Abstract

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The Supply Chain Perspective on Slow Steaming

Purpose: Slow steaming in container liner shipping has emerged since 2008 as a mean to reduce the operating costs and the CO2 emissions of shipping companies. However, despite the financial and environmental benefits that slow steaming brings to the shipping market, supply chains have been impacted by such practice as lead time was lengthened, inventory increased, and production planning became more challenging. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the impact of slow steaming on the supply chain performance metrics to determine whether its advantages are extended to benefit the supply chain not. Design/methodology/approach: This study is exploratory using semi-structured interviews on a sample of 30 companies from different business sectors. Purposive sampling is applied as the companies chosen would be involved in imports/exports activities to/from Asia in which slow steam shipping is most likely to occur. The purpose of the semi-structured interviews would be to identify the impact of slow steaming on the supply chain performance metrics of the chosen companies and examine the extent to which the advantages of slow steaming are extended to their supply chains not. Originality/value: The majority of research addressing the slow steaming topic focused on studying its impact on the shipping lines whether on their financial environmental performance. A significant gap was noted in studies addressing the slow steaming from the perspectives of shippers the supply chain as a whole. Thus this research would attempt to close this gap through this empirical study on the impact of slow steaming on supply chain performance. Research limitations/implications: Since this study is empirical and it focuses on companies in Egypt, its findings cannot be generalized, however it paves the way for other similar studies to be carried in different countries/regions as it sheds light on the importance of addressing the entire supply chain in evaluating the implementation of new operational techniques. Practical implications: This investigation would assist companies in determining the processes that are impacted by slow steaming and propose measures to maintain the required performance measure.