

## STRATEGIC SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT AS A DRIVER OF SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

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### Abstract

In an increasingly competitive and uncertain business environment, organizations are required to move beyond traditional, cost-focused supply chain practices to achieve long-term success. This study examines the role of strategic supply chain management (SSCM) as a key driver of sustainable competitive advantage. Drawing on the resource-based view and dynamic capabilities perspective, the study investigates how strategically aligned, integrated, and sustainability-oriented supply chain practices contribute to long-term organizational competitiveness. A quantitative research approach was adopted using a cross-sectional survey design, with data collected from supply chain and operations managers across manufacturing and service organizations. The data were analyzed using reliability analysis, descriptive statistics, and regression analysis to test the proposed relationships. The findings reveal that strategic supply chain management has a significant and positive effect on sustainable competitive advantage, while supply chain integration further strengthens this relationship. The results suggest that organizations that embed sustainability, collaboration, and strategic alignment into their supply chain practices are better positioned to enhance performance, resilience, and differentiation. This study contributes to the growing literature on strategic and sustainable supply chain management by providing empirical evidence of its competitive value. Practical implications are offered for managers and policymakers seeking to leverage supply chains as strategic assets for sustainable competitive advantage.

### Introduction

Strategic supply chain management (SSCM) has become one of the pillars of attaining sustainable competitive advantage instead of operational efficiency in an ever competitive and environmentally conscious global market. SSCM incorporates long-term planning, sustainability practices, stakeholders involvement, and technological innovation in creating value that goes beyond cost reduction and short-term benefits. The recent studies put forward the

emphasis that sustainable practices of the supply chain, in addition to the enhancement of firm performance, contribute to a higher competitive positioning of firms as they fit organizational capabilities to demands of the environmental and social spheres (Li et al., 2025). Regulators, customers, and investors pressured organizations to incorporate sustainability in the core of their supply chain operations, which resulted in the achievement of better risk management, better brand appeal, and better responsiveness to market

(Li et al., 2025; Chen, 2024). As an illustration, green procurement, circular logistics, and low-carbon operations can be considered sustainable supply chain properties that assist companies in fulfilling regulatory requirements and gain the differentiation and resilience benefits in global trade settings (Marvin, 2025). The strategies help firms to translate sustainability commitments to competitive results by enhancing resource efficiency, process innovation, and enhancing relationships with stakeholders (Marvin, 2025). In addition to environmental issues, strategic supplier relationship management promotes resilience and agility, which have become important in the current unstable business environment defined by geopolitical risks, supply resilience, and fast-changing consumer tastes (Zhao, 2025). The strategic engagements of suppliers increase the level of transparency, trust, and mutual innovation, which contribute to the sustainability goals and competitiveness. Similarly, sustainable practices, including ethical sourcing and circular logistical solutions can also make firms more adept in minimizing waste, promoting operational efficiency, and developing differentiated products and services that are attractive to socially responsible consumers (Syarkani, 2025). According to emerging market research, such as the manufacturing industry of Indonesia, a sustainable supply chain has a positive relationship with the competitive advantage, and environmental management, ethical sourcing, and the use of circular logistics are major competitive driving factors (Syarkani, 2025). Such conclusions endorse that sustainability ceases being a non-strategic complement but a core component of strategic supply chain planning that both creates long-term performance, resilience and competitiveness.

This theoretical basis of the relationship frequently relies on Natural Resource-Based View and Stakeholder Theory which clarify how distinctive supply chain resources and the pressure of stakeholders convert sustainability investments into strategic resources inaccessible by competitors (Li et al., 2025). In this perspective, companies that actively embrace environmentally friendly

supply chain management successfully use environmental and social resources to achieve competitive advantage and achieve sustainable competitive advantages. As an example, the introduction of green technologies to supply chains, like Internet of Things (IoT), blockchain, and sophisticated analytics, would improve the supply chain visibility, responsiveness, and sustainability rates (Chen, 2024). These enablers are technological in nature and help in strategies, enhancing coordination with partners, and real-time adjustments to market changes that are all beneficial as they contribute to competitive advantage. Moreover, strategic supply chain processes have dynamic capabilities that enable firms to re-organize resource in reaction to environmental changes that will support their performance in the face of uncertainty and complexity (Atieh and Abushaega, 2025). One of the strategic supply chain management focuses on flexibility and innovation develops the environment in which long-term value addition is attained in all three economic, environmental, and social facets.

With the growing trend in the development of the concept of sustainability within the branding and operational processes of the multinational firms, the phenomenon of sustainable supply chains has also come out as one of the major competitive elements in the international marketing and global brand positioning. Companies that prioritize sustainability in all their supply chains gain a competitive edge in boosting consumer trust, cutting costs on resources, and developing stronger relationships with partners and other stakeholders, which generates reputational and operational benefits in the international markets (Stošica Mihajlovic and Mihajlovic, 2025). Sustainable supply chains also help in the creation of wider corporate goals through increased transparency, minimization of environmental risks, and ability of firms to achieve high standards of sustainability required by the international regulatory agencies and global supply chain standards. Sustainable supply practices, in this regard, serve as an efficient differentiator in the market as firms are able to compete beyond price

by using their adherence to ethical, environmentally-responsible, and socially-relevant practices.

Empirically, the advantage of linking sustainability efforts to strategic planning to create competitive advantage is also noted. Research has determined that sustainable practices have a positive impact on the performance of the organization, and they mediate the relationship between strategic supply chain planning and competitive performance (Li et al., 2025). Companies integrate sustainability in their supply chain strategies, which improves the efficiency of processes, builds innovations, and lowers environmental expenses, which build the capabilities that lead to the long-term competitiveness (Chen, 2024). Besides that, strategic supply chain management is effective in helping firms develop resilience by preparing to deal with disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic, tension over global trade, and climate-related uncertainties. Strong supply chains cushion companies against shocks, continuity, and hold competitive stance in the markets that experience a high number of disruptions and unpredictable occurrences.

Overall, strategic supply chain management has become a versatile and dynamic field of study that spurs sustainable competitive advantage by incorporating the concepts of sustainability, stakeholder value, new technologies, and response capabilities. Through coordinating strategic supply chain efforts and the general organizational objectives and external demand to take on environmental and social responsibility, companies can attain a competitive advantage that is not only sustainable but also resilient. It is this holistic approach towards supply chain strategy that helps to comprehensively explain why companies need to go beyond the old models of cost focus and instead view sustainability as a key strategic direction. Sustainability, strategic planning and competitive advantage interaction makes strategic supply chain management an important catalyst of long-term organizational success in a more complex and global business environment.

## Literature Review

### Strategic Supply Chain Management Conceptual Foundations

Strategic Supply Chain Management (SSCM) is more than normal supply chain operations as it allows the strategic alignment of the supply chain processes with the organizational strategy and sustainability objectives. Although the efficiency and cost reduction are the primary aspects of the traditional supply chain management, SSCM considers long-term relationships, sustainability, and strategic planning as the central elements of decision-making (Li et al., 2025). Li et al. (2025) claim that SSCM practices bring together disparate functions, logistics, procurement, production and distribution, under a strategic framework that focuses on agility, responsiveness, resilience and sustainable performance. Theoretically, the Natural Resource Based View (NRBV) and Dynamic Capabilities perspective informs very important perspectives on how SSCM resources and capabilities can be converted into competitive advantage (Atieh and Abushaega, 2025). The NRBV suggests that the sustainability competencies of green innovation, resource efficiency and environmentally-focused supply chain policies provide distinctive and unrivaled resources that can improve long-term performance of a firm. Instead, dynamic capabilities highlight the fact that organizations should ceaselessly change and reorganize supply chain operations in reaction to the environmental change, which reinforces resilience and competitiveness (Atieh & Abushaega, 2025). This theoretical basis underscores the fact that SSCM is not only a collection of operating methods but an approachable platform of integrating the environmental and social implications in long-term competitive positioning.

### Strategic Combination and Competitiveness

One of the key themes in the literature of late is the beneficial effect of strategic supply chain integration to sustainable competitive advantage. Integration can be described as the coordination and alignment of both internal and external partners to accomplish shared goals and high

outcomes in performance (Li et al., 2025). The supply chain integration increases visibility, information flow, as well as joint decision-making across the stakeholders leading to better responsiveness and market flexibility. Li et al. (2025) proved that integrated supply chains are not only able to minimize lead times and transaction costs but also innovation and risk management capabilities are also established, which are all significant determinants of competitive advantage. Besides, it has been found that supplier relationship management with its focus on trust, commitment, and long-lasting cooperation can be regarded as a strategic mechanism with the help of which companies can demonstrate better performance in uncertain settings (Zhao, 2025). As mentioned by Zhao (2025), strategic supplier engagement promotes resilience - the possibility to absorb and recover disruptions which becomes one of the sources of competitive differentiation. Integration and collaboration also enable the firms to establish synchronized supply networks that are quick to adapt to changes, minimize uncertainty and remain competitive even in unfavorable circumstances. This literature supports the statement that supply chain integration is a strategic facilitator of competitive advantage and not a tactic operational activity.

#### **Competitive Advantage as a Driving Force of Sustainability Practices.**

The sustainability aspect of SSCM has received considerable academic consideration where companies are increasingly beginning to see environmental and social activities as part of differentiation and stakeholder worth. It is found out that green supply chain practices such as green procurement, eco-design, waste reduction, and low-carbon logistics enhance operational performance and response to external demands of environmental responsibility (Marvin, 2025). Marvin (2025) established that companies that incorporate sustainability into supply chain strategy are more cost-effective, satisfied by customers, and comply with the regulations, which altogether lead to sustained competitive

advantage. Equally, Syarkani (2025) presents facts based on manufacturing industry in Indonesia, which indicate that sustainability activities enhance resource use, better brand image, and ethical market position, all of which improve the competitive edge. Notably, sustainability is not merely an operational strategy but also a strategic distinction, which will help companies to find customers and investors who pay close attention to environmental issues and comply with new global sustainability criteria (Syarkani, 2025). The results are consistent with the stakeholder theory according to which companies that consider environmental and social interests as well as other aspects besides shareholder profits are more likely to maintain their performance in complex, multi-stakeholder situations. Therefore, environmental stewardship and competitive advantage are major influencers that are founded on sustainable practices entrenched in strategic supply chain management.

#### **Competitive Edge, Resilience and Technology.**

The use of technology is important in ensuring that SSCM gains competitive advantage in a world that is marked with digital transformation and constant disruptions. The traditional technologies of the Internet of Things (IoT), blockchain, cloud computing, and advanced analytics provide transparency and traceability, as well as real-time decision-making, which are all the keys to strategic supply chain performance (Chen, 2024). Chen (2024) emphasizes the role of digitalization in strategic planning, including the combination of data between the supply chain nodes, the ability to predict, and a faster reaction to changes in the market or the environment. Digital supply chains provide a better coordinated approach, less uncertainty, and customer responsiveness - all elements of competitive advantage. Moreover, robust supply chains take advantage of technology and strategic plan to absorb shocks such as pandemics, trade wars and climatic effect. Zhao (2025) notes that resilience as the ability to absorb, adapt, and recover due to disruptions is a strategic asset in the modern business environment that has turned volatile. Based on resilience and

sustainability practices, organizations are more likely to consolidate their competitive bases based on the continuity of services, minimizing risks, and vulnerability to supply shocks. Collectively, technology-based SSCM practices establish a competitive basis towards operational excellence as well as long-term competitive distinction.

**Methodology**

The present study takes the form of quantitative research in order to find out the impact of strategic supply chain management on sustainable competitive advantage. The cross-sectional survey design was adopted, which is suitable because it is suitable to gather standardized and data on a large sample at a specific time and it can also be used to test hypothetical relationships between variables (Sekaran & Bougie, 2020). The sample size was in the form of supply chain, operations, and logistics managers in manufacturing and service companies. A structured questionnaire based on validated scales of measurement that were used in previous research on strategic supply chain management and competitive advantage was used to collect the data (Li et al., 2025). The questionnaire contained several questions and the answer to these questions was based on a five point Likert scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Non-probability purposive sampling method was used, to make sure that the respondents had the relevant knowledge and experience pertaining to the supply chain decision-making. To have quality data, the data collected were filtered in terms of missing values, outliers and normality before data analysis. Cronbachs alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted were used to assess the reliability and validity of the constructs according to the recommended values (Hair et al., 2021). The respondent demographics, as well as the important variables examined in the study, were summarized using descriptive statistics. Regression analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM) were used to test hypotheses, and it is appropriate when the researcher needs to examine more complicated relationships among latent constructs (Hair et al., 2021). There was a deliberate adherence to ethics issues during the research process. It was voluntary participation, and anonymity was guaranteed, as well as respondents knew about the academic nature of the research. The approach is a powerful methodology of assessing empirically the contribution of strategic supply chain management towards sustainable competitive advantage.

**Results**

**Results**

**Table 1: Reliability Analysis of Study Constructs**

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha
Strategic Supply Chain Management	6	0.872
Sustainable Competitive Advantage	5	0.845
Supply Chain Integration	4	0.818

Table 1 shows the reliability values of the most significant constructs adopted in the study. To determine the internal consistency of the scales of measurement, the values of Cronbach alpha were calculated. As per the generally accepted rules, a Cronbach alpha value of 0.70 and above is a reasonably good level of reliability. According to the table, Strategic Supply Chain Management has a Cronbachs alpha of 0.872 implying that it has a

high degree of internal consistency of the measurement items. On the same note, Sustainable Competitive Advantage had a value of 0.845 with Supply Chain Integration registering 0.818. These findings indicate that all constructs are above the recommended threshold, which proves that the measurement tools are valid and can be used in the further statistical analysis. High reliability scores imply that the items are always

able to measure the corresponding constructs and minimize the chances of measurement error. The findings of the study based on these constructs can therefore be said to be reliable and strong. The

introduction of a scale reliability is an important requirement in the hypothesis testing and structure analysis and the findings reveal that the data satisfies this basic need.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables**

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Strategic Supply Chain Management	3.89	0.64
Supply Chain Integration	3.76	0.61
Sustainable Competitive Advantage	3.92	0.58

Table 2 provides an overview of the descriptive statistics of the key research variables, such as standard deviations and the mean values. The Strategic Supply Chain Management mean score is 3.89, which shows that respondents tend to believe that their organizations have been employing strategic means of supply chain management. The standard deviation of (0.64) indicates that there was a moderate agreement among the respondents. Supply Chain Integration had an average of 3.76 indicating that the supply chain integration is a positive and relatively less strong among the internal functions and external partners. Sustainable Competitive Advantage recorded the greatest mean score of 3.92 which

implies that the organizations believe that they are competitively placed as far as cost efficiency, differentiation and long-term performance is concerned. The standard deviations of all the variables are less than 0.70 which means that there is not much dispersion and all the respondents had similar perceptions. The presented descriptive outcomes imply that the sampled organizations are already involved in active strategic supply chain activities and aware of their contribution to sustainable competitive achievements. All in all, the results give the initial evidence in favor of the suggested relationships and give the reason to continue the inferential analysis to prove the hypotheses of the study.

**Table 3: Regression Analysis – Effect of SSCM on Sustainable Competitive Advantage**

Predictor Variable	$\beta$ Coefficient	t-value	p-value
Strategic Supply Chain Management	0.613	9.84	0.000
Supply Chain Integration	0.274	4.21	0.001
$R^2 = 0.58$	$F = 112.6$	$p < 0.001$	

Table 3 reports the findings of the regression model that evaluated the effect of Strategic Supply Chain Management and Supply Chain Integration on Sustainable Competitive Advantage. Strategic Supply Chain Management has a beta of 0.613 and is also significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) which demonstrates that it has a strong positive correlation with sustainable competitive advantage. This observation implies that companies that embrace strategic, integrated, and sustainability-focused supply chain practices have high chances of recording high-quality and long-

term competitive results. The positive and significant impact also appears in Supply Chain Integration (0.274,  $p = 0.001$ ), which demonstrates the supportive contribution to the enhancement of the competitive advantage by coordination and collaboration. Compared to other models that estimate a behavioral and management research, the model explains 58 percent of Sustainable Competitive Advantage ( $R^2 = 0.58$ ). The large F-value indicates the general fitness of the regression model. These findings not only confirm the hypothesis of the study that

Strategic Supply Chain Management is a relevant source of sustainable competitive advantage but they also substantiate the point that strategic alignment and integration in supply chain are the key success factors in the long-term organizational performance.

### Discussions

This study has produced substantial empirical data that strategic supply chain management (SSCM) is an important aspect in the attainment of sustainable competitive advantage. The findings indicate that companies that have adopted integrated, strategically aligned, and sustainability oriented supply chain practices are in a better position to attain long term competitiveness. The contributions of the importance and positive association between SSCM and sustainable competitive advantage is in line with previous studies that have underscored how the supply chain operations can be turned into a strategic asset instead of an operational activity. This result is consistent with current literature that states that long-term-based supply chain strategy, collaboration, and sustainability contribute to better performance and differentiation of firms in very competitive markets.

The descriptive statistics and reliability show that the respondents view their organizations as actively involved in the strategic supply chain practices, which also supports the validity of regression findings. The large explanatory amount of the regression model indicates that SSCM explains a significant percentage of the sustainable competitive advantage, which indicates its strategic relevance. Such results are in line with the Resource-Based View and Dynamic Capabilities Theory, which argue that distinctive and valuable, and not easily replicative, supply chain capabilities have a role in maintaining competitive advantages. The strategic alignment of the supply chain, collaboration and integration seem to be dynamic capabilities that allow companies to respond to environmental uncertainty without compromising their high level performance.

Moreover, the high impact of supply chain integration indicates that the value of

coordination and information sharing among supply chain partners cannot be undervalued. ICs help organizations to manage disruptions more efficiently and maintain a competitive edge by providing responsiveness, risk mitigation, and innovation. This finding aligns with previous research which highlights the importance of supplier relations and internal coordination in improving resiliency and competitive performance. The results indicate that companies in the unpredictable and volatile environment can obtain a strategic advantage by encouraging long-term partnerships and joint supply chain design. Another finding is the strategic importance of sustainability-oriented supply chain practices. Organizations can deliver cost efficiencies, positive brand image, and stakeholder expectations by integrating the environment and social concerns into supply chain strategies. These sustainability-based results are differentiation processes that strengthen the long-term competitiveness. This justifies the stakeholder theory that claims the consideration of the interests of various stakeholders improves organizational legitimacy and positioning in the markets. In general, the paper confirms that strategic supply chain management is a multi faceted concept that incorporates strategy, sustainability and cooperation to foster sustainable competitive advantage, which presents significant information to both researchers and practitioners interested in improving organizational performance by implementing strategic supply chain programs.

### Practical Implications

This research has various practical implications that can be given to the managers, policymakers and practitioners in the supply chain. First, the findings indicate that a supply chain management is a strategic activity, but not a purely operational activity in organizations. Managers are advised to integrate the supply chain strategies with the overall corporate goals to obtain the long term competitive advantage. Strategic alignment helps companies to use the capabilities of the supply chain like integration, collaboration, and sustainability as organizational strengths.

Second, the beneficial effect of supply chain integration implies that companies need to invest into better coordination systems both interdepartmentally and with other firms. The responsiveness, uncertainty, and resilience to disruptions can be increased through the enhancement of the information sharing, integrated planning, and lasting relationships with the suppliers. Third, the results underline the necessity to incorporate sustainability into the process of supply chain decision-making. Environmentally and socially responsible practices, including green procurement and ethical sourcing, are not only the practices that managers have to implement to meet the regulations but, also, to stand out at competitive markets. Lastly, these insights might be utilized by the policymakers and the regulators of industries to foster sustainable supply chain activities by fostering cooperation, visibility, and digital technology adoption. These initiatives may make the industry more competitive and in addition promote wider sustainability objectives.

### Limitations of the Study

Although it has contributed to it, this study has a few shortcomings that need to be mentioned. To begin with, the study used a cross-sectional design, thereby restricting the possibility of establishing causal links between the strategic supply chain management and the sustainable competitive advantage. Longitudinal data would perhaps give a better idea on how these relationships change with time. Second, the research study was based on self-reported survey data that can be prone to common method bias and respondent subjectivity. Thirdly, the sample was limited to a particular group of supply chain and operations managers which might interfere with the generalizability of the findings to other industrial or geographical situations. Moreover, the research concentrated on the selected aspects of strategic supply chain management and failed to consider other factors that might have been relevant, including the organizational culture, leadership style, or the external environmental uncertainty. These boundaries indicate that one should be

careful about the interpretation of the results and that there is a chance to conduct additional research.

### Future Research Directions

The study findings can be developed in future research in various ways. To begin with, longitudinal research is advised to focus on the sustainability of strategic supply chain management on sustainable competitive advantage and to capture the dynamic change in supply chain strategies over a period of time. Second, other intermediary or collateral variables (agility of the organization, digital transformation, or environmental uncertainty) can be included in the future research to get an in-depth view of underlying mechanisms.

Third, the comparative analysis between industries or countries might be a good source of information on the impact of the contextual factors on the success of strategic supply chain practices. The literature would be richer with the research in emerging economies, especially, the research would indicate challenges and opportunities in the region. Lastly, qualitative or mixed methods may be used to supplement quantitative results to give more information on managerial views and decision-making in strategic and sustainable supply chain management.

### Conclusion

This study has discussed strategic supply chain management as source of sustainable competitive advantage and given empirical evidence of the strategic significance of this concept. The results validate strategic aligned, integrated, and sustainability based supply chain practices to a very large extent when it comes to the long-term competitiveness of an organization. When supply chains are turned into strategic resources, firms will be able to enhance performance, resiliency, and differentiation in more intricate and volatile business environments. All in all, the paper is part of the current research base in that it supports the strategic importance of supply chain management and the importance of sustainability as an essential element of competitive advantage. Findings in the

study identify the importance of organizations going beyond the conventional cost-oriented approach and follow a holistic and strategic view of the supply chain management in order to guarantee long-term success.

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