

# Editorial Preface

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## INTRODUCTION

The first issue of *International Journal of Applied Logistics* in 2018 contains four articles that discuss environmental, human factors, and methodological issues in logistics research. The first article focuses on the environmental impact of cross-border commerce. The second article discusses implications for human resource management, drawing on principles from Theory of Constraints. The third article examines the humanitarian logistics and demonstrates the importance of training and support for people. The fourth article discusses how the event study method can evaluate the impact of logistics management initiatives.

## ARTICLES

The first article (Cullinane & Cullinane, 2018) examines the increasing trend towards B2C cross-border e-tailing with a particular focus on the returns process. Using a case from the clothing category, seven reverse supply chain types are identified, and a research agenda for further study is presented.

Within Europe, e-tailing is a rising phenomenon that has been supported by the European Union (EU) shift towards a 'Digital Single Market (DSM)' to simplify and enhance the provision of e-tailing. However, while the selling of goods over borders has been well-addressed, the returns process has not been carefully examined, despite a high average returns rate over European countries. As a result, in apparel, there is not only a significant cross-border flow of goods to get the product to the customer, but there are also significant reverse logistics flows.

Each of these flows has environmental effects that need to be studied. Using five Swedish firms as a case, seven categories of returns processes are identified with varying levels of environmental impact. An agenda for further research is presented, focused on the increasing globalization of e-tailing returns, mitigation strategies that may be either short- or long-term, and dealing with the increase in packaging waste associated with e-tailing.

The second article (Galli, 2018) examines the importance of human resources in ensuring firms reach their operational objectives. Drawing on the well-regarded and influential book *The Goal*, the author analyses the human resource implications of the Theory of Constraints improvements made within the volume.

Traditional approaches to human resource management are explained in the context of the Theory of Constraints, with a particular focus on where and how traditional approaches may produce conflicting outcomes. Key focuses include how HRM influences the management of bottlenecks, technology, sustained improvements in both quality and operational outcomes, and continuous improvements. It is clear that further research is required to develop a stronger understanding of how HRM influences operations and this may require studies in both manufacturing and service contexts.

The third article (Baporikar & Shangheta, 2018) examines a single non-profit organization (the Red Cross Society) in Namibia to learn more about humanitarian logistics challenges they face. The rise of a range of both sudden and slow-onset disasters has affected more than half of the population since 2008. A descriptive survey received 21 responses from members of the Red Cross Society helped to identify challenges they face while providing humanitarian assistance.

The survey results indicate that there are difficulties in planning and coordinating responses, particularly with a lack of effective information systems; the importance of effective planning further recognized as important as this is one of the critical phases of the response. There is also a strong sense that security for humanitarian workers while in the field is an issue that must be further addressed. While additional funding would be beneficial, there are shortages of other resources and an awareness that additional technical training and support would be of benefit.

The fourth article (Wood and Wang, 2018) begins with the observation that it is often difficult to evaluate whether management decisions relating to logistics have been beneficial to the firm. Evaluating the impact of change using operational data is often difficult as many firms will not share this data. Instead, the authors discuss an alternative approach using more readily available secondary data – the event study method.

The event study method is discussed with a range of assumptions addressed and the commonly used market model presented for discussion. Several research design factors are pointed out that researchers can be careful of, including the use of appropriate test statistics to evaluate the significance of the calculated abnormal returns, and the selection of the sample of announcements as an important step in the research design. A selection of articles that use event study to examine logistics scenarios are reviewed with key methodological differences and design decisions tabulated. From this, suggestions are provided to improve the methodological rigor when event studies are used to examine logistics research questions, and several important areas are identified where the method can be used.

## **A THANKS TO OUR AD HOC REVIEWERS IN 2017**

A journal like the International Journal of Applied Logistics cannot be run without community support. While our Editorial Review Board members and Associate Editors put in a great deal of effort to ensure the journal runs smoothly, we also have a number of ad hoc reviewers that we would like to thank for their contribution. These are additional scholars and researchers who, in 2017, gave their time and expertise towards the International Journal of Applied Logistics to help support the publication by reviewing articles sent to them.

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