

Guest Editorial

Supply Chain Forum: An International Journal

Special issue: New strategies and organizations in e-distribution

The concept of e-commerce existed before the turn of the Millennium. However, despite being in a more mature phase in 2017, e-commerce distribution or ‘e-distribution’ remains a topical subject for researchers, retailers, retail brands, multi-channel or pure-player retailers, and logistics service providers. During the last decade we have seen significant transformations in distribution to end consumers; some researchers argue that consumers think and act more like business-to-business logisticians in the online space (Xing et al., 2010) while others note that some retail sectors and countries in Europe have been slow to adopt online sales and e-distribution (Grant et al., 2014).

Furthermore, the developing concept of omni-channel, where retailers can interact with consumers through many digital channels such as websites, physical stores, kiosks, direct mail and catalogues, call centres, social media, etc., is adding complexity to e-distribution (Rigby, 2011). An online purchase of a physical product involves different e-distribution strategies requiring more substantial efforts in packing and picking, dispatch, delivery, collections and returns (Ferne and Grant, 2015).

Such e-distribution, including ‘click and collect’ or ‘drive’ where the consumer becomes part of the process, necessitates new ideas in existing organizations and in some cases new forms of organization such as logistical redesign in the upstream supply chain (Benzidia, 2013) or pooling of distribution for urban deliveries to achieve efficiency and effectiveness, with a sustainability benefit from reducing e-distribution’s impact on the natural environment (Durand et al., 2013).

This special issue for *Supply Chain Forum: An International Journal* sought submissions investigating recent evolutions in e-distribution at both the strategic and organizational design level. All submissions underwent a rigorous double-blind review process which yielded the resultant three papers. This process required the cooperation of both authors and reviewers and we thank all of them for their efforts and diligence; they all made our role as special issue editors easier and enjoyable.

The first paper by Dablanc et al. investigates the digital market place disrupting transport and mobility services in the urban freight sector. The paper highlights four issues impacting urban freight services in European cities: freight trips and data; business models; labour legislation and work conditions; and local public policies.

The second paper by Modak models a two-level omni-channel supply chain under price and delivery time sensitive stochastic demand. The model demonstrates that delivery lead time has an adverse effect on the online selling price and online channel profit.

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The third paper is a case study of adidas in Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States by Cordon et al. and is based on extensive semi-structured interviews with key adidas executives who implemented a radical information technology supply chain and omni-channel initiatives, including the rollout and implementation of click-and-collect, ship-from-store, endless aisle and radio frequency identification.

We believe these three papers provide a good flavour of the issues affecting e-distribution from the perspectives of the external environment's impact on e-distribution, modelling e-distribution solutions to ensure more efficient and profitable services, and the successful results from e-distribution practice.

Readers will know who the authors are from their papers, however reviewers usually go unnoticed and unheralded despite their very important efforts towards the academic publishing process. Thus, we want to thank all the reviewers for this special issue who gave up their time and had to endure constant e-mail follow-up, and recognize them below by listing their names and affiliations in alphabetical order:

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