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Competitive Liner Shipping Network Design

Pisinger, David; Brouer, Berit Dangaard; Karsten, Christian Vad

Publication date: 2013

Document Version Peer reviewed version

Link back to DTU Orbit

Citation (APA):

Pisinger, D., Brouer, B. D., & Karsten, C. V. (2013). Competitive Liner Shipping Network Design. Poster session presented at Maritime Researchers Day 2013, Copenhagen, Denmark.

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Background

The backbone of modern global trade is maritime transportation. Especially the liner shipping industry, which today carries around 60 percent of international goods by value.

Liner Shipping carriers have colossal asset and operational costs, and a well designed network is crucial to the profitability of the network. To obtain a profitable network it is crucial to have a highly efficient network in terms of capacity utilization on board the vessels and the lead times of the cargo transported.

Current research on Liner Shipping Network Design does not account for the lead times of cargo in the network, nor does it consider the important capacity issue of repositioning empty containers due to asymmetric world trade or trade legislation such as cabotage rules. Recent progress within the field of liner shipping network design means that we are ready to target a solution to these constraints.

Research question

Funded by:

This project aims to bring liner shipping network design closer to the operations of global carriers by incorporating lead times and other operational constraints such as empty repositioning and cabotage rules.

Research design

An existing mathematical model and prototype of liner shipping network design will be expanded to account for lead times, empty repositioning and other operational constraints. The prototype will be iteratively expanded with one constraint per work package and network scenarios will be designed to test the performance of each constraint. The first work Package in 2013 targets lead times.

At the same time Liner Shipping Network Design has targeted a redesign of the entire network not considering the significant cost of repositioning vessels and disregarding that a

network is organic and iteratively adapts to new market situations.

Expected results

A prototype of a tactical decision support tool to make quantified decisions about incremental network changes. Ideally the project will lead to a basis for decision support tools which can be used both at the strategic, tactical, and operational level in a modern liner shipping company.

Contact

David Pisinger, Professor PhD DTU Management Engineering Produktionstorvet, bld. 424 DK-2800 Kgs. Lyngby + 45 45 25 45 55 dapi@dtu.dk

Berit D. Brouer, PostDoc Christian Vad Karsten, PhD student

Completion date: 31th January 2016



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Layout: Lisbeth Lassen, Communication adviser, DTU Mechanical Engineering

DTU Management Engineering Department of Management Engineering