

Foreword

In today's global business environment, organizations are increasingly demanded to not only pursue economic prosperity, but to act socially and environmentally responsible through their own business operations and even beyond their organizational boundaries. As a result, research on sustainability in a supply chain context spurred over the last years. In addition, practitioners in the business community still struggle with identifying appropriate concepts for handling the increasing demand for sustainable business operations, for instance in the case a company or its suppliers fail to fulfill the externally induced demands for responsible behavior. Moreover, focal firms that own or govern a supply chain become increasingly dependent on their suppliers and sub-suppliers, since a growing share of a firm's total expenditure accounts for purchased products and materials, and as simultaneously supply chains developed from simple, hierarchical structures to complex, interwoven, international networks. This dependency is particularly critical in the context of sustainability, because social or environmental misconduct, even at the supplier or sub-supplier level, can have a significant (negative) impact on the focal firm's reputation and sales figures, even though it is not responsible for the underlying issue. For this reason, the question on how the upstream supply chain consisting of suppliers and sub-suppliers can be effectively managed towards sustainability and how on the other hand the suppliers in this chain strategically behave with respect to sustainability is of high relevance for academics as well as for practitioners.

The Chair of Supply Chain Management at the Friedrich-Alexander-University of Erlangen-Nürnberg focuses on performing excellent research in the area of supply chain management, which includes the relevant and interesting field of sustainable supply chain management. This dissertation addresses this area of research and the above stated research question regarding the effects of sustainability on supplier-buyer relationships with three theory-based and empirical papers.

The three papers, which form the overall structure of this dissertation, aim at contributing to extant sustainability literature across the research disciplines of supply chain management, management and marketing by cross-functionally investigating the effects of sustainability on supplier-buyer relationships from both a supplier- and a buyer perspective. The first article illuminates the focal

firm perspective and focuses on the question how buyers manage suppliers towards sustainability in interdependent supply chain situations. The second article analyzes supplier-buyer relationships from a supplier perspective and empirically investigates the interdependence of a supplier's sustainability-related marketing and purchasing practices. Finally, the third article digs deeper into the functional integration of purchasing and marketing in the context of a sustainable supply chain, and additionally explores the main external drivers for this cross-functional integration.

In combination, the papers' different perspectives on sustainability in buyer-supplier relationships provide a holistic view on the underlying research questions, and result in interesting and relevant insights for both management practice and the research community.

With respect to the future of supply chain management research, the importance of sustainable supply chain management is likely to even further increase, which underlines the relevance of this dissertation. The Chair of Supply Chain Management will continue its research in the field of sustainable supply chain management, in order to deliver further high quality research on this topic.

I would like to congratulate Thomas Leppelt on this exceptionally well-executed research and I wish him all the best for his personal future.

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Evi Hartmann

Sustainability in Supply Chains

A Study on the Effects of Sustainability on
Supplier-Buyer Relationships

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