A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

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The enormous interest generated by SCM—Supply Chain Management and the lack of consensus on its definition, as well as the scope of its practical applications, are the main incentive to develop this work. In this paper, we reviewed the literature on SCM focusing on the different trends or so-called schools to define SCM. We discuss the basic concepts we need to propose a conceptual framework for a critical analysis of the definitions of SCM. The conceptual framework considers three basic perspectives: (a) Business Process, (b) Business Functions and Logistics and (c) Systems approach. We compare and analyze the differences between SCM, Supply Chain and Logistics. Finally it is proposed a definition of Supply Chain and Supply Chain Management based on the concepts of SC, systems and business processes concepts discussed throughout the article.

Palavras-chaves: Supply Chain Management, Supply Chain, Logistics
1. Introduction

Despite the importance of Supply Chain Management (SCM) to gain competitive advantages and improve the performance of organizations, many authors agree that there is still no consensus on: (i) its definition, (ii) the limits for practical application and (iii) the relationships SCM has with other disciplines and / or concepts (COOPER ET AL. 1997b, CROOM ET AL. 2000, ELMUTI 2002, LAMBERT ET AL. 1998, GUNASEKARAN ET AL. 2001, SANDERS 2009).

There are several schools attempting to explain the meaning of SCM, including, among others, (i) theoretical and empirical, (ii) the pragmatic and the models, (iii) functional and logistics. Without doubt, they have helped to advance in the concept of SCM. However, the academic world still has not provided an unquestionable guide on SCM based not only on empirical studies but also in a theory and constructive development in the field. For Wisner and Tan (2000) "The concept is still evolving. There is no generally accepted definition of SCM or a general understanding of how SCM affects the characteristics and organizational practices". Handfield and Bechtel (2004) noted that "what we are seeing in the field of SCM, which is that for years was defined in some way, has now become larger with different fragments of theory".

According to Gibson et al. (2005), we could say that at least there is a consensus that SCM is a discipline or branch of knowledge constantly evolving and, as noted by Ballou et al. (1999), it is natural that in this process, there are disagreements among scholars about the meaning of SCM as well as regarding their applications. Furthermore, Cooper et al. (1997b), Mentzer et al. (2001) and Gibson et al. (2005) highlighted the importance for a discipline, to have its definition, as this should provide clearness to understand the concept, its key basic functions and its practical implementation as well as lead future research. For Gibson et al. (2005), the effort to agree on the meaning of SCM should continue as well as the effort to build the necessary bridges between the various schools. The benefit will ultimately be for those who are concerned on how to improve business performance, both individually and collectively, through the improvement of the economic value perceived by customer satisfaction.

This lack of consensus on the definition and scope of SCM, added to the confusion between concepts such as SCM and Logistics and Value Chain, in addition to the enormous interest this area incite have been the main impetus for this article. This paper is organized as follows: Section 2 contains a review of the concept of Supply Chain and summarizes the major trends or schools that have proposed definitions for SCM. In Section 3, three perspectives are proposed for conducting a comparative analysis of the definitions of SCM and its scope. In Section 4 is proposed a conceptual definition of SCM based on the previous discussion. Finally, in Section 5, conclusions are presented.

2. On supply chain and supply chain management

It is normal to find in the literature that was published on SCM till today, the terms Supply Chain-SC and Supply Chain Management-SCM, are used as synonyms. However, both concepts are different but are closely linked as it suggested below.

2.1. What is a supply chain

For La Londe and Masters (1994), the SC is a set of enterprises (organizations) that move materials forward. It can be assumed that, in reference to materials, they are also speaking of
products, products in process, parts, components and raw materials. Note that in the production of goods and delivery of these to customers (end users), several independent companies are involved in the process and they are all members of the SC, such as manufacturers of components and raw materials, assemblers, wholesalers, retailers and transportation companies to name a few. Lambert, Stock, and Ellram (1998) define a SC as the association of companies that deliver products and services to market. In both definitions – La Londe and Master (1994) and Lambert, Stock, and Ellram (1998) – are included the end users as part of the SC.

Christopher (1992) defines SC as a network of organizations that are involved in upstream and downstream relations in the various processes and activities that produce value in the form of products and services that are delivered to the final consumer.

To Mentzer et al. (2001), SC is a set of three or more organizations directly involved in the flow of goods, services, finance and/or information both upstream and downstream from a source (supplier) to the consumer. They considered three types of SC according to the "structure" of Supply Chain. One of them is the extended SC. This SC includes the provider of the immediate provider and customers of the immediate customer, all of them are related to the flow of goods, services, finance and/or information both upstream and downstream.

As also noted by Mentzer et al. (2001), the SC is independent of whether or not it is managed. Therefore, if any of the companies that are part of the SC do not implement some of the concepts related to management, SC will still exist. In other words, management concepts are strictly absent in the SC.

For other authors like Harland et al. (2001), there is a wider concept than Supply Chain, called Supply Networks. These are networks of interconnected companies, which are part of a larger inter-companies network, whose main purpose is to supply, use and transform resources to provide packages of goods and services to customers.

Strictly speaking, it is concluded therefore that SC is an underlying structure encompassing several organizations but without management practices.

This article argues that an SC is a set of interacting organizations (among themselves) under a common goal and are involved in the flow of goods, services, resources and/or information. This is characterized by the following basic elements:

1) Organizations and/or individuals can be grouped under a common goal. The common goal does not necessarily mean that all the organizations share the same goal or objective. For example, consider the SC of the food industry in a specific country, where there are even firms in competition participating of the SC, each with its own goals and objectives in term of market share and product quality, but all the firms want to get their products to market and to reach the final consumer;

2) The interactions between the organizations can take many forms, such as exchange of raw materials, exchange of goods, services, sale/purchase of various resources, information exchange, etc.

3) The limit - or range- defining which organization is part of the supply chain, i.e. the boundaries (scope) of the SC, is determined by the type of problem that will be addressed and the capabilities of analysis tools that will be used. In this respect, there may be one or more root suppliers, and one or more groups of final customers and a number of other organizations in between. For example, for one organization interested in determining where to locate
facilities, like manufacturing plants, with the objective to maximize profit and service level, the SC could look at the actual physical location of the firm facilities plus the location of some closer supplier and the market “location” where the products go. And, if the purpose is to use mathematical programming methods to solve the problem of facility location, then most of the member of the SC will be physical facilities and physical characteristics disregarding other types of organization that provide just information.

For the purposes of this article, we use the concept of root supplier (provider) to describe a provider that has no other provider, i.e. for which there is no organization that provides products, services, resources and/or information to it. Of course, this root provider is defined just for the purpose to establish the beginning of the SC in one end.

The term resources encompasses all the assets that organizations need to manage in order to achieve its goals, such as money, manpower, facilities, machinery, etc. We prefer to leave information resources separately from other resources to highlight the importance that will have later in the management of an SC.

It is also understood that, from a practical viewpoint, it is more appropriate to use the term organizations instead companies or firms. This is because, for example, there are intermediate institutions linked to the government, or other non-profit institutions that can participate in the SC and are not necessarily companies looking for profit. Under this definition, SC forms a system, this is a set of objects (organizations) linked by some form of interaction or interdependence. Of course, end customers are not classified as organizations.

2.2 Supply chain management - origins and trends for its definition

As it has been raised by Mentzer et al. (2001), perhaps the origin of the SCM concept dates back to the 1950s in a publication of Forrester (1958), who states "Management is on the verge of a major breakthrough in understanding how industrial company success depends on the interactions between the flows of information, materials, money, manpower, and capital equipment. The way these five flow systems interlock to amplify one another and to cause change and fluctuation will form the basis for anticipating the effects of decisions, policies, organizational forms, and investment choices". Besides this definition leaves some aspects of the SCM without mentioning such as the need for multi-enterprise analysis and relationships between them, surely this is the first approach to what should now be known as SCM.

Other authors like Bowersox (1969) (cited Larson et al. 2007) anticipated some features of SCM, and in this case, highlighting the advantages having to the company, to integrate the functions associated with the physical distribution. In this respect, the physical flow is the main characteristic in the SC.

According to Oliver and Webber (1982), the term SCM itself has its origins in the 80s, with some articles using the term Supply Chain between 1985 and 1997. According to Lambert et al. (1998), the wide diffusion of SCM occurred from the late '90s, with efforts to define SCM in the early '90s and started a theoretical and empirical research since 1997.

At the beginning of the 1990s there was a great effort to define SCM, characterizing it under three aspects: product flow, management of relations and the extension of the concept from the supplier to the customer. Perhaps this last point is coincident with the component characterized as a structure of SCM by Cooper, Lambert and Pagh (1997). However, despite these attempts, authors like Skjøtt-Larsen (1999) and Mentzer et al. (2001) account for the lack of consensus on the definition and confusion that they were at that time. To such confusion was added the lack of agreeing to differentiate logistics and SCM. The differences
between them were discussed in the article by Cooper, Lambert and Pagh (1997) and they concluded that for some professionals and academics, SCM could be (a) as well as logistics, (b) an extension of logistics, or (c) a new approach to process management. Recently Larson et al. (2007) completed this work conducting a survey of over 100 experienced professionals in logistics, based on four different perspectives that make the difference between logistics and SCM. Incidentally, this is a job that also presents a classification of the different definitions of SCM arising from logistics.

As summarized by Gibson et al. (2005), there have been numerous studies and literature reviews to propose a meaning for SCM and agreeing on the scope, functions and relationships that should define SCM. Examples of such attempts are made by Bechtel and Jayaram (1997), Bechtel and Mulumudi (1996), Croom et al. (2000) and Tan (2001). According to these authors, there are basically six "schools" that placed emphasis on different aspects in defining SCM, and are therefore not comprehensive and cannot be taken as a definition of SCM, which are: (a) awareness of the existence of chain, which integrates the flow of materials and information from the origin of raw materials to final consumer, (b) "integrated" logistics to show that the physical distribution processes are connected, (c) integration to bring the redefinition of the company structure and form "virtual" organizations, (d) information - to emphasize the importance of information flow, (e) supplying and purchasing and (f) transport and logistics, the last two proposed by Tan (2001). Cooper, Lambert and Pagh (1997) conducted a review of 13 definitions and provided strong arguments for distinguishing logistics from SCM — although, as noted above, subsequent authors continue to maintain the similarity of concepts. Mentzer et al. (2001) analyzed more than 20 definitions and concluded that previous attempts defined two concepts - SCM and Supply Chain Orientation (SCO) - merging them on one single concept. In the same article they stated that the definitions discussed can be categorized into three types: (a) a management philosophy, (b) the implementation of the management philosophy and (c) a set of management processes. Finally, according to Gibson et al. (2005), a survey conducted by the Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals (CSCMP) to seek a consensus definition of SCM, "concluded that the characteristics of SCM more accepted by the community interviewed (academics and practitioners) found that the definition should include strategies and activities and collaboration, along with the concepts of demand generation and fulfillment of those associated with marketing and sales functions".

Giannakis and Croom (2004) attempting to establish a conceptual framework for classifying research in SCM, they proposed three dimensions of analysis: (a) synthesis-related to the physical structure of the SC, (b) synergy-human interactions and relationships in the SC and (c) timing - coordination and control of operational processes through the SC.

On spite of the research conducted till today on the topic, as can be seen in recent articles written by Giunipero et al. (2008), Larson et al. (2007) and Frankel et al. (2008), there is still a confusion, abuse and use of the term SCM to profile problems that are simply a part of what should be a SCM.

3. A framework for analyzing the concept of supply chain management

In this paper is proposed to review the concept of SCM based on three perspectives: (a) Business Process, (b) Functional and Logistics, and (c) System. These perspectives contribute to a structured discussion on the different emphasis, aspects and characteristics that are associated with the definition of SCM. We must recognize that several definitions examined here might contain characteristics linked to more than one perspective, as will be shown
below. We reviewed some of the most representative definitions of SCM in order to propose a definition to SCM.

### 3.1. Business processes perspective.

A business process is a structured set of activities with business results for a specific customer (Davenport and Beers 1995). The concept was originally introduced in the late '80s and became popular after the publication of Hammer and Champy (1993) and Davenport (1993). Lambert et al. (1998a) defined SCM as "the integration of key business processes from end user (customer) to the original supplier which supplies products, services and information that add value to customers and other stakeholders”. The key business processes identified by them are: (1) customer relationship management, (2) customer service management, (3) demand management, (4) order fulfillment, (5) manufacturing flow management, (6) supplier relationship management, (7) product development and commercialization, and (8) returns management (CROXTON ET AL. 2001, LAMBERT 2004b). These eight processes provide much of the so-called logistic, purchasing, operations management and marketing functions of a business (for others as Frankel et al. 2008, these functions are academic disciplines) and there are authors who come to use the concept of SCM as synonymous with any of these functions or a combination thereof (LAMBERT ET AL. 2005).

According to Cooper, Lambert and Pagh (1997), the implementation of SCM is performed using three key elements: (a) the network structure of the SC, (b) the business processes of the SC and (c) management components. This definition of SCM and its proposed implementation is also known as the work of The Global Supply Chain Forum (GSCF framework). The management components that are part of the proposed implementation of SCM are: planning and control, work structure, organization structure, product flow facility structure, information flow, management methods, power and leadership structure, risk and reward structure, and culture and attitude (COOPER, LAMBERT AND PAGH 1997).

Harland (1996) describes supply chain management as the management of business activities and relationships at various levels in the SC, including internal, external, with one or more members and the entire chain. We understand that, when referring to activities, these are comparable to the notion of business processes listed above.

It should be recalled that initially any methodology of business process implementation was limited to a single organization or company, and it was used as a way to integrate various activities across multiple business functions within the company. In this new proposal, the business processes are implemented in a multi-enterprise scale for all those who are members of the Supply Chain. So, For Hammer (2001) the true value that can be obtained with the application of this concept comes from the integration of business processes between companies that comprise the Supply Chain. Note therefore that, the business process perspective recognizes the importance of considering all the members of the Supply Chain.

As mentioned by Mentzer et al. (2001), some authors proposed a definition of SCM as a process itself, which differs from the definitions discussed above and given by Lambert et al. (2005), in which SCM is composed of a series of business processes such as those mentioned previously. La Londe (1997) said "SCM is the process of managing relationships, information and material flows between companies so as to deliver better customer service and greater economic value through synchronized management of the physical flow of goods and associated information from its origin to the point of consumption ". This definition can be found, in some features, similar to the perspective of logistics of SCM which is discussed later.
on. Despite understanding that it is not the same SC and SCM, Ross (1998) (cited Mentzer et al. 2001), “defines supply chain process as the actual physical business functions, institutions, and operations that characterize the way a particular supply chain moves goods and services to market through the supply pipeline”. According to this definition, the SCM process is an ordered set of activities in time and specific location where each activity has a beginning and an end, inputs and outputs are clearly identified and there is a defined structure for action (ELLRAM AND COOPER 1990, COOPER ET AL. 1997a, COOPER, LAMBERT AND PAGH 1997, TYNDALL ET AL. 1998).

Lambert et al. (2005) conducted an analysis and discussion of five approaches based on business processes to adequately implementing SCM. These approaches consider those described in Cooper, Lambert and Pagh (1997), Mentzer et al. (2001), Bowersox et al. (1999), Srivastava et al. (1999), Supply Chain Council SCC (1996 cited Lambert et al. 2005).

The Supply Chain Council proposed a reference model called SCOR (Supply Chain Operations Reference) for modeling the SCM based on processes and to measure overall performance in the Supply Chain. The model is multi-functional and multi-levels. However, it does not consider some processes such as sales and marketing, product development and research and development.

Newman and Huang (2006) and Newman et al. (2006) proposed a business model with a more contemporary view of processes and presenting some case studies. In summary, the authors proposed four domains (understanding, design, improvement, and coordination) that capture the motivations behind the investments and initiatives undertaken by companies to improve their SCM. It also defines four levels of integration that are superimposed on the four domains. These levels range from no integration of function silos outside a single company to a fully integrated Supply Chain, i.e. integration of functions within an enterprise and between enterprises that are members of the SC.

3.2. A functional and logistics perspective

Between 2000 and 2005 were conducted important changes in the definition of logistics and SCM, promoted largely by the now re-appointed Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals, CSCMP (formerly Council of Logistics Management-CLM). As mentioned by Frankel et al. (2008), in 2001 CLM defined logistics as "that part of the Supply Chain process that plans, implements and controls the effective and efficient flow and storage of goods, services and related information from point of origin to point of consumption so as to satisfy the customer requirements". Then, in 2003, CLM re-defined logistics as "that part of the supply chain management that plans, implements and controls the efficient and effective forward of flow and return, the storage of goods, services and related information from point of origin and the point of consumption so as to meet the needs of consumers".

Bowersox et al. (2006) suggested that "logistics refers to the responsibility of designing and administer systems for the control of movement and geographical positioning of raw materials, work-in process, and finished inventories at the lowest total cost". This definition leaves without considering various aspects, including the source (supplier) and destination (end consumer) and the relationship between companies.

According to CSCMP, “Supply Chain Management encompasses the planning and management of all activities involved in sourcing and procurement, conversion, and all Logistics Management activities”. It also includes coordination and collaboration with
channel partners, which can be suppliers, intermediaries, third-party service providers, and customers.

Despite the "logistics" origin of the definition of SCM given by CSCMP, it should not be considered as a narrow definition. On the contrary, it raises several important features that are intermingled with the process perspective as well as the systems perspective. For example, it considers planning and management of complementary logistics activities, such as processing (usually as part of operations management) and the supplying and purchasing, more associated with the procurement. Furthermore through coordination and collaboration with partners (channel partners), includes a wider range of SC members. It is not clear the type of entities or members could be part of the SC, and the explicit reference to channel partners is not sufficient to clarify the point. According to the CSCMP, the SCM definition includes activities and processes across multiple functional disciplines and multiple companies. The definition keeps the concept of activities and it confuses these with processes and also with other business functions. In this latter respect, this definition does not refer to other business functions as marketing and product development, which are listed below.

For Metz (1998), the SCM is the logical evolution of logistics management. Metz describes the evolution of SCM in four stages of increasing functional breadth. The first phase calls for physical delivery, involving the integration of the functions of storage and transport. The fourth and final stage, called "super" SCM includes additional functions such as marketing, product development and customer service. According to Metz (1998) the concept of SCM has evolved from a subset of activities normally associated with logistics, to a broader concept involving over her duties. Coyle et al. (2002) describe a similar evolution of the concept of SCM, starting with the physical layout of the 1960s.

Tan (2001) has a similar view, but more restrictive. He raises the origins of SCM in two ways (a) purchasing and supplying in one side and (b) logistics and transportation on the other. Later he merged both of them to get the SCM definition. For Tan (2001) the origins of SCM in supplying and purchasing are associated with manufacturing companies whose primary concern is to optimize their purchases of raw materials or the like, while the other side is more associated with the retail and logistics, where reach is more important with a good cost, price and service. The other interesting point that aggregates Tan (2001) in their definition of SCM includes all activities that add value to the Supply Chain. For Tan (2001), these activities include: planning, design and product development, sourcing, manufacturing, fabrication, assembly, transportation, warehousing, distribution, and post-delivery, customer support. As shown, this is another source of confusion.

Value chain is a business management concept coined by Porter (1985) and consists of a chain of activities through which the product goes and in each of them it is gaining value. The concept of value chain has spread beyond the companies / individual organizations to apply in Supply Chain, but it is necessary to emphasize that they are not the same.

Mentzer et al. (2001), adds that "SCM encompasses all the traditional intra-business functions". They introduce the idea that SCM includes other functions in addition to logistics, such as the traditional business functions namely, marketing, sales, research and development, forecasting, production, purchasing, logistics, information systems, finance and customer service. Clearly, once again, logistics is not the same as SCM and it is part of it.

Another definition, hard to categorize in the two lines previously, is given by Scott and Westbrook (1991) and New and Payne (1995), who described the Supply Chain Management
function as a "chain" that connects each elements of supply and manufacturing process from raw material to the final customer, across multiple organizations.

It must be acknowledged here that, logistics or integrated logistics as defined by Ellram (1991) are just some of the functions performed in business, as pointed out by Mentzer et al. (2001).

Linking the definition of SCM with the processes perspective, Cooper , Lambert and Pagh (1997) indicate that SCM goes beyond logistics involving the management of multiple business processes, including marketing research, promotion, sales, information gathering, research and development, product design, new product development, and should include an analysis of system (BECHTEL AND JAYARAM 1997, BOWERSOX 1997, ELLRAM AND COOPER 1990, MENTZER 1993, TYNDALL ET AL. 1998).

The recent work of Larson et al. (2007) in addition to establish the differences between logistics and SCM by defining four perspectives (traditionalist, re-labeling, unionist and intersectionist), it serves as a basis for analyzing the origins of the definition of SCM from logistics.

At this point it could be said that SCM is neither logistics nor integrated logistics. SCM is not part of logistics and logistics is one the traditional business functions being part of SCM like marketing and sales.

3.3. The systems perspective.

This is another trend, or rather emphasis used to conceptualize SCM. Cooper and Ellram (1993) characterize the SCM as an approach including a complete network from suppliers to end customer, which is analyzed and managed to achieve the best result for the entire system. In the same line, Towill, Naim, and Wikner (1993) define the SCM as a system whose constituent parts - suppliers, production facilities, distribution services and customers-, are linked by the flow of materials (forward) and the associated information feedback. Of course one could say that this last definition, among other things, does not mention explicitly the treatment to be given to the backward flow, such as materials or products going back for remanufacturing or disposal. However, the significance challenge behind this approach is the proposal to manage a network of organizations as one "virtual" company.

Bowersox and Closs (1996) argue that, for firms to be fully effective in the current competitive environment, they must expand their integrated “behavior” to include consumers and suppliers. This extension of the integrated behavior (which is assumed the company has in its interior), through external integration is called Supply Chain Management.

Ellram and Cooper (1990), Houlihan (1988), Tyndall et al. (1998) also use the systems approach to describe SCM. That is, considering the SC as a single entity or "virtual" enterprise rather than each of the companies separately. In the same vein, Ketchen and Giunipero (2004) posed an idea of a Supply Chain organization. Therefore, the concept of partnership is extended to include all the companies belonging to the SC which, at the end, are part of the system.

To Mentzer et al. (2001), integrated management of this system leads to each of its members to develop innovative solutions for creating unique and individualized sources of customer value. Langley and Holcomb (1992) argue that the goal of SCM should be the synchronization of all activities of the SC to create customer value.
Mentzer et al. (2001) define SCM as "the systemic coordination at the strategic and tactical level of the business functions within a particular company and across all companies in the Supply Chain, to improve the long-term performance of companies on an individual base as well as the Supply Chain as a whole ". In this definition, the Supply Chain is defined as the set of three or more entities (organizations or individuals) directly involved in the upstream and downstream of flows of products, services, finance and/or information from one source to the consumer.

In this definition, the systemic perspective of the SCM is clear, as also the others business functions that must be coordinated - including logistics -. It also pointed out that coordination must be conducted at the strategic and tactical level, with the objective of common good for the Supply Chain and individual enterprises. We note the lack of the operational perspective, normally present as a level in strategic planning. Furthermore, it appears restricted to one business function "coordination", leaving other important managerial functions of government aside. In this respect we understand both points - customers and competitive advantage - may be contained in the goal of improving the long-term performance.

Respect of business functions - marketing, sales, research and development, forecasting, production, purchasing, logistics, information systems, finance and customer service - these are clearly confused with other processes - Marketing research, promotion, sales, information gathering, research and development, product design, new product development - referred to by Cooper, Lambert and Pagh (1997). At this point, as will be mentioned later, it is preferable to deal only with business processes, as the managerial functions involved in traditional businesses can more easily vary from company to company. Consider also that business processes are less subject to change and is the recommended approach to overcome the functional silos within the enterprise.

4. Supply chain management – a conceptual analysis

After the analysis conducted previously to the main definitions that have been given to the SCM categorized under the proposed three perspectives, it may be concluded that the main sources of confusion regarding the SCM are the following: (a) business functions, processes and activities that are part of SCM, (b) the differences between SCM, SC, logistics and other traditional business functions, and (c) what organizations must be part of SC and hence the extent of the SC.

For the purposes of this article, it is proposed the following: (a) If it is defined the system as the Supply Chain, (b) If the business processes cover all the traditional business functions of the company, (c) If activities (and sub-process) are part of business processes, (d) If integration is part of the intrinsic characteristics of a system and therefore the SC, (e) If the objectives of each process are aligned with the objectives of the system and the members of the SC and (f) If each process makes use of various resources in the way defined previously, then we could establish that Supply Chain Management is a multidisciplinary approach to managing effective and efficiently the Supply Chain.

The manager considers a number of typical functions such as planning, control, leadership, management and others. It is proposed that the most appropriate way to administer the SC in an effective and efficient manner is through business processes that are, in this case intra-and inter-enterprise. The traditional management functions, such as those mentioned above logistics, marketing and sales, finance, etc, make sense from an organizational perspective for each company as well as to the virtual organization.
Under this viewpoint, the definition of SCM delivered by CSCMP and discussed in Gibson et al. (2005), it is not a systemic view because it does not contain some business functions (marketing and sales for example) and as a consequence, the key business processes that have been mentioned previously and being part of the SCM are outside of that definition.

It is also necessary to mention that under the perspective of processes shaping and giving life to the SC, the activities mentioned in the definition of SCM by CSCMP and by other authors are part of the business processes, which should be appropriately defined and agreed. At this respect, there is usually an abuse of language in assimilating activities to business processes, because the former are part of the second (LAMBERT ET AL. 2005). According to Frankel et al. (2008) it is still a challenge to define what processes belong to the SCM.

A number of other characteristics usually associated with the SCM as cooperation, collaboration, synchronization, visibility and integration, may be considered "features" or desirable "approaches" to be used by organizations to manage the SC so that the customer perceives a value added proposal and their demands are met, and on the other hand, companies belonging to the SC and the SC itself achieve a competitive advantage and profitability.

5 . Conclusions

This article has made a revision of the main definitions of Supply Chain Management found in the literature and have identified several trends in this area. It is proposed three perspectives - processes, functional and logistical and systemic-to analyze and discuss the different definitions of SCM and compare schools or trends that have been previously used to define SCM. The main sources of confusion in the definition and scope of SCM have been produced by the use (and abuse) of terms and concepts different to say "almost" the same, such as business functions, processes and activities, and SCM and logistics. Through a review of definitions given for SCM, has resulted in a proposed definition of Supply Chain and Supply Chain Management based on the concepts of SC, systems and business processes discussed throughout the article. It has been established that SCM is a broad and complex concept to put into practice and that must necessarily reduce its scope from the point of view of the processes involved as well as organizations involved in the SC. We are still in the early studies on SCM, there is a huge and fertile field for research and applications.

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