

A New Classification of Supply Chains Based on Resourced Based View in Automotive Industry

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Abstract: The supply chain configuration approach develops understanding of which kind of supply chain better fits with the strategic objectives of the firm respect to the management of material and information flows. Most of the proposed configurations have been based on environmental factors and structure-conduct-performance approach. That is, an outside view of the firm. To complement that view researchers in the strategic field have advocated the use of the Resource Based View of the firm. Thus, exploring supply chain configuration with emphasis on supply chain resources and capabilities could be a logical addition to the mentioned configurations. In this paper, after a qualitative research analysis of the views of experts from three main Iranian automotive companies, a new configuration for classification of supply chains based on supply chain resources and capabilities is explained. We then specify three types of supply chains based on supply chain capabilities and environmental factors namely: lean supply chains, customer-focused supply chains, and innovative supply chains.

Keywords: Strategic Supply Chain, Supply Chain Configuration, Resource Based View, Relational View, Automotive Industry

1. Introduction

Fine (1998) has classified industries in two categories based on their clock speed (product change rate, process change rate, and organizational characteristics change rate): high clock

speed and low clock speed. According to Fine (1998) the automotive industry is placed in low clock speed category and in these industries there is high probability for which the firms can attain sustainable competitive advantage. Demeter et al (2006) studied the impact of two automotive company's strategy on supply chain activities and configuration and they've concluded that OEM's strategies influence on their supply chain activities and configurations. Clearly they observed two type of configuration and two types of procurement and supplier relationship management activities in Hungarian automotive industry. The Suzuki has much relied on establishing strategic partnerships with suppliers while the Audi has much relied on price and market mechanisms for procuring its materials and parts. Handfield and Nicols (1999) have defined strategic supply chain management as: strategic management of (1) material and information flows, (2) supply chain's partnerships. Material and information flows management is physical infrastructure of supply chain management and is related to logistics activities. It is necessary for material and information flows management to apply a systematic and holistic view. Such approach could be "a configurationally approach". This approach considers the organization as a mixture of strategy, structure, process and context elements. Each configuration contains internal aspects of organization and also external environment or context of organization. The main constituent elements of supply chain configuration are strategic goals, in the one hand, and coordination mechanisms of supply chain material and information flows in the other (Kotzab et al., 2005). Thus, configuration represents strategic management of material and information flows. The configurations proposed for classifying supply chain yet, mostly based on environmental factors and industry structure approach. In other words, in the strategic goals of supply chains section there have been greater emphasis on environmental factors and less attention have paid to unique characteristics of firms which are members of the chain and also the supply chains itself. The gap here in such a language is the lack of a configuration for classifying supply chains based on resource-based view or the inside-to-outside one. In this research we try to provide a configuration for classifying supply chains using Miles and Snow's strategic choice approach (1978) and supply chain management processes in automotive industry.

2. Literature review

2.1. Supply Chain Configurations

The starting point of configurationally approach is related to Fisher's work (1997). In order to strategically manage the material and information flows in supply chain given to demand specifications, Fisher (1997) suggested two supply chains: the efficient supply chains for products with stable demands and responsive supply chains for products with volatile demands (Seuring et al., 2003). Tan et al., (1999) provided a more distinctive approach regarding the responsive to market supply chain configuration. They divided the responsive supply chain in two categories: customizable product type configuration and innovative product type configuration. There are subtle differences between two type of configurations in terms of unpredictable demand patterns, product short life cycle, make to order strategy (Kotzab et al., 2005).

Several authors (Childerhouse and Towill 2000; Christopher, 2000) believe that the pure configurations are not appropriate for all supply chains and situations, and thus suggested the mix configurations. They have stated that lean or efficient supply chains are good for functional products, and for innovative products, the leagile supply chains are better. Given to demand and supply uncertainties, Lee (2002) differentiated four types of supply chains. In this configuration, the efficient and responsive supply chain configuration in terms of low and high uncertainty extent in supply and demand was divided into four type as efficient, responsive, agile and risk hedging supply chains. Another configurationally approach has been presented by Corsten and Gabriel (2002). They used product structure and demand uncertainty dimensions to describe the supply chain configurations (Kotzab et al., 2005). One more approach that combines other approaches is proposed by Klous (2003). While other configurations hadn't had a clear relationship with configuration theory, this configuration is theoretically based on configuration theory (Kotzab et al., 2005).

Most of suggested configurations are implicitly based on structure-conduct-performance classic framework or could be related to Porter's generic competitive strategies. In other words, in all configurations the dominated approach is outside-in and so much concern taken up to environmental factors. However, for much more effectiveness of configuration, they have needed to complement by in-outside approach and have considered internal supply chain capabilities and competencies.

2.2. Using the Miles and Snow strategy typology in supply chains

Miles and Snow (1978) suggest four types of strategies for businesses: prospectors, defenders, analyzers, reactors. Walker and Ruekert (1987) claimed that reactor is not an active strategy in business environment. They also believed that defender strategy must be divided into low cost defender and differentiated defender. Thus, these four types of strategy are defined as (Slater and Olson, 2000):

- Prospectors: These businesses with introducing new products are pioneers to enter new markets. They do not fear to enter into new markets that seem to have advantage. They also focused on providing new products with new performances. Their goals are to provide most innovative products according to very high performance improvement and very high cost reduction.
- Analyzers: These businesses rarely are the first mover in new and emerging markets. However, with exact monitor of competitors' actions and customer reactions to them, and with better objective setting, increasing customer benefits and total cost reduction could be the quickest follower of prospectors.
- Differentiated defender: These businesses with intense protection of their own product-market position attempt to sustain a stable market. They are rarely the first in developing new products and rather than focused on providing better quality and superior products. Their product's prices are usually higher than industry average price.
- Low-cost defender: These businesses with intense protection of their own product-market position attempt to sustain a stable market. They focused on increasing their own market shares in existing markets through presenting products with the best prices.

In Miles and Snow's strategic choice theory, the unit of analysis for categorizing firm's strategies is configuration (Ketchen and Giunipero, 2003). According to Katz et al., (2003) supply chain members follow four active strategies: innovativeness (equal to prospector strategy), modularization (equal to defenders), appending (equal to analyzers), and following (equal to reactors).

Hult et al., (2006) have believed that the effective proportion between knowledge elements and the special type of supply chain strategy is valuable, rare, and imitable, and could be a strategic resource in supply chains. They have examined the interdependence among various knowledge elements and different type of supply chain strategy and superior performance with using

resource based view (Barney, 1991), strategic choice theory (Miles and Snow, 1978) and configuration approach.

2.3. Supply chain management processes

Nelson and Winter (1982) in evolutionary economic theory have stated that routines are the main elements of organization constituent elements and they've believed that routines play the same role as genes in human organism (Becker, 2006). With considering supply chains as unit of analysis, supply chain processes are the same as routines according to Nelson and Winter (1982), in which these processes are constituted the main part of supply chains, and if the supply chain should be equipped with capabilities, they must create in the supply chain processes. According to Ray et al., (2004) as a dependent variable, the business process effectiveness could be an appropriate measure to testing resource-based view. Therefore, the supply chain resources and capabilities must reside in supply chain business processes. Davenport et al., (1995) have defined a business process as a set of structured activities with specified goals oriented to serve customers. At the beginning of process-centered view, business processes were considered as a means of integrating internal corporate functions. Now, business processes are used to organize the activities between supply chain members (Lambert, 2006). Streamlining cross-firms processes is the next appropriate area for reducing the costs, enhancing the quality, and accelerating the operations. Most successful firms are those which have new approaches for business and work closely with partners for design and management processes, which are beyond the traditional boundaries of the firm (Hammer, 2001). Existing frameworks for categorizing supply chain management processes are summarized in table 1.

Framework	Processes	Developer
1	Customer relationship management, customer service management, supplier relationship management, demand management, manufacturing flow management, product development and commercialization, order fulfillment process, returns process	Global supply chain forum (Stock and Lambert,2001), (Lambert,2006) (GSCF)
2	Plan, source, make, deliver, return	Supply chain council (2003) (SCOR)
3	Customer relationship management, product	Stravistava et al., (1999)

	development management, and supply chain management	
4	Planning, procurement, make, deliver, product design and redesign, capacity management, process design and redesign, measurement.	Boversox et al., (1999)
5	Supply chain planning, procurement, customer order management, manufacturing, and logistics.	American Productivity and Quality Council

Table 1: frameworks for classifying SCM processes

Among these five presented frameworks only two of them (GSCF and SCOR) have described processes in full details, and are used mostly by firms in business environments. The two frameworks have differences with each other in some aspects, and managers and authors must select the best one considering those differences. In general, GSCF framework has more strategic orientation, and focuses on increasing long-term benefits of the shareholder through closer cross-functional relationships with key supply chain members. This framework is more used in business situations that the ability of identifying, creating and retaining business relationships would be a competitive advantage (Lambert, 2006; Lambert et al., 2005)

Given to strategic view of this paper to supply chain management, GSCF framework processes are considered as the basic framework. Because large number of processes and similarity between them in GSCF, based on discussing them with some supply chain management academic experts, we have reduced eight processes to six. The following six processes applied in this research are:

- Customer relationship and service management: the business process which view the customer and develop a structure for creating and retaining relationships with customer.
- Supply chain planning and demand management: the task of this process is to establish balance between supply and demand in whole chain and attempt to hinder from supply and demand excess in various supply chain's parts.
- Manufacturing flow and logistics management: the process includes all necessary activities for producing and transferring products from the plant to the next stage of chain. This process is also responsible for acquiring, implementing and managing manufacturing flexibility.

- Procurement and supplier relationship management: this process is responsible for procuring materials and parts in various supply chain's tier as well as developing and maintaining effective relationships with suppliers.
- Product development and commercialization: this process provides structures for developing and engaging products in market through joining the cooperation with suppliers and customers.
- Order fulfillment and distribution: this process includes all necessary activities for defining customer requirements, distribution network design and fulfilling customer requests with minimum delivery total cost.

Among above six processes, procurement and supplier relationship management and customer service and relationship management are processes that are playing role of establishing relationship with external members of supply chain (i.e. suppliers and customers). Other four supply chain processes are related with suppliers and customers too, but their relationships are established with the help of two mentioned processes. Several researches (for example Takeishi, 2001) have been studied the impacts of product development and commercialization process in which the product is developed with close cooperation between key suppliers and automakers, on automakers performance.

3. Research Method

The main approach in this research is the qualitative one; however, we used quantitative techniques to analyze the gathered data. Creswell (2003) have listed various qualitative research strategies as ethnography, grounded theory, case study, phenomenological research, and narrative research. In the case that the question is to identify influential factors on event, understanding best event indicators and theory testing, then the quantitative approach would be appropriate. Nevertheless, if the phenomenon or concept needed to be identified - since little past research has been done on that - qualitative approach would be appropriate (Creswell, 2003). In terms of research objectives, they are classified as explaining research, descriptive research, predictive research and explorative research (exploring quite not understandable phenomena, identifying important variables, and providing more hypotheses for more researches). (Marshall and Rossman, 2006).

Because of there is not any studies on the supply chain configuration based on RBV (Halldorsson et al., 2007), the problem of this research is naturally qualitative. Moreover, this research has lied in the explorative research category, since this research tries to identify fundamental classifications and patterns of strategic supply chains with emphasis on resources and capabilities and one of the main tools for gathering data in this type of research is interviewing with experts (Marshal and Rossman, 2006).

Experts sampling in this research wasn't probabilistic sampling but it is snowball sampling (Lee, 1993). This type of sampling in some situations is the best way for putting topics with needed characteristics into the research. This type of sampling is used in studying various deviation categories, critical topics, and at the time when access to populations is difficult. This special characteristic can be defined as having relatively high experience in automotive industry and great knowledge about supply chain processes, and being informed about global automotive industry. In order to identify the experts, first, I decided to consult with vice presidents of automotive companies to find the right persons, and after interviewing with that person, I asked him/her to introduce some other persons with similar characteristics. In sum, we have interviewed with 31 experts (Lee, 1993). The list of interviewed experts in this research is shown in table 2.

Car company	Interviewees positions	Average experience (years)
Bahman Engines (assemble Mazda and Isuzu cars)	Procurement and localize parts deputy, Strategic planning manager, Quality assurance and production manager	18
IranKhodro (the partner of Peugeot and Mercedes Benz)	Warehouses and assembly feeding manager, Supplier logistics manager, Manufacturing strategy manager, supply strategy manager, product strategy manager, suppliers affairs manager, foreign purchasing manager, quality assurance manager, production purchasing manager, technical and engineering deputy, business plan manager, business development vice president, CEO consultant, foreign and local plants logistics manager, organization excellence manager	10

Saipa (the Partner of Kia motors and Citroen)	CEO consultant, organization excellence manager, order planning and control manager, strategic planning manager, vice president of business development, information technology and systems manager, inbound logistic manager, supply strategy manager,	9
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Table 2: the characteristics of interviewed experts

The interviews were in form of standard or structured interviews. They were done individually and they approximately took 45 minutes in average. In the interview protocol, first we explained about supply chain strategies and supply chain management processes and then we asked from interviewees to specify his/her opinions about the extent of importance of each supply chain management processes in each supply chain strategy.

The used method for analyzing the data in this research is weighting method. Given to research problem which is related to providing a configuration for supply chains based on resources and capabilities, the extent of importance of each supply chain management processes at each supply chain strategy was specified by weighting method. The used formula for this purpose is as below (Keeny and Raiffa, 2008):

$$R_p = \sum_{j=1}^k (R_{pj})$$

Where:

R_p : the sum of converted ranked judgments for P objective

R_{pj} : the assigned converted rank to P objective by j decision maker

K: the number of decision makers

And so:

$$W_p = \frac{R_p}{\sum_{j=1}^k (R_{pj})}$$

4. Results

The number of assigned ranks to the processes in the supply chain prospector strategy is shown in table 3 as an example:

Supply chain prospector strategy							
Process/rank	1	2	3	4	5	6	Weight
Procurement and supplier relationship management	2	3	8	11	5	2	0.181141
Customer relationship and service management	3	16	4	4	2	2	0.25062
Manufacturing flow management and logistics	0	2	2	8	7	12	0.091811
Supply chain planning and demand management	0	3	14	6	8	0	0.183623
Product development and commercialization	26	2	0	2	1	0	0.354839
Order fulfillment and distribution	0	4	3	1	8	15	0.086849

Table 3: ranks and weights of each SCM processes in supply chain prospector strategy

In tables 4 to 7, the processes arranged in terms of importance in each supply chain strategy.

Prospector supply chain strategy	
Process	Weight
Product development and commercialization	0.35
Customer relationship and service management	0.25
Supply chain planning and demand management	0.18
Procurement and supplier relationship management	0.18
Manufacturing flow management and logistics	0.08
Order fulfillment and distribution	0.08

Low cost defender supply chain strategy	
Process	Weight
Procurement and supplier relationship management	0.32
Manufacturing flow management and logistics	0.29
Supply chain planning and demand management	0.25
Order fulfillment and distribution	0.12
Customer relationship and service management	0.09

Product development and commercialization	0.07
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Table 4: the importance of processes in low-cost defender supply chain strategy

Table 5: the importance of processes in prospector supply chain strategy

Differentiated defender supply chain strategy	
Process	Weight
Customer relationship and service management	0.32
Product development and commercialization	0.23
Manufacturing flow management and logistics	0.18
Procurement and supplier relationship management	0.14
Supply chain planning and demand management	0.14
Order fulfillment and distribution	0.11

Analyzer supply chain strategy	
Process	Weight
Customer relationship and service management	0.28
Product development and commercialization	0.24
Supply chain planning and demand management	0.18
Manufacturing flow management and logistics	0.16
Procurement and supplier relationship management	0.14
Order fulfillment and distribution	0.12

Table 6: the importance of processes in analyzer supply chain strategy

Table 7: the importance of processes in differentiated defender supply chain strategy

5. Discussion and configuration development

Woodward has argued that firms have to act in three areas: operations, product development and sales and marketing (Fleury and Fleury,2003). Fleury and Fluery (2003) according that, have argued that firms compete in the market based on three strategies: operations excellence, product development and customer-oriented. With considering that supply chain management processes have covered all of the three firm's activities areas; it could be to adapt supply chain management processes with mentioned strategies:

- Operations excellence: manufacturing flow management and logistics process, procurement and supplier relationship management process, order fulfillment and distribution process.
- Product development: product development and commercialization process
- Customer-oriented: customer relationship and service management process

The supply chain planning and demand management process is necessary in all strategies and has a medium weight in all strategies.

As it is shown in Figure 2 in the prospector supply chain strategy, product development and commercialization process and customer relationship and service management process are the most important processes, and, on the other hand, manufacturing flow management and logistics process are the least ones. It is represented that in this type of supply chain, the research and development and innovation activities have great importance (Kabanoff and Brown,2008), and usually the resources and capabilities of supply chain members should be focused on those activities. This type of supply chains could be matched with responsive supply chains of Fisher's framework (1997) or agile and responsive supply chains of Lee's framework (2002). Generally this type of supply chains is matched with the supply chains that are focused on innovative products.

In the low-cost defender supply chain strategy, the procurement and supplier relationship management process and the manufacturing flow management and logistics process obtained the highest importance and the product development and commercialization process obtained the lowest importance. It means that the resources and capabilities of supply chain members must more emphasis on lean operations or operation excellence. In the past configurations (Childerhouse and Towill, 2000; Christopher, 2000; Kotzab et al., 2005; Lee, 2002; Seuring et

al., 2003) this type of supply chains matches more with lean supply chains or functional products.

In the differentiated defender supply chain strategy, the customer relationship and service management process and product development and commercialization process obtained the highest importance and while manufacturing flow management and logistics process obtained the third level of importance. It is represented that in this type of supply chains, members of supply chain have to focus their resources and capabilities on identifying customer needs and fulfilling their needs as better as possible. While the supply chains should attempt to lean the operation and produce at lowest cost. This type of supply chains have more conformed to Lee's (2002) responsive supply chains.

In the analyzer supply chain strategy that has much similarity with differentiated supply chain strategy, it is the same as differentiated supply chain strategy regard to supply chain member's resources and capabilities focus.

In the study of Snow and Herbiniak (1980) about firm's distinctive competencies in Snow and Miles (1978) strategy typology in four industry (plastic, automotive, semiconductor, air transportation), they have specified distinctive competencies of each strategy. Clearly the firms have operated in automotive industry and have fallen to defender strategy category, operations and production activities and applied engineering activities were as distinctive competencies, which is similar to manufacturing flow management and logistics process in supply chain management. The firms have fallen to automotive industry and prospector strategy category, the fundamental engineering activities and sale and marketing activities were as distinctive competencies which is similar to product development and commercialization process in supply chain management. In analyzer strategy category, sales and marketing activities have been considered as a distinctive competency which is similar to customer service and relationship management process in supply chain management.

With considering that supply chain management processes play the role of Nelson and Winter's (1982) routines and in the resource based view account as main elements of organizations and supply chains, we present a configuration with emphasis on supply chain resources and capabilities according to relative importance of each supply chain management processes in different supply chain strategies. This configuration is shown in figure 1.

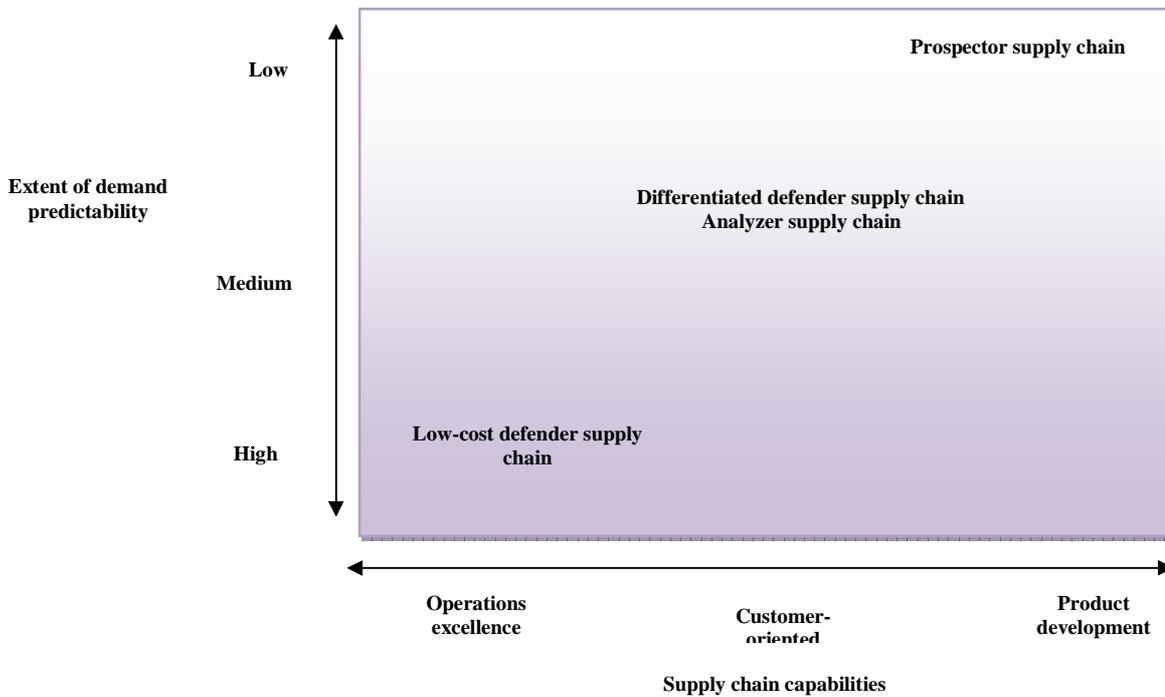


Figure 1: supply chain configuration with emphasis on resources and capabilities

The configuration shown in figure 1 has two dimensions. The vertical axis is related to demand predictability. This coordination mechanism has been used in Lee's configuration (2002) and Klawns's (2003). The horizontal axis considers supply chain capabilities. Given to that the firms usually concentrate their resources and capabilities in three areas: product development, operations excellence and customer-oriented; the supply chain members also focus their resources on those areas following the channel leader.

Thus, we can observe three types of supply chains:

- *Lean supply chains*: this type of supply chains is focused on standard products and existing markets and in capabilities dimension they going to doing activities that lead to leanness all supply chain member's operations. The most important processes for this category of supply chain are manufacturing flow management and logistics process and supplier relationship management and procurement process. In this type of supply chains, decoupling point and postponement activities will be positioned in the end of downstream of the supply chain as much as possible. In automotive industry, the firms like VW, Renault, Tata Motors, and Hyundai have got such supply chains.
- *Customer-oriented supply chains*: this type of supply chains is focused on relatively innovative products and according to Tan et al., (1999) customizable and in some extent new markets. In capability dimension they are going to concentrate their resources on sales and marketing activities. The most important processes for this category of supply chain are customer service and relationship management process and product development and commercialization process. Decoupling point and postponement activities will be positioned in the middle of supply chain. In the automotive industry, the firms like Daimler, BMW and Audi have got such supply chains.
- *Innovative supply chains*: this category of supply chains have considers the most innovative products and the newest markets. In terms of capabilities they are going to invest most of their resources and capabilities on research and development activities and

fundamental engineering activities. The most important processes for this category of supply chain are product development and commercialization process and customer service and relationship management process. Decoupling point and postponement activities will be positioned in the initial stages of the upstream of the supply chain as much as possible. In the automotive industry, firms like commercial vehicles of Daimler, Hybrid division of Toyota, BMW, and Porsche have got such supply chains.

Resource orchestration is the main concern in association between supply chain and resources based view (Hitt, 2011). In each of above archetype of supply chain strategy, the resource orchestration can be done in supply chain in various manners. For instance, in an prospector supply chain the resources of OEM and main suppliers in supply chain are coordinated in terms of innovative and R&D activities. In contrast, in a low cost defender supply chain, the resources and capabilities of supply chain member must be orchestrated for achieving as efficient as possible operation in whole supply chain.

6. Conclusion

Given to that the existing configurations mostly has emphasized on environmental factors and has followed the structure-conduct-performance view, in this research we 've attempted to consider the supply chain configuration in terms of resource based view and in completion of environmental factors we've proposed a configuration for supply chains based on supply chain management processes. According to Fine (1998), the low clock speed industries like automotive industry could attain sustainable competitive advantage using supply chain management. In this research, we've attempted to determine the supply chain characteristics in which they may lead to sustainable competitive advantage using resource based view in supply chain management and automotive industry context. Considering that in this research we have emphasized on interviewing with experts in one industry in order to providing a supply chain configuration, the research results could be more leveraged with studying more firms and industries. According to this research results we could suggest three propositions about supply chain configuration that can be tested in the future empirical research:

- Proposition 1: the supply chains which have followed prospector strategy similar to their business strategy would focus their resources and capabilities on product development and commercialization SCM process.

- Proposition 2: the supply chains which have followed low-cost defender strategy similar to their business strategy would focus their resources and capabilities on manufacturing flow management and logistics SCM process.
- Proposition 3: the supply chains which have followed differentiated defender or analyzer strategy similar to their business strategy would focus their resources and capabilities on customer service and relationship management SCM process.

Aligning competitive strategy and supply chain strategy is not an easy work for most of firms. In a study (Mckone-Sweet and Lee, 2009) it was indicated that there is no relationship between the SC Strategy and a firm's competitive priorities, specifying that firms are often not linking their SC strategy to their competitive strategy. It is also arise another challenge and future research area that how the firms in supply chain can align their competitive strategy with supply chain strategy.

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