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Katrina Savitskie

Savannah State University, savitskiek@savannahstate.edu

Sandipan Sen

Southeast Missouri State University, ssen@semo.edu

Sampath Ranganathan

University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, ranganas@uwgb.edu

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Information's Role in Supply Chain Integration Efforts of the Indian Manufacturing Firm Under Environmental Uncertainty: The Supply Chain Flexibility Impact

Katrina Savitskie, Ph.D.
Savannah State University

Sandipan Sen, Ph.D.,
Southeast Missouri State University

Sampath Ranganathan, Ph.D.,
University of Wisconsin-Green Bay

ABSTRACT

Managers recognize that supply chain management (SCM) practices can improve operational efficiency (Monczka and Morgan, 1998). Supply chain management initiatives, including better communication often result in more responsive organizations. Indian companies are trying to become more competitive following the liberalization of the Indian economy by employing new approaches like SCM to be more efficient and competitive (Saad and Patel, 2006). Therefore, our study examines the impact of environmental uncertainty on the firm's information sharing abilities and the information quality available and its subsequent impact on supply chain integration, and ultimately, supply chain flexibility in India.

Given that the Indian small scale manufacturing sector plays a vital role in the continued economic development of the country, we elected to restrict our study to this sector. We contracted with a market research firm (*GfK Mode*) in Kolkata, India to collect our data and had 100 manufacturing executives participate in the study. Using SmartPLS, we evaluated the data and our SEM model to better understand the issues facing manufacturers operating in the complex and growing small scale manufacturing sector.

The results provide useful insights since they indicate that environmental uncertainty is an important influencer of information sharing but not information quality. Furthermore, the findings suggest that the quality of exchanged information among supply chain partners has a strong positive impact on supply chain integration. The results reinforce the fact that under environmental uncertainty, companies turn to their supply chain partners (through improved supply chain integration) to enhance the flexibility of their supply chains (Swamidass and Newell, 1987; Vickery *et al.*, 1999; Sanchez and Perez, 2005).

In conclusion, this research contributes to an improved understanding of SCM related factors that impact small scale manufacturing in India. Thus, in order to be flexible, it is important for the firm to have internal collaboration with different functional departments as well as external

collaboration with its key suppliers, especially in a time of market uncertainties (Vickery et al., 1999). Additional research is still needed and we hope our study serves as a launching pad for more SCM research in emerging markets like India.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Katrina Savitskie (Ph.D. Michigan State University), Associate Professor of Marketing and Logistics, Savannah State University, Savannah, GA savitskiek@savannahstate.edu

Sandipan Sen (Ph.D. University of Memphis), Associate Professor of Marketing, Southeast Missouri State University, Cape Girardeau, MO ssen@semo.edu

Sampath Ranganathan (Ph.D. University of Memphis), Associate Professor of Marketing, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, Green Bay, WI ranganas@uwgb.edu

