

Research paper

Outsourcing integration and third party logistics services: An appreciation of two ‘classic’ articles in industrial marketing management

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A B S T R A C T

This paper provides an appreciation of two highly cited, ‘classic’ *Industrial Marketing Management* articles pertaining to outsourcing integration and third party logistics services. The appreciation includes revisiting the general topic themes emanating from both articles, third-party logistics (3PL) service providers, outsourcing and core competence for competitive advantage, relationships, integrating supply chain actors, and combining products and services as a value proposition, with an objective to cast each article's influence on, and ongoing and future contributions to, present day research.

1. Introduction and method

This paper provides an appreciation of two highly cited, ‘classic’ *Industrial Marketing Management* (IMM) articles:

- Susanne Hertz & Monica Alfredsson (2003) *Strategic development of third party logistics providers* from Volume 32 Issue 2, pages 139–149 (269 citations at the end of November 2018), and
- Andrew Davies, Tim Brady & Michael Hobday (2007) *Organizing for solutions: Systems seller vs. systems integrator* from Volume 36 Issue 2, pages 183–193 (233 citations at the end of November 2018).

This appreciation includes revisiting the general topic themes emanating from both articles, third-party logistics (3PL) service providers, outsourcing and core competence for competitive advantage, relationships, integrating supply chain actors, and combining products and services as a value proposition, with an objective to cast each article's influence on, and ongoing and future contributions to, to present day research.

The method for this paper comprised three stages. The first stage in Section 2 critically reviewed the two ‘classic’ articles to confirm their contributions and synthesise themes running through them for a review of current literature on the themes. The first step in this stage investigated the list of citations for each from the citation provider for IMM, Scopus, to determine descriptive statistics and the nature of the citations and journals using these citations. The time frame selected was from when each article appeared in print until the end of November 2018 when this paper was finalised. The second step was a content analysis of each article's title and abstract to determine predominant topics and disciplines they address. The third step involved categorizing

pertinent research themes that suggest trends or impacts for authors citing the works.

The second stage presented in Section 3 comprised synthesising the themes across both articles to determine commonality or differences and was supplemented by a literature review and content analysis of several selected articles, including a few of the most recent last articles published in IMM and elsewhere that cite each article, to determine if these themes continue to represent important trends in research and practice today.

The final stage in Section 4 considers the veracity and predictiveness of both articles in light of the second stage in order to evaluate and comment on their overall contribution to knowledge, and concludes the paper.

2. The two ‘classic’ articles

2.1. Hertz and Alfredsson (2003)

The 269 Scopus citations for Hertz and Alfredsson (2003) comprise 182 journal articles, 63 conference papers, 13 book chapters, 9 reviews and 2 miscellaneous pieces and Fig. 1 shows their temporal distribution. The article has 20 average citations per year when removing the first 2 years due to publication lag times. The peak number of citations was 28 in 2008 and the line in the figure continues to trend around 20 citations per year.

Regarding journal distribution, citations for the article appear on 17 occasions in *International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management*, 12 in *International Journal of Logistics Systems & Management*, 10 in *International Journal of Production Economics*, 8 in IMM, and 7 each in *Supply Chain Management: An International Journal*

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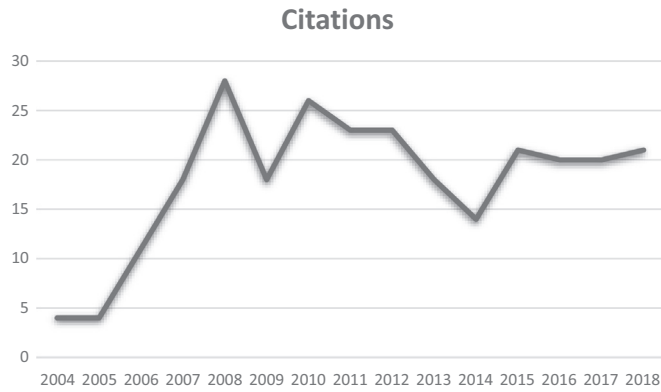


Fig. 1. Citations from 2004 to 2018 for Hertz and Alfredsson (2003).

and *International Journal of Logistics Management*, totalling 61 occasions. The other 121 occasions were all five or less in any one journal and thus the article is widely cited but clearly has resonance with logistics and SCM researchers given the preponderance of their journals.

The article's premise was to investigate strategic choices behind firms entering the growing industry sector of third-party logistics (3PL) service providers in regards their relationships with customers (tier 1), customers' customers (tier 2) and partners. Thus, the article focussed on downstream supply chain activities and ignored upstream services for suppliers in an integrated supply chain.

Hertz & Alfredsson developed a matrix, shown in Fig. 2, based on a 3PL firm's general abilities for customer adaptation and problem solving in network relationships. The classification for a customer developer is akin to a fourth party logistics service (4PL) provider while a service developer provides different modules of services, i.e. almost cafeteria or menu services, that are highly dependent on information communications technology (ICT).

They used four case examples to illustrate how tier 1 and 2 customers influence a 3PL's development regarding these abilities. The four case examples were Swedish-based, reflecting the authors' affiliations: ASG, which the authors noted was acquired by Danzas (now part of DHL) in 2000, Transfargo, DHL from Germany, and Cat Logistics from the US. Hertz & Alfredsson found two underlying drivers for 3PL business development growth: *internationalisation* and *outsourcing of non-core business* to increase efficiency and reduce costs and thus establish *competitive advantage*. This led them to consider future development for firms will see them move towards *high levels of customer adaptation and problem solving* in their matrix. Customers influence this movement along with such firms *establishing separate organizations* solely for 3PLs activities to maintain *neutrality* and develop *trust*.

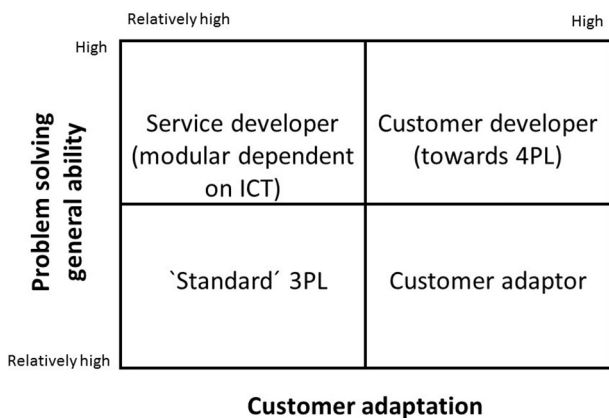


Fig. 2. Ability classifications for 3PLs (adapted from Hertz & Alfredsson, 2003:141).

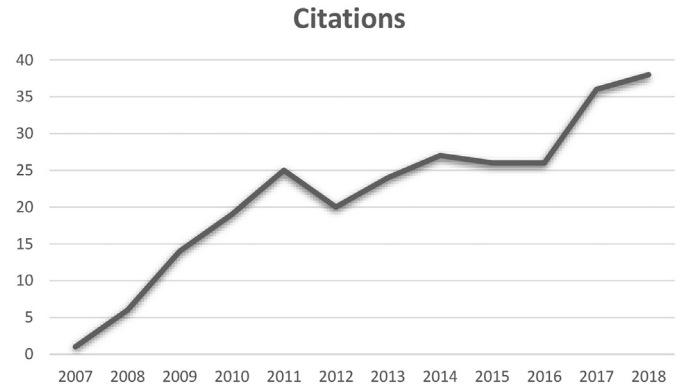


Fig. 3. Citations from 2007 to 2018 for Davies et al. (2007).

They concluded that firms are entering the 3PL market to follow customers and their needs, as opposed to making a strategic choice to do so. I.e. they are market followers and not leaders. Hertz & Alfredsson also consider that firms doing so often lack knowledge about the 3PL sector to determine what value-added services to provide at a profit, hence the intention to spin out 3PL activities to separate entities. Internationalisation became an issue as indigenous firms could only provide regional coverage since they were tied to local warehouse operators. Finally, Hertz & Alfredsson noted the growth of *mergers and acquisitions* and consolidation within the industry sector at that time and predicted they would continue.

2.2. Davies, Brady, and Hobday (2007)

The 262 Scopus citations for Davies, Brady, and Hobday (2007) comprise 197 journal articles, 32 conference papers or colloquia, 12 book chapters, 11 reviews, 6 books and 4 miscellaneous pieces, and Fig. 3 shows their temporal distribution. The article has 24 average citations per year when again removing the first 2 years. The peak number of citations is 38 for 11 months in 2018 and the line in the figure continues to have an upward trend.

Citations for this article appear on 46 occasions in *IMM*, 14 in *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, 13 in *Journal of Service Management*, 10 in *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, 8 in *International Journal of Project Management*, 7 each in *International Journal of Production Economics* and *Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing*, and 6 in *Construction Management and Economics*. These total 111 occasions, and the remaining 86 occasions were five or less in any one journal suggest the article is cited narrowly but deeply across a few journals, but widely across a number of other journals. The article has resonance with industrial marketing and project management academics, particularly those publishing in *IMM* which make up one-quarter of total journal citations.

The article's premise was to investigate how firms organise to provide integrated solutions in the context of both product and service provision. Davies et al.'s thesis was that the industrial marketing literature provided two contrasting organisational system types: a vertically integrated systems seller who produces everything in and a systems integrator who coordinates the integration of components supplied by external firms. They argued that the strategy literature helped identify key aspects of integration, while overemphasising its novelty and disruptive nature, and that traditional advantages for systems sellers were becoming less attractive as customers required more integrated solutions.

Their view of a systems integrator, as shown in Fig. 4, was that of an intermediary between product and service components sellers as opposed to a systems seller who does all three activities. Davies et al. also noted that which system is adopted depends on the customer's 'make or buy' i.e. outsourcing decision.

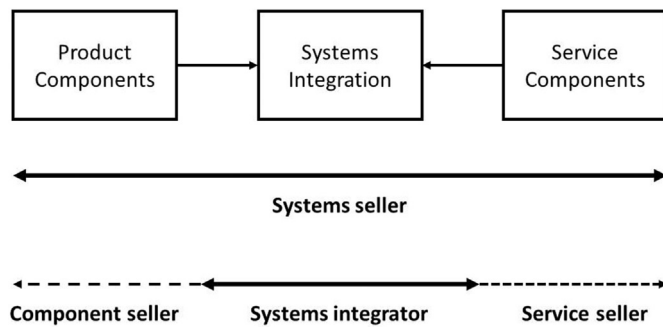


Fig. 4. Ideal systems types (adapted from Davies et al., 2007:186).

They also provided five case studies to illustrate the difference between the two types of systems: Alstrom Transport who provide rail rolling stock and signals, Ericsson and Cable and Wireless who both manufacture telecom and mobile equipment, Thales Training and Simulation for flight training, and Atkins project management services.

They found that while integrated solutions were becoming more widespread it was not a new business model as it had its origins in the 1960s. They also found that firms adopting systems integrations were abandoning traditional forms of vertical integration in favour of new organisational forms that could include pure product and/or pure service integrators, or complex forms that combine elements of systems selling and integration.

Davies et al. concluded that the ability to integrate a range of components from many internal and external suppliers is a core competence required for system integrators and is becoming a new competitive advantage instead of vertically integrated systems selling.

3. Synthesis and analysis

3.1. Synthesis of both articles

First, we note that using Scopus did not provide an exhaustive citation search, despite it being the choice of *IMM* and its publisher Elsevier. Möller and Halinen (2018) record 638 citations for Hertz & Alfredsson using the Harzing ‘Publish or Perish’ website whereas Scopus records only 262 citations. Möller & Halinen did not discuss Davies et al. nor record any citations for it. However, the purpose of this paper is to determine general influences and contribution for both articles and is not intended as a thorough systematic literature review. Scopus has provided that as discussed in Sections 3.1 and 3.2 such that findings from them are considered reliable and indicative to inform this paper.

Both articles focus on the concepts of outsourcing, core competences and competitive advantage as better business models for firms going forward in the 21st century; Hertz & Alfredsson in a narrow context of 3PL service providers and Davies et al. in a wider context of systems integration across supply chains. Both sets of authors consider solving problems and providing unique solutions are important, but Hertz & Alfredsson consider internationalisation is also important while Davies et al. recognise it almost as a hygiene factor.

Hertz & Alfredsson’s aspirational framework encouraged firms to undertake 3PL activities and imply firms doing so are ‘following the herd’ as opposed to making a *strategic choice* to do so or are forced to do so when acquired or acquiring to grow as evidenced by their case studies of ASG and DHL. They also only consider activities directed at customers downstream in the supply chain.

On the other hand, Davies et al.’s wider systemic view recognises the emergence of firms moving strategically from being a systems seller to a systems integrator and considers both products and services across the entire supply chain i.e. in both directions from a focal firm. In so doing, they imply firms are undertaking a paradigm shift from vertically

integrated control to a dependence on relationships with others. However, this latter position is not without risk as one of their case companies, Ericsson, suffered from such a dependence on Phillips providing mobile phone chips in a widely used relationship risk case study (Mukherjee, 2008).

A simple Scopus article search was conducted using the terms noted above in various ‘AND’ and ‘OR’ Boolean logic combinations. As noted at the beginning of this section, our intention was not to undertake an extensive, systematic literature review but to find samples to inform the discussion about the relevance and contributions of both articles. We also examined two of the most recent published articles to cite each of the two ‘classic’ articles. Möller and Halinen (2018) writing in *IMM* cited Hertz & Alfredsson in their analysis of the relationship between the Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) research community and *IMM* while Yeh et al. cited them in the *The Services Industries Journal* in their study of factors affecting relationship duration. Luotola, Hellström, Gustafsson, and Perminova-Harikoski (2017) also cited Davies et al. *IMM* in their study of uncertainty of value co-creation in service provision and delivery while Rabetino, Harmsen, Kohtamäki, and Sihvonen (2018) cited them in *International Journal of Operations & Production Management* regarding their structuring of servitization-related research.

In summary, we believe there are several key takeaways and topics from both articles that have influenced and contributed to current thinking. The first relates to 3PLs and outsourcing; these two concepts link symbiotically due to their dependency on core competences to create competitive advantage. Second is the importance of integrating relationships among customers, 3PLs and suppliers that are strategically relevant in problem identification and solving, a *raison d’être* in advanced 3PL relationships. A third is internationalisation due to increases in globalisation over the past 20 years and its effects on the global 3PL market. The fourth relates to the integration of products and services as business offerings that form part of, or are enhanced by, 3PLs and outsourcing in an integrative manner and which relates to the IMP network perspective. Finally, the use of ICT as an enabler is the fifth.

3.2. Current state of the art related to the two articles

3.2.1. Growth of outsourcing and 3PL activity

As noted by Hertz & Alfredsson, 3PL service providers did indeed spawn from the outsourcing phenomena of the early 1990s and this topic continues to be a growing area of interest and activity, especially in logistics and SCM. Outsourcing’s origins are in concepts of transaction cost economics (Williamson, 1975) and organisational core competences (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990), which are unique activities that foster a definable competitive advantage and provide unique value for customers (Quinn & Hilmer, 1994). Advantages include negating capital investment in logistical assets; reducing labour costs; and improving service standards from greater logistical expertise and wider geographical coverage offered by a 3PL through economies of scale while disadvantages include a loss of control over logistics operations with a subsequent loss of management expertise and experience over time; a partial loss of direct contact with customers; disclosing competitively sensitive information to a 3PL; and possible customer confusion regarding service provision and follow-up leading to an increased risk of service failure (Grant, 2012).

While Hertz & Alfredsson were prescient about the continued growth of 3PL services they likely did not anticipate the phenomenal volume this sector has enjoyed. The number of European companies engaging 3PL service providers has nearly doubled since 2000 and the European volume of 3PL logistics and SCM business in 2016 was around USD 173 billion, while total global revenues were over USD 802 billion (Langley and Infosys, 2018).

3.2.2. Integration, collaboration and consolidation

Langley and Infosys (2018:4) argue there is a “continuation of positive relationships between shippers and third-party logistics providers. Greater availability of data and the ability to make real-time decisions are driving both parties towards more meaningful partnerships, which is leading to innovative solutions that can provide a competitive advantage for shippers”. For 3PLs and customer partnerships to be successful both parties should invest in the relationships and establish good communication.

However, the outsourcing disadvantages discussed in Section 3.2.1 point to a failure in 3PL relationships, the reasons for which include outsourcing being a strategic error; poor choice of a 3PL service provider; poor management of the relationship; and a lack of suitable and appropriate performance measurement tools despite a service level agreement (SLA) with the 3PL (Browne & Allen, 2001). Hertz & Alfredsson argued that 3PL providers should develop quality relationships such that they will enhance their customer adaptation and problem solving abilities while Davies et al. argued that a systems integrator would enhance relationships. However, these failures suggest that relationship propensity, trust, capabilities and commitment continue to be issues in this sector (Grant, 2005).

Other articles have supported the need for integration and collaboration put forward by Hertz & Alfredsson and Davies et al. Börteçine and İsmail (2017) found that both corporate and supply chain network governance among 3PLs and other stakeholders have a positive effect on sales and logistics competences, which together influence customers' intentions for relationship continuity. They considered the coordination and control between the supply chain members is a governance function.

Jayaram and Tan (2010) studied factors affecting integration among 3PLs and other supply chain members and found several factors vital in enhancing firm performance: 3PL selection criteria at a relationship's onset, performance evaluation criteria, information integration and relationship building. They argued 3PLs could use their study to calibrate how their current capability strengths match in order to expand their clientele and become full scale integrators to potential and future customers and thus move up the capability ladder.

Wagner and Sutter (2012) likewise explored contingency factors important in joint 3PL provider–customer innovation projects and project outcomes for 3PL providers and 3PL provider–customer relationships. They found several contingency factors, high integration with customer, establishing links to customers insisting on new services, complementary relationship-specific investments, agreement of benefit sharing, influence these joint projects. Further, their analysis showed that such innovation projects allow the 3PL providers to upgrade their positioning, intensify customer relationships and enjoy higher performance, thus providing a source of sustainable competitive advantage.

Yeh, Wang, Hsu, and Swanson (2018) operationalized three relational benefits (i.e., financial benefits, human interaction benefits, preferential treatment benefits) and empirically validated their impacts on switching barriers, customer satisfaction, and behavioural loyalty in an international air express delivery service context. They cited Hertz & Alfredsson's argument that one of a 3PL's primary functions of providing delivery.

Lambert and Enz (2017) revisited and updated their 2000 *IMM* article where they presented a cross-functional, cross-firm SCM framework as a new business model to overcome silo mentalities within a firm and lead to integrating supply chain key members. They found that their framework remains one of two cross-functional, cross-firm process frameworks that have been successfully implemented in major firms. The other framework, the Supply Chain Operations Reference or SCOR® model, does not include key business functions such as marketing, finance, and R&D. They concluded that while functional specialisation is still a must and processes will not replace functions, there remains a need to collaborate with other intrafirm functions and key supply chain members to create and deliver value propositions.

Hertz & Alfredsson also identified consolidation in the 3PL sector and there has been significant merger and acquisition activity in the global 3PL marketplace over the last decade. Six 3PL/4PL organizations (Burnson, 2017) generated worldwide revenues greater than USD 10 billion in 2016: DHL (26.1 billion), Kuehne + Nagel (20.3), Nippon Express (17.0), DB Schenker (16.8), C.H. Robinson (13.1) and DSV (10.1). Again, Hertz & Alfredsson could not see how much consolidation has taken place. For example, US-based XPO Logistics bought France's Norbert Dentressangle in 2015 or 3.24 billion Euro. Norbert Dentressangle itself had acquired UK 3PLs Cristian Salvesen in 2007 (£254 million) and TDG in 2011 (£212 million) and the US 3PL Jacobsen Companies in 2014 for \$750 million (XPO Logistics, 2018). Despite that flurry of consolidation, XPO was still only seventh on the 2016 global revenue list generating USD 8.6 billion (Burnson, 2017).

The growth in the sector to achieve competitive advantages support Davies et al.'s view the being a system integrator will do so. The contra argument is that there is now an oligopoly of large providers which may actually affect general competitive conditions for customers and lead to poorer service and failures. For example, since 2010 DHL has won the right to provide 3PL services for two different fast-food chains in the UK from the same smaller 3PL, Bidvest Logistics: Burger King in 2012 and Kentucky Fried Chicken in 2018 (Weaver, 2018). In both cases there were service and delivery failures and both chains have since returned to Bidvest.

3.2.3. Internationalisation

Internationally, Yeung, Zhou, Yeung, and Cheng (2012) noted 3PL services have experienced unprecedented growth and studied the mediating role of logistics outsourcing as a strategy to develop exporting firms' capabilities in the strategy–performance relationship. Growth and consolidation statistics presented in Sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 respectively underlie the increase in internationalisation. Drawing on the resource-based view (RBV) of the firm, Yeung et al. (2012) found there are positive relationships among exporters' strategic orientation towards third-party logistics (3PL) providers, 3PL providers' basic and augmented capabilities, exporters' competitive advantage, and exporters' export performance.

However, Baraldi, Ciabuschi, Lindahl, and Fratocchi (2018) noted there has been a move towards ‘reshoring’ production back to home countries for reasons relating to rising costs, poor product quality, and scarcity of skilled human resources in the host country. Thus, such motivations for reshoring often revolve around economic rationales and typically rely on international trade theory, strategic management theories (e.g., Resource Based View and Transaction Cost Theory) or location theories (e.g., industrial clustering). Further, there have been discussions of providing ‘port-centric’ logistics centres and hubs close to home country ports (Mangan, Lalwani, & Fynes, 2008) and the concept of delivering to the nearest port or ‘nearporting’ for sustainability reasons (Menachof & Grant, 2016). These developments appear contradictory to Hertz & Alfredsson's suggestions regarding internationalisation.

3.2.4. Products and services and service extensions and the IMP perspective

An extension to 3PL is the concept of a fourth-party logistics or 4PL service provider discussed by Hertz & Alfredsson. Davies et al. likened this to deepening or increasing the role of a systems integrator. A 4PL is often a separate entity established via a joint-venture or long-term contract between a primary customer and one or more partners and acts as a single interface between the customer and multiple logistics service providers. Ideally, all aspects of a customer's supply chain are managed by the 4PL and in essence it aims to establish comprehensive supply chain solutions rather than simply improve efficiency of physical logistics operations. A 4PL combines a customer's in-house resources and capabilities with those of outside partner and takes a lead role in creating value, for example undertaking the assembly of finished goods on behalf of customers. Thus, 4PL operates almost virtually, i.e. it

typically does not own assets like a 3PL but does make very intense use of technology and software in managing outsourced supply chain processes (Grant, 2012).

The move towards providing a combination of products and services has resulted in two fields of research and thought: ‘servitization’ and ‘service-dominant logic’ (S-D logic). The term servitization has become “nearly synonymous with companies moving from selling products and basic services to selling product-service systems (PSS)” (Rabetino et al., 2018:350) and Davies et al.’s discussion of service integrators was a precursor to the PSS idea; hence the continuing citations to their work in the servitization literature. According to Vargo & Lusch, S-D logic represents “a shift in logic of exchange” from a goods dominant logic to a process-driven, service-centric logic providing a “transition from a manufacturing model to a service-provider model” (2008:257) that moves the “locus of value creation” from the producer to “a collaborative process of co-creation between parties” (2008:256).

Several articles adopted an IMP network perspective, which is in-line with the premises of Hertz & Alfredsson and Davies et al. As indicated in Section 3.1, Möller and Halinen (2018) cited Hertz & Alfredsson in their comparison of IMM and IMP. Baraldi et al. (2018) used an IMP lens to investigate home- and host-country contexts and considered they both form a single large transnational network. Additionally, Choi and Hara (2018) investigated the effects of relationship-specific resources and tailored activities on relationship performance. Based on the IMP group’s actors–resources–activities (ARA) model, their study found that show resource specificity and ‘activity tailoredness’ positively influence relationship performance.

There is also an expansion of networks beyond the dyad to triads. Sengupta, Niranjan, and Krishnamoorthy (2018) argued that firms, in order to compete and sustain, struggle to achieve a level of excellence in all aspects and that a manufacturer’s (or supplier’s) role today is more of a systems integrator and solution provider, affecting what they term the supplier-3PL-customer service triads. They consider that service triads, because of their unique characteristics and associated risks, are an under-researched subject that warrants further work and understanding. These discussions relate to the Hertz & Alfredsson and Davies et al. articles, which both identified service, longer supply chains including triadic relationships among suppliers, 3PLs/integrators and customers.

3.2.5. Communications and ICT

There are a number of established and emerging strategies for improved communications between 3PLs and customers, including real-time customer access to 3PL administrative responses and a focus on people, process and technology. A key indicator here is the extent to which customers believe ICT capabilities of 3PLs are important. Langley and Infosys’ (2018) survey found that 91% of customers believe that and that satisfaction with 3PL ICT capabilities has increased to 56% from 22% in 2002.

Mortensen and Lemoine (2008) considered development trends for future cooperation between manufacturers and 3PL providers and argued there will be an increase in the efficiency of the relationships based particularly on ICT. While both Hertz & Alfredsson and Davies et al. raised issues of communication and the former acknowledged the role technology would play, neither of them could have foreseen the rapid adoption of technologies such as smart-phones, apps and now blockchain which has dramatically changes the landscape in the last 10 years.

4. Conclusions

In summary, both the Hertz & Alfredsson and Davies et al. articles raised many of the topics discussed in Section 3 and thus should have informed and influenced the over 260 citations each article has in Scopus. It is of course difficult to know how much they informed and influenced others unless a citing article specifically used their ideas

and/or frameworks such as Wagner and Sutter (2012) or Yeung et al. (2012).

Hertz & Alfredsson have primarily contributed to the 3PL debate by identifying strategic considerations for them, which has been important to their constituents in the logistics and SCM domain. Issues of reshoring and 3PL growth and consolidation likely stemming from the 2008 financial crisis nor the rapid movement towards 4PL activities could have not been foreseen by them. Work in other areas such as integration, servitization and S-D logic have also gone beyond their expectations.

Davies et al. have likewise contributed to topics of vertical versus network integration and outsourcing and competitive advantage for constituents in industrial marketing and operations including servitization. They did not specifically look at 3PLs and supply chains however their work is applicable to these domains.

What then for the future of these works? It is useful to briefly comment first on potential future research of the five areas discussed in Section 3.2 based on recent literature. Outsourcing and the increased use of 3PLs/4PLs continues to provide opportunities such as horizontal collaboration among competitors (Hingley, Lindgreen, Grant, & Kane, 2011). Langley and Infosys suggest that “...greater availability of data and the ability to make real-time decisions are driving both [shippers and LSPs] towards more meaningful partnerships, which is leading to innovative solutions that can provide a competitive advantage for shippers” (2018:4). However, challenges remain in developing full and meaningful collaborations (Grant, 2005) which might require different approaches and methodologies based on actor behaviours and intentions and relationship governance such as neural differences between trust and distrust (e.g. Van Zeeland-van der Holst & Henseler, 2018). Servitization research also continues and the use of technology and the Internet of Things (IoT) may be an enabler that will require new and difference methodologies and methods (e.g. Rymaszewska, Helo, & Gunasekaran, 2017). Finally, technology in 2018 is focussed on the notion of blockchain “...which breaks each movement down into a block and documents transactions every time a shipment changes hands ...and creates a record of the parties involved in the process and provides specific details associated with each movement...” (Langley and Infosys, 2018:4). It is still a nascent technology which has had been lauded and criticized (e.g. Saberi, Kouhizadeh, & Sarkis, 2018) and so research opportunities exist to understand its opportunities, shortcomings and applications.

Hertz & Alfredsson’s work has been important for a decade and one-half, and based on the citation trend shown in Fig. 1 appears to be continuing to add value for newer research. Davies et al.’s work is more recent and shows an upward citation trajectory in Fig. 3. However, all research has a temporal element to it and thus both will likely see a decline in their relevance at some point as new knowledge comes to the fore. Nevertheless, the number of citations each article has suggests their respective contributions have been important and thus they are worthy of being considered ‘classic’ articles in IMM.

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