Abstract

The paradigm shift in business due to globalization and information technology revolution, has replaced business units with business networks. This has given rise to issues of integrations and coordination in these networks or supply chains making it a fertile area to explore for researchers as well as practitioners. While coordination, integration are hot area in supply chain research, service quality is also an important area in supply chain owing to its nexus to business performance. The businessmen, who were once contended with local optimization, have realized that they have to think of optimization in supply chain perspective now. The 'me syndrome' has to be replaced by 'we syndrome' in business to survive and sustain in the long term.

Service quality, a well researched and structured domain in research, claims of various models, metrics and scale that measures service quality in various settings across diverse industries. But the various inventories, that the literature offers, addresses service quality at unit/ micro level; the macro perspective to measure the service quality when more than one firm is involved is absolutely missing. The service quality literature has to be aligned to supply chain perspective.

Business performance literature offers a bouquet of frameworks and metrics to measure the performance of firm. While most of them focus on cost metrics, a few of them include non cost metrics also, and thus, give a balanced assessment of the business performance. But as the case in other domains of research, this domain also considers micro/ unit level for assessment and focuses on local optimization of performance. The supply chain perspective is missing again.

Realizing the need for measuring the service quality and business performance from supply chain perspective, the researcher has taken up the following topic for doctoral study 'Development of measure of service quality across supply chain and its impact on overall supply chain performance'. In order to make the research feasible a section of supply chain is considered with a supplier, focal firm and distributor. The service quality of the supplier (upstream supply chain) and the service quality of the distributor (downstream supply chain) is measured by developing a service quality scale. The scale has been developed on methodology similar to that used by Parasuraman in developing Servqual. Having developed the scale, the service quality of the
upstream and downstream partners with respect to the focal firms has been measured for 150 supply chains. The business performance of the focal firm is measured using the balanced score card developed by Kaplan & Norton. The service quality of the upstream and downstream supply chain is then aggregated to compute the overall service quality of the supply chain. The business performance of the focal firm is also aggregated to compute the overall performance of the supply chain. The aggregates of service quality of supply chain and business performance are then studied to see how service quality affects the overall supply chain performance. To make the study more useful the service quality of the upstream and the downstream partners have been studied across the industry demographics. The performance of the focal firms has also been studied across the various industry demographics.

The above outlined work is executed and put in the form of this thesis. The thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter is on introduction and chalks out the importance of supply chain in contemporary business. It highlights the nexus of service quality and business performance and delineates the same in supply chain perspective.

The second chapter presents a comprehensive review of literature that exists, relevant to the topic of research. The literature review touches upon three different islands, namely- supply chain, service quality and business performance. The literature has been collected from various journals and online repositories of the three disciplines to understand the current state of research that is exist in the three areas.

The third chapter discusses the proposed model and the research methodology. In order to make the research practically feasible, a simple model of the supply chain is considered for assessing service quality and business performance. The research objectives and hypothesis are also a part of this chapter. The model is followed by research methodology that is used to carry out the task and achieve the objectives of research.

The fourth chapter is on data analysis; it gives an exhaustive presentation of analysis that is done to extract useful information from the data by means of charts, tables and various statistical tools. This chapter is divided into various subsections. The first section gives the demographic profile of the focal firm of the supply chain. The next two sections discuss the scale development for
upstream and downstream service quality. The next section deals with the performance measurement of the focal firm. Subsequent section discusses the relationship between upstream service quality and downstream service quality. The last two sections discuss the service quality and its relationship with performance of supply chain.

The fifth chapter is on discussion and findings. The result of data analysis is discussed here in the same sequence as it has been done in the chapter on data analysis. The service quality of upstream and downstream supply chain has been touched first followed by performance measurement. The chapter ends with discussion on service quality of supply chain and its impact on overall business performance of supply chain.

The last chapter is on conclusion. It puts across the relevance of this research work for managers. After discussing the implications of the service quality scale that is developed and the implications of other findings, the chapter ends with limitations and directions for future research.