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## Editorial: Research in shipping and transport logistics

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Three years ago, the *International Journal of Shipping and Transport Logistics (IJSTL)* was just a working plan envisioned by the editors and editorial board members. With the mission of “publishing original, high-quality and methodologically rigorous research papers that address significant management issues pertinent to shipping and transport logistics”, the *IJSTL* is now established as a highly-referenced and well-regarded scholarly journal servicing shipping and transport logistics research. Reflecting this achievement, the *IJSTL* has recently been accepted for listing in the social sciences citation index and will appear with an impact factor in the *Journal Citation Reports (JCR)*. All the papers published in the *IJSTL* are included in the *ISI Web of Knowledge* by Thomson Reuters. The published papers include articles that are conceptual, theoretical, and empirical on topics pertaining to various topical subjects in the field of shipping and transport logistics.

Between 2009 and 2010, the *IJSTL* has published two volumes comprising five regular issues and three special issues. To provide a forum for scholars to address specific research topics at greater depth, the *IJSTL* from time to time collaborates with the international academic community in shipping and transport logistics to publish special issues. The past special issues include:

- ‘Comparative benchmarking analysis of seaports at international level’, which was published in 2009 (Barros et al., 2009). In this special issue, six papers dealing with benchmarking analysis of seaports were selected based on their quality and novelty.
- ‘Managing container operations effectively’, which was published in 2010 (Song and Roe, 2010). One article in this special issue entitled “Managing empty container flows through short sea shipping and regional port systems” (Le-Griffin and Griffin, 2010) has been listed as one of the hot topics in marine highway by the Maritime Administration of the US Department of Transportation.
- ‘Air-cargo logistics and airport economics’, which was published in 2010 (Leung et al., 2010). The papers published were selected based on their quality and fit to the theme of this special issue.

We take this opportunity to introduce four highly cited *IJSTL* papers according to the *JCR* from the *ISI Web of Knowledge*. The first paper is by Lun and Quaddus (2009), who provide insights into the four major shipping markets and explain how these markets

affect one another based on empirical evidence on the relationships among the key variables of bulk shipping. The second paper by Lun and Browne (2009) is about the fleet mix decision. In container shipping, carrying capacity is one of the important resources conducive to better firm performance. Shipping is one of the most capital intensive industries as carriers need to acquire ships such that shipping services can be offered to their customers. This paper provides insights into the issues of scale operations and service scope in the container shipping industry. The authors also introduce the 'SCOPE' framework for shipping managers to determine their fleet mix in providing liner shipping services. The third paper by Wong et al. (2009) discusses the relationship between information systems management (ISM) and supply chain management (SCM). Although prior research has generated considerable knowledge on the importance of ISM and SCM for improving business performance, their findings are at best inconsistent and at worst contradictory. This paper advances knowledge on the alignment between ISM and SCM practices and highlights the importance of recognising the complementarities of ISM and SCM in their implementation efforts. The fourth paper by Roe (2009) is concerned with maritime governance. This study provides insights into maritime policy making failures in the European Union. The author suggests that lack of governance in the maritime sector may hold the key to the failures that have been identified, and discusses how governance may need to adapt to satisfy the demands of a new postmodernist environment.

Shipping has evolved from its original relationships with ships and seaborne trade to transporting cargoes between two geographical points (Lun et al., 2010). Shipping is a 'global industry' and is closely related with international trade. Trade and shipping is one of the most important industries in the world to sustain economic growth (Lun et al., 2009). Accordingly, the continuous growth of shipping-related activities is critical to global economic development. Shipping management involves a network of stakeholders, consisting of ship owners, terminal operators, carriers, and traders. Nowadays, the accelerating economic globalisation has stimulated remarkable breakthroughs in shipping-related activities. Firms, particularly those servicing the shipping sector, need to meet the challenges of continually expanding market share while maintaining cost and service advantages. The key focuses of the *IJSTL* include, but are not limited to, shipping operations, intermodal transport operations, container transport management, terminal management, green shipping management practices, technological adoption for shipping management, and regional planning and policy to promote trade and shipping.

In view of existing and emerging trends in shipping and international trade, the *IJSTL* provides a forum for professionals, academics, researchers, and policy makers working in the field of shipping-related areas to disseminate information and to learn from one another's work. As a scholarly journal emphasising shipping studies and research, the *IJSTL* will continue its mission by establishing communication links among global shipping researchers. Through the *IJSTL*, we seek to facilitate collaboration between academic researchers and practitioners to generate and disseminate information on possible solutions to the industry's problems, develop new business models and technological innovations, and promote their adoption in the shipping industry. The *IJSTL* also encourages works that address both theoretical and practical issues associated with managing shipping activities in today's dynamic and complex business world.

While the papers published in volumes 1 and 2 of the *IJSTL* have addressed some key issues in shipping and transport logistics, there are many other interesting topics worthy of studying in future research. To stimulate shipping research from both strategic and

operations perspectives, we pose the following research questions for interested researchers to explore:

- 1 What is a shipping and transport logistics chain? What are the roles of strategic alliances and relationship management in shipping and transport logistics? What factors affect a firm to develop strategic alliances in the shipping-related industries? How does operations strategy influence the choice of partners in shipping and transport logistics related firms? How do firms integrate with their partners effectively?
- 2 How should a firm enhance its organisational capability in the shipping industry? How to manage empty containers cost-effectively? How to enhance transport security to meet customers' need? What is the role of intermodal transport in improving the performance of a shipping and transport logistics chain? How to enhance intermodal transport capability? What tools are useful for evaluating the effectiveness of adopting the hub and spoke operation?
- 3 What are the impacts of scale operations on shipping and transport logistics? How to determine an optimal scale in shipping operations? What are the effective ways to evaluate efficiency in shipping operations? What are the roles of routing and scheduling in a transport chain? What are the relationships between enhancing shipping and transport logistics operations and improving firm performance?
- 4 What is the role of risk analysis in shipping management? What are the different types of risk in shipping operations? What are the major security issues in shipping and transport logistics under globalisation?
- 5 How does globalisation affect international shipping? How does trade volume affect fleet capacity and the development of operations strategy? What forecasting methods can be used to accurately predict market trends in international shipping?

Before closing, we would like to express our sincerest thanks to all the contributors, anonymous reviewers and editorial board members for their time, effort, guidance, and support, without which the *IJSTL* would not have been able to come to where it is in such a short span of time.

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