

Papers from the 22nd International Symposium on Logistics (ISL)

The 22nd ISL was hosted in Ljubljana, Slovenia from 9 to 12 July 2017. The conference represents one of the premier events in the logistics and supply chain management calendar, each year alternating the venue between Europe and the rest of the world. In 2017, the conference attracted 95 delegates, with 88 papers scheduled for presentation. There is a continuing strong world-wide presence with submissions from over 32 different countries. Hence, the conference is regarded as one of the main international platforms for presenting and discussing research, practice and new ideas in supply chain, logistics and operations management with a highly collegial and supportive environment.

The conference theme, “data driven supply chains”, highlighted the potential exploitation of information systems to extract as much information as possible from our supply chains to sense how well our logistics operations are performing and to respond and recover from ever more turbulent events. For example, over the last decade we have witnessed the financial crisis that has affected the whole world, growing evidence of human impact on the climate and political discourse, resulting in outright warfare, insurgencies and/or protectionism by nation states. Private organisations and policy makers are striving to ensure the sustainability of their operations to maximise economic impact and societal benefits while concurrently reducing negative implications for the environment. These include advocacy of closed-loop supply chains, exploitation of new technologies to manage operations, right-shoring decisions, informing a nation’s logistics policy and collaborative models to enhance sustainability. The papers from the 22nd ISL comprise of extended versions of those submitted to the conference and have been judged as providing the latest insights into logistics research covering these themes.

A rigorous peer-review process was followed. Of the 88 papers scheduled for the conference, 27 were shortlisted by a sub-panel of the ISL International Advisory Committee, based on a combination of their reading of the conference papers, attending presentations and assessment of feedback from session chairs. An initial desk review was then undertaken by the guest editors after which 17 were invited to submit papers. Following the peer-review process prescribed by the *International Journal of Logistics Management*, and in line with its editorial policy, we have the final five papers accepted.

In the first paper, Kalverkamp (2018) notes that in research on closed-loop supply chains, a key contributor to circular economy practices, there is more emphasis on the reverse flow of goods than with industrial symbiosis. The paper goes on to explore the opportunity for the development of e-procurement and supplier relationship management solutions to aid brokers, or scrap dealers, in the European automotive sector in supplying returned cores to the remanufacturing sector. Given the huge variance in product returns that brokers encounter, the ability to identify and match returns to user demand is a daunting challenge. The problem is expounded by the growing number of independent brokers in the European market. Hence, by comparing European and North American practises, Kalverkamp’s proposed solution, combining technological and relational aspects in the open-loop element of the closed-loop supply chain, shows potential for enhancing data accessibility, for example through vehicle identification numbers, to ensure valid used parts harvesting. The opportunities are there as brokers and remanufacturers could collaborate further, both vertically and horizontally, with minimal need for regulatory intervention.



If information technology (IT) is an enabler for data-driven supply chains, enabling data to be transmitted at the right time, to the right place, of the right quality, then organisations need to determine the extent to which the management of the IT is a core capability or is better undertaken by others, i.e. a make or buy decision is required. In the second paper, exploiting the perspective of the IT providers rather than those acquiring the service, Martins *et al.* (2018) investigate relational forms for IT outsourcing, determining the extent to which strategic relationships require considerable effort on the part of the providers as opposed to relying on purely transactional processes.

The matter of reshoring is a substantive concern by many organisations, with the realisation that off-shoring, or far-shoring, has not yielded sustainable benefits not merely in terms of “cost” but in particular for the resilience of the supply chain and the delivery of quality products. Hence, in the third paper, Pal *et al.* (2018) address this issue through an empirical Delphi study of Swedish textile and clothing manufacturers, which are synonymous with labour intensive operations, with respect to identifying the key enablers and inhibitors that would impact the likelihood of reshoring their supply chains. Such decisions under uncertainty require “factual” data that are often hard to come by. Pal finds that a major challenge for manufacturers to reshoring is the high local costs associated with their operation, while key success factors are enhanced lead-time, sourcing and capacity flexibility capabilities.

The fourth paper, by Havenga and Simpson (2018), takes a macro perspective of logistics to exploit input–output economic modelling to help inform policy makers as to where investments need to be targeted to enhance national competitiveness and social benefit with due consideration of externalities. The approach advocated is very much data driven, with the need to collect data on all the different freight flows from the various modes of transport. With cases from South Africa, the modelling indicates the opportunities for total cost reduction in modal shift from road to rail transport. To achieve such requires policy makers to create a regulatory framework that promotes public–private partnership.

In our last paper, we find Zissis *et al.* (2018) proposing a logistics model for an urban environment, exploiting collaborative approaches, to reduce the total economic, environmental and societal costs associated with the delivery of groceries. The authors show that, for a particular case, where two online retailers work closely together on their distribution network, then there is potential to see a reduction of around 10 per cent in miles travelled and 16 per cent in time to delivery.

We hope that these papers indicate the considerable breadth and depth of the current state-of-the-art that emerged from the ISL 2017 conference, and that they will have an impact on the *IJLM* readership. We would like to acknowledge the hard work and efforts of the all the presenters, authors, chairs, organisers and committee members of ISL 2017, which made it such a vibrant event. Thanks also to the *IJLM* EiC, for her guidance, and the *IJLM* publishing team for their support. Our particular thanks go to all the anonymous reviewers who gave up much of their time to enhance the quality of the SI and the papers therein. In particular, both authors and reviewers were extremely diligent and professional in their approach with excellent adherence to the tight schedule.

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