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Supply Chain collaboration and inter-organizational coercion in Mexican firms^{*}

Carmen Estela CARLOS ORNELAS^a, Oscar PÉREZ VEYNA^b, Jorge Alberto RODRÍGUEZ STEFFANI^c, Martha GONZÁLEZ ADAME^d

^a *Research Professor in Department of Economic and Management Sciences,*

Aguascalientes Institute of Technology, Tecnológico Ave. 1801, Aguascalientes, MEXICO.

^b *Research Professor in Doctoral Program in Development Studies, Unit on Development Studies,*

University of Zacatecas, MEXICO.

^c *Doctoral Student in Technological Innovation Projects in Product and Process Engineering,*

Department of Engineering Projects, Technical University of Cataloni, Diagonal Ave. 647. Barcelona, SPAIN.

^d *Research Professor in Doctoral Program in Management, University of Aguascalientes, Av. Universidad # 940 University City, Aguascalientes, MEXICO.*

Abstract

This document is focused on both the definition of inter-organizational collaboration in supply chains by distinguishing characteristics and establishing their boundaries with other forms of inter-organizational relationships, as to how these relationships are influenced by coercion resulting from the asymmetries of power between customers and suppliers, or the voluntary agreement that create them. Rhetoric about the relationships between organizations in supply chains, which are named and conceptualized in different ways (supply chain integration, supply chain cooperation, supply chain coordination, customer-supplier relationships, supply chain collaboration, supply chain management) are always desirable they reach high levels, by the expected impact on response time, flexibility, quality and delivery of goods or services produced by the channel.

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- This paper has not been presented at any other revue.
 - Corresponding author C.E. Carlos. Tel. +52 449 910 5002 ext. 146 Fax +52 449 970 0423
 - *Email addresses:* carmenestela@yahoo.com (Carmen Estela Carlos Ornelas), pveyna@estudiosdeldesarrollo.net (Oscar Pérez Veyna), jorge.alberto.rodriguez@upc.edu (J.A. Rodríguez Steffani), mgonzale@correo.uaa.mx (Martha González Adame)

However, there is a little evidence about how much this collaboration is a reality in Mexican firms and its impact on supply chain performance. The issue has been studied only tangentially in some previous works. In one of them, the researcher found a lack of awareness of global and systemic business thinking, particularly in medium and small enterprises, which makes them vulnerable to global competitors by limiting their performance and competitiveness (Jimenez, 2004). However, the emphasis placed in the same work to fundamental factors such as cost, cycle time, service level and quality by the partners of supply chains, especially the preferences granted to the last two factors, allow see an opportunity to increase the level of collaboration. Although the diverse range of priorities assigned to the factors by the different partners of the supply chain becomes apparent lack of common and aligned goals. Therefore, it is necessary to generate knowledge about the degree of inter-organizational collaboration, their characteristics, and its origin.

In this paper, collaboration has six dimensions: management commitment, alignment, supply chain performance measurement, external simplification processes, information systems integration and alliances. The management commitment refers to actions that demonstrate willingness to improving performance that gives the firm to an external orientation of its operations. The alignment is the holistic view of supply chain competitiveness and processes combined with the creation of the specific role of each partner in the supply chain to meet customer requirements. The supply chain performance measures considered its objectivity and its orientation toward collaboration between partners in the supply chain. External processes simplification refers to the degree in which operational efficiency is increased, in a process not constrained by organizational boundaries, and activities are linked smoothly between business process, eliminating processes or parts of processes duplicative or unnecessary and implementing new and more efficient work routines that operate under common operational policies for the supply chain. The information systems integration consider how they articulate with the those of customers and suppliers providing real-time exchange of accurate, relevant and timely information. Alliance refers to mechanisms, guidelines and procedures for inter-organizational operations. In measuring supply chain performance four dimensions were analyzed: lead time, flexibility, quality and delivery of products produced by the channel. Finally, collaboration origin is a dichotomous variable with next two possible values: coercive or voluntary collaboration.

Data were collected through interviews with production, marketing and logistic managers in 30 manufacturing firms. Dates were submitted to a content analysis to verify the dimensions established theoretically and describe and characterized supply chain collaboration by its origin.

Key words: Supply chain collaboration; Inter-organizational coercion, Supply chain performance

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