
Editorial

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According to the *Global Competitiveness Report 2005–2006*, released on the 27th September 2005 by the World Economic Forum, Finland remains the most competitive economy in the world and tops the rankings for the third consecutive year. The USA is in second position, followed by Sweden and Denmark. In fact, all of the so-called Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, are among the top ten in the 2005 competitiveness rankings. In terms of logistics and supply chain management, the Nordic countries have also been in the forefront regarding both the usage of latest technologies, as well as the implementation of best practice principles. Research relating to the Nordic context has also been conducted and published; however, little of that has been published internationally. Therefore, this special issue of the *International Journal of Integrated Supply Management* aims to furnish academics, researchers, practitioners and policy makers with cutting-edge information on the latest supply chain issues in the Nordic countries.

The idea for this special issue originated from the very fruitful research collaboration with two visiting researchers at the Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration, Prof. Joel D. Wisner from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and Dr. David B. Grant from the Heriot-Watt University Edinburgh, whom we would like to thank for their valuable contributions to this special issue. We would also like to thank all the authors who submitted their work to this special issue, and especially extend our

gratitude to a brilliant guest editorial board and all reviewers. The guest editorial board consisted of:

Mette Aagaard Andreassen
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The articles that have been accepted to this special issue after a double-blind review process show the variety of research carried out in a Nordic context. This variety exists in several dimensions, in terms of the topics addressed, the applied methodology, and the countries in which the research has been carried out. Nevertheless, some common areas of interest can be distinguished. *Supply chain integration* continues to be a topic that receives interest from researchers both in the Nordic countries and internationally. The two papers of Arlbjørn, Wong and Seerup, and Bagchi, Ha, Skjøtt-Larsen and Sørensen focus on this topic, though taking a different methodological angle. Arlbjørn *et al.* conduct a case study while Bagchi *et al.*'s article is based on an extended survey in all Nordic countries. *Transportation* also continues to be a major topic addressed by logistics researchers on a macro and micro level. The article by Naula and Ojala focuses on the transportation sector and the logistical challenges after the enlargement of the EU, whereas Andersson, Pruth and Rehme focus on the specialties of third party logistics relationships (TPL) in a Nordic context. While the latter article provides the special issue with insights from recent qualitative research, the article by Björk, Hejazi and Carlsson goes back to the roots of supply chain management in modelling the bullwhip effect in a case study.

Arlbjørn, Wong and Seerup, in their article on 'Achieving competitiveness through supply chain integration', present a case study from the Danish industry, where an

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system is implemented to increase supply chain integration. The paper demonstrates how improved competitiveness can be obtained through a synchronous implementation of a new ERP system together with Business Process Reengineering (BPR) activities. The paper provides support for improving supply chain performance by creating transparency of vital supply chain information through ERP implementation and BRP.

Bagchi, Ha, Skjøtt-Larsen and Sørensen examine supply chain integration in a wider context. Their article 'Nature and extent of supply chain integration in Nordic firms' investigates supply chain integration in a survey of manufacturing companies in the Nordic countries. They specifically study in what areas firms are involving their key suppliers and customers in decision-making and what are the underlying factors that define supply chain integration. The focus of the article is on the effect of supply chain integration on perceived performance improvements. The main findings confirm that supply chain integration in the Nordic countries is more a rhetoric than reality in most firms.

Naula and Ojala write about 'The logistical impact of EU enlargement – the case of the Baltic States'. The paper deals with the logistical impacts that EU enlargement has brought about, using the development in the Baltic States and the Nordic context as an example. According to their findings, new EU member states need to implement a way to monitor their logistics environment and firms' logistics efficiency on a regular basis.

On a more micro-economic level, Andersson, Pruth and Rehme discuss how to 'Coordinate to enhance third party logistics relationships'. They argue for the need of a coordination function in Third Party Logistics (TPL) that is enabled by Key Account Management (KAM). In this, they take a buyer's perspective on KAM in a service context. The article proposes that KAM has a material impact on TPL relationships and that this function can be developed further, primarily as having a coordination role. Andersson *et al.*'s article develops a coordination model, which explains how different types of coordination can integrate functions and contents to build successful TPL relationships.

Björk, Hejazi and Carlsson focus on 'The Bullwhip effect – complexity in theory and in a real life application'. This paper highlights the gap between some theory contributions and the situation found in a real supply chain. The data was obtained from a Finnish industrial context. They conclude that eliminating the bullwhip effect might also have negative repercussions from a holistic perspective, and thus the bullwhip effect needs to be balanced against other costs such as manufacturing costs and transportation economies.

This special issue of the *International Journal of Integrated Supply Management on Supply Chain Issues from a Nordic Context* has been able to bring together theoretical insights as well as empirical observations from all the Nordic countries. By doing so, the special issue serves as a platform to distribute the knowledge of academics and researchers in the fields of logistics and supply chain management who come from the countries most renowned for their competitiveness. We hope that you will enjoy reading the articles, and that the logistics community is provided with the latest insights from research in such a productive geographical context.