitive advantage<sup>1</sup>. In addition, this thesis explicates an integrative SSCM framework that provides new insights linking sustainability and SCM disciplines. Hence, this study has several implications for practitioners to adopt SSCM practices. First, businesses will learn (and benefit from) how to integrate different aspects of SSCM strategy into their overall business model, enabling them to reduce their business risk. Second, this study enables managerial understanding as to how their businesses can progress through the different stages of SSCM integration. The main limitation of this study is that the findings cannot be generalized to any specific industry or larger population. Future research should therefore focus on an industry-specific exploration of SSCM strategies, and also test the study's findings in a large-scale survey.

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**Aymen Sajjad, 18 September 2015**

## Related Publications

### Journal Articles and Book Chapters

- 1- Eweje, G & Sajjad, A (2015). Corporate greening – A conceptual analysis. *Annual Book 2015 Sustainability and Strategy*. Japan Forum of Business and Society, 95–117.
- 2- Sajjad, A; Eweje, G & Tappin, D (2015). Sustainable supply chain management: Motivators and barriers. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 27(4), 643–655.
- 3- Sajjad, A & Eweje, G (2014). Corporate social responsibility in Pakistan: Current trends and future directions. In G. Eweje (Ed.), *Corporate social responsibility: Emerging trends in developing economies* (pp. 163–190). Emerald Publishing Group.
- 4- Sajjad, A & Eweje, G (2013). Sustainable supply chain management: A conceptual framework. *Meiji Business Review*, 60(4), 53–74.

### Conference Presentations and Proceedings

- 1- Sajjad, A (2015, August). *Embedding sustainability into supply chain management: A New Zealand perspective*. Paper presented at the Massey Business School PhD Symposium, Palmerston North, New Zealand.
- 2- Sajjad, A & Eweje, G (2014, December). *Motivators and barriers for sustainable supply chain management: A New Zealand Perspective*. Paper presented at the 28<sup>th</sup> Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management (ANZAM), Sydney, Australia: University of Technology, Sydney.

- 3- Sajjad, A (2014, November). *Sustainable and green supply chain practices: A case of New Zealand business sector*. Paper presented at the Massey Business School PhD Symposium, Auckland, New Zealand.
- 4- Sajjad, A & Eweje, G (2014, August). *Motivators and barriers to sustainable supply chain management: Empirical evidence from New Zealand*. Paper presented at the First Annual Conference of the Global Corporate Governance Institute (GCGI), London, UK: University of Surrey.
- 5- Sajjad, A (2013, November). *Trends in sustainable supply chain management: A New Zealand perspective*. Paper presented at the Sustainability Conference 2013, Auckland, New Zealand: Massey University.
- 6- Sajjad, A (2013, November). *Embedding sustainability into supply chain management: A New Zealand perspective*. Paper presented at the PhD colloquium, sustainability conference 2013, Auckland, New Zealand: Massey University.
- 7- Sajjad, A (2011, December). *Sustainable supply chain management: A qualitative inquiry of socially responsible New Zealand businesses*. Paper presented at the ANZAM Doctoral Workshop, Wellington, New Zealand.
- 8- Sajjad, A (2011, October). *Integrating sustainability into supply chain management: A New Zealand perspective*. Paper presented at the 15th Annual Waikato Management School Student Research Conference, Hamilton, New Zealand.

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