

---

# Editorial: From impact and relevance to learning faster and innovating forward – introduction of a new paper category

Editorial

745

---

## Introduction

Many journal editors will state that impact factors are imperfect measures of success as they proudly post annual impact factors for their journals. The need for the search for research rigor to not go at the expense of relevance has been well articulated multiple times over (Lambert, 2019; van Hoek *et al.*, 2020). But today, we research in a different world, and our journal is seeking to build on its legacy of providing a publishing space that helped co-create and innovate our discipline (van Hoek, 2021). For that reason, *IJPDLM* launches a new section and paper type devoted to innovators and transformers. We welcome research that can help scholars learn faster and innovate forward.

## A different time in logistics and supply chain management

There are at least three key changes that impact research today. The first is that our field has matured. *IJPDLM* is over 50 years old, and you can fill very thick textbooks with our theoretical and conceptual body of knowledge, libraries with all the research being published. Unlike our founding fathers, we as researchers today are not building something new. We can stand on the shoulders of those innovators that came before us. We need to continue to learn from them and owe it to the wealth of knowledge they helped create to carry their work forward. There are many opportunities to continue to advance their innovative approaches and to continue to transform our field.

The second change is that our field is now widely recognized in academia and industry. Even consumers understand there is such a thing as a supply chain that needs to work for them. At our universities, we are seeing a growth in number of students in our programs and in the number of first year students that come in having already decided they are going to study supply chain. That is different; we used to have to “win them over” from finance, marketing and strategy. In industry supply chain, managers and executives are spending less time working to earn a “seat at the table.” The CSCO of a European manufacturer for example indicated that he is being called into business reviews with the top customers, on customer request, recently, something that did not happen just two years ago. Customers are recognizing the need to consider supply chain as a key factor in the value proposition and key aspect of a company’s ability to serve. The growing focus on ESG has only enhanced this. Many businesses turn to the supply chain team to own major and concrete aspects of the ESG agenda and long-term targets (CSCMP, 2022). On top of that, customer attention is driven by the need of supply chain managers to cope with an ongoing set of challenges and disruptions, including war, inflation and extreme weather. As researchers, we need to not only learn from and be inspired by innovators and transformers that came before us, and we also have the opportunity to learn from today’s innovators and transformers in industry. By capturing their lessons learned at the frontier of practice, we can also inform a research agenda that can support further innovation and transformation.

The third change is that the bar is going up on supply chain management. The supply chain team owning ESG targets is an exciting expansion of scope and opportunity to add



International Journal of Physical  
Distribution & Logistics  
Management  
Vol. 52 No. 9/10, 2022  
pp. 745-747  
© Emerald Publishing Limited  
0960-0035  
DOI 10.1108/IJPDLM-12-2022-537

value. It also means additional metrics to perform against. Recognizing the “grand challenges” our discipline faces and can impact (Touboullic and McCarthy, 2020), it is time for researchers to step up and support progress more and faster. That may mean the need for changes in the research process, embracing industry collaboration and the usage of newer methods such as action principles research (van Hoek et al., 2022). The journal’s new section seeks to encourage such approaches, in support of the innovation and transformative needs in supply chain management.

***IJPDLM* has a legacy to build upon – the right home to innovate the publishing model**

*IJPDLM* had many CSCMP distinguished service award winners and hall of famers from academia and industry publish, edited and contribute from its very first volumes onward (van Hoek, 2021). The journal truly stands on their shoulders, and the editorial approach and research contributions can continue to inspire progress today. The first volumes of the journal featured papers co-author with managers and included work on preliminary findings about new innovations not fully developed but offering promising direction for research. In the spirit of “standing on the shoulders of giants,” we introduce this new section to build upon these innovations and contributions.

**A new section**

The progress in research methods used in supply chain management research is part of maturation in academic research. The rigor of fully empirical studies and research approaches such as design science and longitudinal and reproduction research goes without saying. But given the need to learn faster, there is room and need for an additional approach. Action principle research, for example, (Lacity et al., 2021; van Hoek et al., 2022) aims to learn from innovators at the very frontier as they innovate. The benefit of doing so is that early lessons learned can inform innovative efforts of others in a timely manner and inspire researchers as innovation unfolds not after the fact. Table 1 aims to clarify how in response to changes in supply chain management, the new section aims to offer additional avenues for

| What has changed?                 | Implications for research                     | New section publishing innovation                                                                                                                                      | What it is not                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Maturity of the discipline        | Standing on the shoulders of giants           | Papers about innovators and transformers (such as CSCMP Supply Chain Hall of Famers) to continue to learn from them and identify pathways for building upon their work | Just a historical account – the aim is to learn from innovators as a basis for identifying how their contributions can be furthered and build upon                             |
| Recognition of the discipline     | Less about justifying, more about advancing   | Papers at the frontier of knowledge to help inspire further research, enabling faster learning and support innovation as it happens                                    | A case against rigorous empirical research – the aim is to create an opportunity to learn early lessons that can support further innovation and research into promising fields |
| Innovative need of the discipline | The need to learn faster and innovate forward | Co-creations with industry to “get closer to the fire” and to directly support frontier innovative efforts                                                             | A call for case studies – the aim is to collaborate with innovators at the frontier closer to when the innovation and transformation happens, not record after the fact        |

**Table 1.**  
Call for papers

research and publishing that learns from innovators and aims to build upon their contributions, study innovation at the frontier, possibly in direct collaboration with innovators, to capture early learnings faster and a basis for inspiring further research and innovation.

### Types of papers welcomed

The new section welcomes papers that

- (1) Seek to capture learnings from the greatest innovators and transformers in the past in an effort to continue to build upon their innovations and to inspire a research agenda that further transformation,
- (2) Capture lessons from innovators and transformers in the current, by collaborating with innovators at the frontier of practice, to inform a research agenda that can help accelerate innovation and transformation and drive real-world progress in supply chain management and
- (3) Target paper length is 4,000–6,000 words, and a full empirical study does not need to have been completed, this in support of faster learning at the frontier and inspiring further research with transformative impact potential

As an editorial team, we will aim to support accelerated review cycles and reviews that consider the nature of the section and papers we seek. By offering a home for research that can support learning faster and innovating forward, we hope to do our part in response to the great need for progress in supply chain management. We hope you will do yours.

**Remko van Hoek**

### References

- CSCMP (2020), *2022 State of Sustainable Supply Chain Report*, CSCMP, Oak Brook, IL.
- Lacity, M., Willcocks, L. and Gozman, D. (2021), “Influencing information systems practice: the action principles approach applied to robotic process and cognitive automation”, *Journal of Information Technology*, Vol. 36 No. 3, pp. 216-240.
- Lambert, D.M. (2019), “Rediscovering relevance”, *International Journal of Logistics Management*, Vol. 30 No. 2, pp. 382-394.
- Touboulic, A. and McCarthy, L. (2020), “Collective action in SCM: a call for activist research”, *The International Journal of Logistics Management*, Vol. 31 No. 1, pp. 3-20.
- van Hoek, R. (2021), “Retrospective on the launch of IJPDLM – lessons for the future of logistics and supply chain management research”, *International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management*, Vol. 51 No. 10, pp. 1065-1089.
- van Hoek, R., Lacity, M. and Willcocks, L. (2022), “Influencing supply chain practice: the action principles approach applied to pandemic risk management”, *International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print, doi: [10.1108/IJPDLM-11-2021-0474](https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPDLM-11-2021-0474).
- van Hoek, R., Loseby, D. and Wong, C.Y. (2020), “Editorial: new section”, *International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management*, Vol. 50 Nos 9/10, pp. 769-774.