

Effects of Green Supply Chain Management Practices on Sustainability Performance: A Systematic Literature Review and Directions for Future Research

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Abstract

In the context that the world is increasingly paying attention to sustainable development, green supply chain management becomes the optimal solution to help balance the three effects of sustainability: economic, environmental, and social. This paper provides a research overview of sustainability performance and green supply chain management practices. Thence, the authors propose a research model on the impact of green supply chain management on the sustainability performance of small and medium enterprises in Vietnam.

Keywords: Green Supply Chain Management (GSCM), sustainability performance, Small and Medium Enterprises.

DOI: 10.7176/JESD/13-10-01

Publication date: May 31st 2022

1. Introduction

The process of industrialization and modernization has accelerated in recent decades, resulting in negative environmental consequences such as greenhouse gas emissions, climate change, and resource depletion, among others. These consequences have a significant impact on people's lives, ecosystems, production, and business activities, stifling global economic growth. Since the supply chain revolution of the 1990s, the environmental management mindset of businesses around the world has changed, and sustainability goals have become at the core of the organization's strategic vision. Also from here, the term "sustainable development" was mentioned in 1980 by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources - IUCN with the content: "Human development cannot only focus on economic development, but also to respect the inevitable needs of society and the impact on the ecological environment." has been noticed and increasingly asserted its importance. Sustainable development is inevitable and becomes a noble goal associated with world economic development. The complete system of ethical principles for sustainable development includes the principles of sustainable development in "The Bottom Line Trilogy" of economy, society, and environment. To achieve this sustainability goal, green supply chain management (GSCM) was born and was an extremely useful tool for sustainable development and raising awareness about environmental protection and social responsibility. (Wang and Dai, 2017).

Internationally, many authors have addressed the importance of a green supply chain in achieving sustainable development (Senzen và Cankaya, 2019; Green et al., 2012; Rao and Holt, 2005; Sarkis et al, 2010; Zhu và Sarkis, 2004; Laosirihongthong et al, 2013, Le Thi Tam, 2020,...). For example, the natural resource-based view (NRBV) sees environmental practices as a source of substantial gains for enterprises (Hart, 1995).

In Vietnam in recent years, green supply chain management is gaining strong traction and is widely promoted by the government (Ministry of Industry and Trade). Vietnam is also an emerging country participating in the global supply chain, so the research is quite limited, especially in the case of small and medium enterprises (Tran Thi Thuy Hang, 2021). This requires more resources and scientific research in the field. However, so far, the number of studies on GSCM in Vietnam is still quite limited and not comprehensive enough to be suitable for the Vietnamese environment because the concept of GSCM has a very wide scope. The issue of social responsibility has also only received attention recently. In addition, very few studies discuss how GSCM affects sustained performance. Therefore, it is difficult for enterprises to answer the question of whether applying GSCM practices will help them achieve sustainable performance and if so, which GSCM activities will contribute the most to promote efficiency, corporate sustainability.

From the theory and practice mentioned above, it is necessary to give an overview of the issues related to the green supply chain management relationship and sustainable performance. Especially in the current context of Vietnam when the whole country and businesses in general, and small and medium enterprises in particular are in the process of promoting international economic integration. On that basis, the authors propose further research directions to provide solutions for businesses, especially small and medium enterprises in Vietnam.

2. Research method

With the aim of providing an overview of the influence of GSCM on sustainability performance in this study, the research team used the primary qualitative research method to analyze and compare the database and the data. Research methods and theories from previous relevant scientific studies.

2.1. Search procedure and conclusion criteria

Various approaches have been used by the research team to define and categorize previous scientific studies. First, the author used a manual search method and selects articles related to GSCM, sustainable effectiveness, and the impact relationship of GSCM to sustainable performance. In order to maximize the search efficiency, the author conducts a search based on the main keywords "Green Supply Chain Management", "Sustainability performance", "Economic performance", "Social performance", and "Environmental performance".

Then, the author's team conducted filtering of the content based on two main criteria. First, articles must be published in reputable journals to ensure the quality and reliability of the research. Second, the selected studies had a high degree of relevance and compatibility between factors and the business environment in Vietnam. Thereby, the author had a list of typically related research papers.

In addition, the author also relied on the reference lists of the above research articles to expand the search scope for the most relevant studies.

2.2. Evaluation methods

After the above search and selection process, related research papers have been synthesized and classified into 3 angles: Studies on GSCM in general; Sustainability studies in general; Studies on the influence of green supply chain management on sustainability performance. The studies are arranged by the author in chronological order so that readers can clearly see the development of the relationship between GSCM and sustainable effectiveness. From there, the author will identify the problems, levels, and scope posed in related works, point out research gaps in previous research, and propose some future research directions in the specific context of Vietnam.

3. Literature review

3.1. Research on GSCM

GSCM is an area of great interest in recent times and requires many related sources. The GSCM literature continues to grow as organizations and researchers begin to understand that the management of environmental programs and activities is not limited to organizational boundaries (Zhu et al. 2005)

Only one year later, Diabat and Govindan (2011) built a model to analyze the factors affecting the implementation of GSCM by using the method of structural modeling (Interpretive Structural Modeling - ISM) and MICMAC analysis. The model was developed and validated on case research at an aluminum manufacturing company in south India. The research described 11 factors that influence the practice of GSCM and also showed that GSCM could be a good way to balance environmental, economic, and social benefits.

Shohan et al. (2019) researched and developed a framework to assess the main motivations for GSCM implementation in the chemical industry sector in Bangladesh. The results of 8 dynamics had been completed from relevant documents and data collected through the survey and by consulting experts through the Delphi method. The research team pointed out that the competition between chemical companies and their suppliers could play an important role in GSCM implementation. Along with that, the paper pointed out that the most important barrier was the high cost. Ultimately, the main objective of this research was to help managers evaluate and select the key areas they needed to emphasize for GSCM implementation in the chemical industry.

In the same year, Do Anh Duc et al (2020) studied the influence of GSCM on Vietnam's tourism industry (VTI). The analysis results show that the relationship between internal environmental management (IEM) and GSCM practice in VTI is very significant; internal environmental management (IEM) has had a significant impact on the external environment and also has a significant impact on the destination image in VTI. Simultaneously, the study of Phan Thi Thu Hien et al (2021) assessed the impact of green supply chain management practices on the financial and non-financial performance of tourism businesses in Hanoi. The study mentions 5 aspects of GSCM including Corporate environment policy, Packaging waste, Economic transport, Product recycling, and Green capability.

Most recently, Ta Van Loi et al (2020) analyzed the factors affecting the motivation to implement GSCM in companies with foreign direct investment (FDI) in Vietnam. This study suggested that organizational commitment, social media, and government support were the driving factors for GSCM. The results of the analysis show that organizational commitment and government support have a positive relationship with GSCM motivations and GSCM practice, while social networking only has a positive relationship with GSCM motivations.

3.2. Research on sustainability performance

The term "Sustainable Development" first appeared in 1980 in the publication of the World Conservation Strategy (published by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources - IUCN) with very simple content. The development of mankind cannot only focus on economic development but also respect the indispensable needs of society and the impact on the ecological environment. To do this, a lot of research on sustainability performance has emerged as sources to provide different views and perspectives on sustainability performance. According to Elkington (1998) in "The Triple Bottom Line", the author proposed the need for a reasonable balance between the three factors: environmental, social, and economic to achieve sustainability in the organization.

- *Economic performance*

Economic performance implies in terms of saving costs including costs for materials purchasing, the cost of energy consumption, fee for waste treatment, fees for waste discharge, and decreases in fines for environmental accidents (Zhu et al., 2008; Zailani et al., 2012; Green et al., 2012; Das, 2018). Further, improving profits is utilized by Laari (2016), and Yang et al. (2013). Increasing market share is recommended by Wagner and Schaltegger (2004); De Giovanni & Vinzi (2012).

In 2012, Frank Boons et al (2012) performed overview research on the relationship between sustainable innovation, business model, and economic performance. It shows that sustainable development requires fundamental and systematic innovations and focuses on the use of sustainable innovation to find ways to succeed in improving economic efficiency and sustainable development. Frank Boons et al. have also clarified the relationship between sustainable innovation and economic performance.

Yildirim et al. (2016) have studied the relationship between institutions and economic performance in developing countries. According to research, Yildirim et al. (2016) said that according to institutionalists, there is no distinction between developing countries and developed countries in terms of good or weak institutions and impacts on economic performance. However, institutional regulations are necessary to increase economic performance, thereby creating differences between developing and developed countries, as countries in the same group may differ.

Adam Gendźwiłł et al. (2019) conducted a study on the impact of city territorial reform on the economic performance of local governments. Thereby, they found that related savings in administrative expenditure, while other sectors do not exhibit economies of scale. They then presented strong evidence for common effects in the pre-merger period and discussed gaps in the literature.

- *Environmental performance.*

Environmental performance measures a company's ability to reduce pollution, minimize waste, prevent the use of hazardous substances, and reduce environmental accidents (Senzen and Cankaya, 2019).

In 2015, Muhammad et al (2015) investigated the nature of the relationship between environmental performance and financial performance in periods of growth and contraction in Australian publicly listed companies. The research results found a close, positive relationship between these two factors in the period before the financial crisis (2001-2007) and there was no relationship between environmental performance and financial performance during the financial crisis (2008-2010). Two years later, also researching the issue, Manrique et al. (2017) added that this connection and impact would become stronger for enterprises in developing countries. However, in the same year, Trumpp and Guenther (2017) argued that the relationship is positive or negative depending on the level of the environmental performance of enterprises.

Ong et al (2019) researched to investigate the relationship between environmental performance, environmental innovation, and financial performance of enterprises. A total of 124 responses were collected from managers of ISO 14001 EMS certified manufacturers in Malaysia. The results demonstrated that environmental competitiveness, i.e. environmental innovation, and EP are the main motivations for creating economic values for enterprises.

Recently, Doan Bao Son (2021) surveyed 395 managers of processing and manufacturing enterprises in Ho Chi Minh City to assess the relationship between social responsibility and environmental performance. with the promotion role of green knowledge capital including 3 factors: green human capital, green capital structure, and green relational capital. Using the SEM model, the author discovered a positive relationship between corporate social responsibility, green knowledge capital, and environmental performance. Besides, environmental efficiency is also enhanced by the implementation of CSR activities.

- *Social performance*

Social performance is measured in terms of increasing health care facilities in the local community (Hutchins & Sutherland, 2008; Das, 2018). According to Das (2018), social performance is also reflected in improving employment/business opportunities in the community. On the other hand, vocational/primary education of the surrounding people advanced is supported by a few studies by Zhu et al., 2016; Das, 2018.

Mahoney et al. (2007) examined the relationship of corporate social performance with financial performance and firm ownership. The team performed the analysis on a large number of Canadian companies

and used a new independent measure of CSP. Based on tests using 4-year panel data, the study showed that CSP had a positive effect on increasing the number of institutions investing in companies' stocks. In addition, there is a positive relationship between the CSP ratings of companies concerning their international operations, the quality of their products, and the number of institutions investing in the companies' stocks.

Wang and Berens (2015) based on the theory of stakeholders, studied empirically the relationship between different types of CSPs, reputation between public and financial stakeholders, as well as financial performance. Research results show that (1) Carroll's four types of CSPs (i.e. economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic) affect financial performance differently, and (2) their effects are mediated by reputation among financial and public stakeholders. The study's findings provide guidance for managers regarding the selection of certain CSP aspects, depending on the specific stakeholder group they are targeting.

Research by Duong Van Ha (2020) based on panel data for the period 2010-2017 has shown that there is an interactive relationship between productivity and social performance of microfinance institutions (microfinance institutions) officially licensed by the State Bank of Vietnam to operate. Thereby, the study proposes recommendations to strengthen the linkage between productivity and social efficiency to contribute to ensuring social goals, increasing income, and sustaining the operation of official microfinance organizations in Vietnam.

In addition, a number of other research studies also focus on combined evaluation based on more than one aspect of sustainability performance such as:

Hahn and Scheermesser (2006) conducted an online survey on corporate sustainability in German companies. The survey focuses on the meaning and relevance of sustainability for German companies, the motives behind their commitment to sustainability, and the use of different management tools to perform sustainability in business practice. The authors concluded that there were significant differences related to the motives behind corporate sustainability practices.

Chang and Kuo (2008) studied firms' sustainable development in terms of economic, environmental, and social dimensions and their financial performance based on secondary data on sustainability scores of 311 firms. The results revealed (1) the better sustainability performers may have a tendency of positive influence on firm profitability in the same and later periods, (2) a positive reciprocal causality may exist between sustainability and profitability among the better sustainability group, (3) profitability affects corporate sustainability positively in both higher and lower sustainability groups and (4) sustainability influences firm profitability negatively in the lower sustainability group.

Another study in the agricultural field by Tran Sy Nam et al. (2021) evaluated the financial, social, and environmental performance in the dike area at the time before and after flood discharge, as a basis for proposing effective flood management measures in the embankment area in Tri Ton district, An Giang. The findings showed that rice cultivation after flood discharge brought economic, social, and environmental benefits compared to before flood discharge.

3.3. Research on the impact of green supply chain management on sustainable performance

Research on the impact of GSCM on environmental performance

Azevedo (2011) made an investigation into the relationship between green practices in supply chain management and supply chain performance. The study is proposed and tested with data obtained from 5 case studies from the Portuguese automotive supply chain. As a result, green practices have a positive impact on improving environmental performance by reducing consumption of solid/liquid waste and hazardous substances, reducing environmental accident rates, and improving public health.

In the same year, Eltayeb et al (2011) surveyed 569 ISO 14001-certified companies in Malaysia to analyze the relationship between the adoption of green supply chain initiatives and environmental performance. and economic efficiency. The results of testing the hypotheses found that green design has a positive impact on 4 types of outcomes (environmental outcomes, economic outcomes, cost reductions, and intangible outcomes). In addition, reverse logistics also contributed to improving economic outcomes in the direction of cost reduction.

Ehsan Khaksar et al. (2016) suggested that there was a positive relationship between green suppliers, green innovations, and the organization's environmental performance, while there was a negative but important relationship between suppliers. green level, green innovation, and environmental performance of the organization. There also existed a positive relationship between green innovation and environmental performance or environmental performance and competitive advantage.

Anwar Al-Sheyadi et al (2019) studied the impact of internal and external GSCM practices on two aspects of environmental performance: environmental impact and environmental cost savings. Research showed a positive relationship between the level of GSCM cooperation and environmental performance. The study's findings confirmed that GSCM practice could lead to better performance.

Research on the impact of GSCM on economic performance.

Rao and Holt (2005) identified a potential link between green supply chain management, economic performance,

and the competitiveness of several companies that achieved ISO 14001 certification in Southeast Asia. The research results showed that greening different stages of the supply chain lead to an integrated green supply chain, which ultimately led to the competitiveness and economic efficiency of enterprises. From previous research by Klassen and McLaughlin (1996), environmental management was identified as a factor that improves the financial performance and competitiveness of the company.

Zhu et al (2008) conducted a study that aimed to empirically investigate the construction of a scale to evaluate green supply chain management (GSCM) practices among manufacturers. With data collected from 341 Chinese manufacturers, two measurement models of GSCM performance were tested and compared by confirmatory factor analysis. Research results showed that GSCM practice did not directly affect economic performance, but could improve it indirectly. GSCM activities helped organizations develop “win-win” strategies to achieve profits and target market share by reducing risk and impact on the environment while improving their ecological efficiency.

Jr et al (2012) conducted an empirical study on GSCM in manufacturing firms from the US point of view. Its results showed that implementing green supply chain management significantly enhanced the profitability of companies, increased market share, and build competitive advantage. In summary, the adoption of GSCM practices by manufacturing organizations led to improved environmental performance and economic performance, which in turn, has a positive impact on operational efficiency.

Another study by Khan & Qianli (2017) on the impact of green supply chain management practices on organizational performance in the context of manufacturing companies in Pakistan. By using factor discovery and regression analysis at the same time, the results indicated that except for green buying activity, the rest of the four independent variables were found to be statistically significant to predict the efficiency organization's activities. However, the ecological design of green practices followed by green information systems had shown the greatest impact on organizational performance.

W.Ahmed and A.Najmi (2018) conducted an empirical evaluation study on the influence of leadership and institutional pressure on green practices and on improving green efficiency and economic efficiency. Research had shown that leadership and institutional pressure affect companies to adopt green internal practices and green external cooperation. The statistics also show that green practices significantly improve the economic performance and green performance of the company.

Research on the impact of GSCM on social performance

GSCM was expected to improve the social performance of companies in the supply chain (Wang & Dai, 2017). However, most studies focused on the impact of GSCM on the environment and economic sectors (Golicic & Smith, 2013). For example, Esfahbodi et al (2016) confirmed the positive impact of GSCM on environmental performance and costs but did not incorporate social performance.

Testa and Iraldo (2010) showed insights and differences from GSCM in social performance through econometric modeling studies using survey data conducted in seven OECD countries (Canada, France), Germany, Hungary, Japan, Norway, and the United States) at the grassroots level in 2003. The study affirmed that besides minimizing risks and costs, GSCM practices could also have strategic benefits and competition: improved brand image, better relations with stakeholders (society, customers, personnel, and government) by reducing environmental damage are possible effects of the application of using GSCM.

Chenxiao Wang et al (2020) studied the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), GSCM, and corporate performance, and examined the regulatory impact of big data analytics capabilities on the relationship between CSR and GSCM. Based on a sample of 260 management-level employees, research indicated that CSR (internal and external CSR) had a positive impact on GSCM and GSCM had a positive impact on company performance.

In Vietnam, there are also some studies on the impact of GSCM on sustainability performance, specifically:

Nguyen Xuan Hung and Le Tuan Anh (2020) also made great efforts and contributions when researching and assessing the impact of green supply chain management on global cooperation and business performance. Vietnamese industry. The analysis results showed that GSCM had a positive impact on the company's global cooperation ability and cooperation efficiency.

When studying the factors affecting the motivation to practice GSCM in Bac Ninh industrial zone, Do Anh Duc et al (2020) pointed out four factors: (1) internal awareness, (2) supplier pressures, (3) consumer perceptions, (4) regulatory pressures that affect GSCM practice and performance. The results showed that internal perception and customer perception were positively related to GSCM practice and GSCM performance. However, supplier pressure and regulatory pressure only affected GSCM practice.

In particular, the author Le Thi Tam (2020) conducted research and analyzed the relationship between GSCM practices and sustainable performance in Vietnamese building material manufacturing enterprises. Based on data collected from a sample of 218 building material manufacturers in Vietnam, the study examined the impact of GSCM factors on business operations including economic, environmental, and social by using the

structural equation model. The study found that green design and green manufacturing had a positive and significant impact on three performances categories, while green procurement impacted social and economic performance but not environmental performance.

4. Conclusion

From the overview of research on foreign and domestic projects related to green supply chain management, sustainable performance as well as the relationship between green supply chain management and sustainable performance as mentioned above, some directions for further research can be done as follows:

Firstly, GSCM is an area of interest to organizations and researchers worldwide, and its goal is to move toward sustainable development. In the context of research in Vietnam, a few documents comprehensively analyze GSCM in small and medium enterprises while there were studies in other industries such as the tourism industry with research by Do Anh Duc et al (2020), FMCG industry with research by Duong Van Bay (2019), construction industry with research by Le Thi Tam (2020). Currently, compared with other developing countries, the understanding and efforts to research and implement green supply chain management in small and medium enterprises in Vietnam are still very limited. However, the majority of enterprises in Vietnam today are small and medium enterprises and they play an important role in promoting the development of the economy. Since then, more research on supply chain management is required in the main group of businesses that make up the Vietnamese economy.

Second, sustainable development requires a balance between three basic dimensions including the economy, environment, and society, but most previous researchers focused on economic efficiency and the environment (Zhu et al., 2008; Green et al., 2012; and De Giovanni & Vinzi, 2012). A few papers consider all aspects of sustainability (economic, environmental and social) simultaneously (Wang & Dai, 2017; Senzen và Cankaya, 2019). Furthermore, the impact of GSCM practices on the social dimension has been discussed in the literature mainly concerning developed countries while this relationship in developing economies is still not much exploited (Laosirihongthong et al., 2013). In Vietnam, social responsibility has only received attention recently and there are very few studies on corporate social responsibility. This can be considered as a research direction that should be exploited more in the future to more objectively evaluate the effectiveness of GSCM practice in the period toward a sustainable development economy in Vietnam.

Third, despite the increase in the number of GSCM studies in various aspects in recent years, the fact that this concept has a very wide range of applications makes it difficult to establish a comprehensive framework for the dimension frames that make up the GSCM. Some authors in this field also mentioned the lack of a dimensionality framework for GSCM (Murphy and Poist, 2003; Laosirihongthong et al., 2013; Sharma et al., 2015).

Fourth, the results from previous studies are inconsistent in affirming that GSCM helps to improve or weaken the sustainable performance of enterprises, making it difficult for enterprises to get clear answers about factors that can bring benefits, thereby making more correct development decisions for the development of the business. Therefore, more studies are needed to further clarify this relationship.

From the above gaps, the authors propose the next research direction for future works: "*Effects of green supply chain management practices on sustainability performance: a research study for small and medium enterprises in Vietnam*". The study aims to show the cause-and-effect relationship between green supply chain management practices and sustainable performance and determine the influence of these activities, thereby making appropriate policy recommendations.

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