



ABSTRACT

- Master's thesis
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Author	Annukka Hejazi	Student number	
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Supervisors	Ph.D. Olli-Pekka Hilmola and M.Sc. Lotta Häkkinen		

Abstract

The research concentrates on the well-known supply chain phenomenon, the bullwhip effect, by applying a multiple case study approach. The objective of the study is to examine whether the bullwhip effect exists in two separate supply chains, and identify the main causes and counter-measures applicable to each case.

The theoretical part of the study contains two main sections. First, a literature review on 55 Supply Chain Management related case study articles is presented. The aim is to identify how case study approach has been applied in the field of supply chain management. The main findings of the literature review show that the number of cases used in a study is often very small and methodological issues are given little consideration. Secondly, a theoretical framework on the key indicators, causes and counter-measures of the bullwhip effect are presented in the third chapter of the study. This section includes also a summary on the case study articles found to examine the bullwhip effect.

Multiple case study approach, containing two cases, was the main research strategy applied to this study. The first case represents an electronics manufacturer while a furniture retail chain serves as a basis for the second case. In both cases also the immediate upstream suppliers are included in the analysis. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in the data gathering process. The quantitative data includes mainly numerical information on incoming and outgoing orders as well as production and deliveries. Qualitative data was gathered by means of in-depth interviews in various occasions. Additionally, data used in this study contained some secondary material such as company brochures, annual reports and information provided by the companies' websites.

The findings of this study show that there remains room for improvement as regards Supply Chain Management theories and methods. Method or solution that seems to be working well in theory can be difficult to put in practice in complex supply chain environments and networks. The second main finding was related to the information availability. Acquiring all the needed information from various supply chain levels as well as on a company level can prove to be very difficult. This finding further emphasizes the importance of information sharing between different supply chain members. If information management is not at the heart of the Supply Chain Management strategies, also other SCM initiatives can be difficult to implement.

Key words	Supply Chain Management, Case study approach, the Bullwhip Effect
Further information	