



Job Responsibilities of Textile and Apparel Supply Chain Managers: From Mentzer's Key Drivers of Competitive Advantage Perspective

Md. Tahmidul Islam Molla and Jung E. Ha-Brookshire, University of Missouri, USA

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Supply chain management refers to “the systemic, strategic coordination of the traditional business functions within a particular company and across businesses within the supply chain, for the purposes of improving the long-term performance of the individual companies and the supply chain as a whole” (Mentzer, 2004, p.4). Similar to any other industries, effective and efficient management of supply chain has been very crucial for the success of the textile and apparel (T&A) industry, which is highly fragmented and globalized (Ha-Brookshire & Hawley, 2014). This nature of fragmentation as well as ever-intensifying globalization makes the T&A industry different from other industries, a fact that has contributed to different and dynamic job responsibilities for supply chain management personnel.

According to Mentzer (2004), there are twelve drivers of competitive advantages in supply chain management. The first three key drivers are to: (a) coordinate the traditional business functions; (b) collaborate with supply chain partners on noncore competency functions; and (c) look for supply chain synergies. Although Mentzer's drivers are applicable for all industries, little research has been conducted on what the core drivers of supply chain management look like in the T&A industry and how businesses communicate such drivers with their current and future employees. Therefore, the aim of this study was to explore: (a) the relationship between Mentzer's core drivers and major responsibilities required for supply chain managers; (b) the distinctive nature of job requirements for supply chain managers; and (c) the key areas supply chain managers must monitor to be successful in the T&A industry.

Content analysis was performed as it is useful “for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of messages” (Holsti, 1968, p. 608). The data were collected from the “Job listing” advertisements posted by Stylecareers.com, one of the largest fashion-only job listing sites in online from all over the United States (Stylecareers.com, 2015). Primary job responsibilities under “supply chain,” “logistics,” “sourcing,” “product management,” “merchandising,” and “quality” were collected, as these jobs were directly and indirectly related to supply chain management functions (Ha-Brookshire, 2015). A total of 51 job advertisements posted in December 2014 were collected and analyzed. Here, terms and expressions described by employers in the job postings were identified, interpreted, coded, and classified. The data were then compared with Mentzer's three key drivers. An overall interpretation occurred to obtain major themes in study objectives.

The study result showed two major themes for each driver. First, 48 out of 51 job descriptions discussed Mentzer's first driver as their primary requirements of supply chain managers. Out of

48, 29 emphasized leadership in coordinating production and sourcing, while 16 job descriptions indicated supporting and fostering relationships among different departments within the organization as requirements. For example, Midwest-based apparel manufacturer Kellwood was looking for a Sr. Manager in Production and Sourcing who could “provide leadership in production & development stage,” while Rush & Company, a South Carolina-based apparel company, was looking for a Materials Trim Specialist who “is comfortable working” with other internal departments. Second, 24 out of 51 job listing indicated Mentzer’s second driver among their major job requirements. 20 out of 24 job listings were looking for candidates who are “able to follow up and work cross functionally with external supply chain partners (e.g. Production Coordinator by The Limited, fashion retailer from Ohio).” Only 8 of them were looking for a candidate who has the “ability to identify new supplier and negotiating qualities from the employees (e.g. Director-Sourcing by Gold Bug, distributor of children’s accessories from Colorado).” Third, 26 out of 51 job descriptions described Mentzer’s third driver, which emphasizes synergies among business functions within the organization and across the partners. Out of 26, 23 job listings indicated “strategy formulation” within and across the organization as their major responsibility (e.g. Director-Global Supply Chain by PVH, New York-based apparel wholesaler), while 12 of them required “problem solving quality” throughout the global supply chain (e.g. Purchasing Manager by Tory Burch, American lifestyle brand from New York).

The results provided comparisons between Mentzer’s theoretical supply chain drivers and implementations in T&A supply chain management. Mentzer’s key drivers did seem to apply for T&A supply chain management. However, what is notable here is the fact that T&A supply chain managers not only lead supply chain functions but also support other functions within the organization and across the partners. Identifying new suppliers was less emphasized than cross-functional collaborations, all of which require creative strategies and problem-solving skills. The results help the future workforce to gain a realistic understanding of the job responsibilities of supply chain management within the industry. Further research is recommended to investigate the unique roles of T&A supply chain managers by assessing different local and multinational job sites, case studies, focus groups, and/ or interviews.

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