

Emerging research themes in global value chains

Global supply chains are continually evolving and transforming the way emerging world economies do business with their developed counterparts. Developing nations are joining forces with developed nations through these rapidly transforming global value chains (GVCs) without investing in building their own; thus saving time, money and gaining access to technological innovations. Today, developing countries are exerting greater influence globally, economically and politically, given the power of GVCs. Through international organizations, such as the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, the International Labor Organization, and the US Agency for International Development, GVCs lead the way for shaping international trade, governance, production, employment, growth, development and competitiveness. Global economy is entering a “major inflection point,” whereby GVCs are becoming increasingly predominant in both emerging and industrialized countries, and emerging economies have become a major engine of growth for global businesses and international trade (Stephenson, 2016).

In this special issue of the *IJOEM*, we present papers focused on supply chains as value chains in emerging (vs developed) economies, international trade, and interrelationships amongst logistics, supply chain management and global trade. These papers offer conceptual and empirical insights into the nature and processes of value chains, GVC approaches and frameworks in different world economies, channel development and management, geographical collaborations, and global supply chains. There are some research themes that emerged out of these papers that we have highlighted below.

Research Theme 1: the emergence of inventive process, institutional theory and transformative models

Agmon (2020) focuses on the inventive process as metamorphic innovative ideas in technology in today’s business world. In his research, he explains how multinational enterprises (MNEs) can use inventive process for their growth in both developed and emerging markets. He dives into the inventive process and shows interrelationships between innovative technology and innovative management. In similar vein, Rottig *et al.* (2020) have applied institutional theory and legitimacy to explore how MNEs need to understand and adapt to, for successfully operating in emerging markets (Rottig *et al.*, 2020). Due to technology supported GVCs that are created by individuals and small teams/organizations, there are new innovative international business models created worldwide which have proven to be more powerful than the existing MNEs. GVCs are built on collaborative supply chain activities and endeavors with institutional pressures and efficiencies in order to build socially, economically and environmentally sustainable organizations (Tate *et al.*, 2010; Mudambi, 2007; Clarke and Boersma, 2017). Yeoman and Mueller Santos (2020) support a collaborative approach to supply chain structure which centers on supply chain fairness. This transformative model is resultant in both positive organizational and system level outcomes. Here, a new supply chain structure, achieved through the adoption of plural fairness principles and practices, transforms the interactions of key supply chain stakeholders including the firm, mediating institutions and governments. These papers denote the complexity of GVCs and the need for emerging economies to look to new and innovative models and systems to manage their growing presence in the global arena.



Research Theme 2: overcoming barriers and new GVC configurations

Emergent GVCs are faced with a plethora of economic, sociological and geographical challenges which have the power to negatively affect the growth of organizations in many emerging countries. Best practices of how to navigate the complexity of GVC systems when new worlds of trade arise are noted in the following three papers. Vickova and Thakur-Weigold (2020) examine and compare the economic outcomes and positions of both a highly developed and emerging GVC within the medical technology (MedTech) industry. Their findings highlight organizational barriers (i.e. the apparent focus on low value activities) and weak links between education institutions and industry for the emerging market GVC as key barriers to growth.

Further, organizational and industry factors were empirically examined in Olaitan *et al.*'s (2020) study of barriers to horticulture product export. Here, the authors analyzed five key stakeholder groups upstream in the supply chain and identified that: the existing institutional framework, infrastructure and logistics issues, market penetration issues, stakeholders' incompetence, food safety and quality issues, high transaction costs, operational challenges of exporting, neglect of agriculture and the existing airline market structure are prominent barriers that require resolution, if horticultural product exports are to increase. These research papers identify key supply chain factors that need to be traversed in emerging markets; however, considerations also need to include how GVCs are configured to enhance the likelihood of barrier mitigation. Petersen *et al.* (2020) explore GVC configuration from a geographic lens and denote a shift away from GVCs orchestrated by MNEs from more developed economics which have been defined by operational efficiency logics to a new "breed" of GVCs. These new configurations successfully combine operational efficiency with societal goals. These societal goals are politically defined and afford a considerable influence over the GVC configuration. The close co-operation between businesses and government in emerging markets has been previously identified (Behrman, 1970; Stopford and Henley, 1991); however, the findings from this paper highlight a more prominent role of government in the geographical configuration of GVCs.

Research Theme 3: cross-cultural collaborative strategies supporting GVCs

Alvarado-Vargas and Kelley (2020) utilize bullwhip effect to investigate uncertainty levels in the marketplace that creates global and regional supply chains disruptions. The authors suggest implications to mitigate disruptions enabling supply chain sustainability. Uncertainties and associated risks are higher in global supply chains due to intense bullwhip conditions. Pratono's (2020) study focuses on cross-cultural collaboration between developed and emerging economies through creative innovation and technology transfer utilizing typologies of GVC collaboration in a global rattan industry. This cross-cultural GVC transformation involves selectivity, enlisting intermediaries, joint strategy, relational capital, multilateral feedback and distribution.

In navigating the complexity of supply chain partnerships, de Waal and de Haas (2020) apply and empirically examine the application of strategies adopted in developed markets to enhance GVC success. In light of the difficulties faced by organizations in creating successful supply chain partnerships (Gomes *et al.*, 2016; Sabath and Fontanella, 2002), the authors seek to examine the application of an internally driven collaborative culture to value chain outcomes. The HPP framework is focused on the establishment of long-term relationships between value chain intermediaries, and when applied to an emerging market setting, has been shown to derive improved performance outcomes, including enhanced profitability for each partner firm in the value chain.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this *IJOEM* special issue highlights research papers in three research themes (identified above) that contribute to an improved understanding of GVCs and GVC-related factors that pivots on inventive process, transformative models, institutional theory, GVC configurations

and cross-cultural collaborative strategies. A transformative GVC approach will help firms, stakeholders, institutions and government policy makers. Future GVC research will benefit from the three research themes identified in this issue, which are based on co-operation and collaboration amongst all stakeholders, including firms, suppliers, intermediaries, consumers, business partners, governments, trade unions, cooperatives and non-profit organizations.

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