
# Sustainable Green Supply Chain Management and Logistics

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## Abstract

Supply Chain Management (SCM) and logistics have evolved from being cost-driven operational functions to becoming strategic enablers of competitiveness, resilience and sustainability. In a global economy characterized by resource constraints, climate change and growing social awareness, organizations face increasing pressure from governments, consumers and investors to align supply chain operations with environmental stewardship and ethical responsibility. This has led to the emergence of Sustainable Green Supply Chain Management (GSCM). SSCM integrates economic efficiency with environmental protection and social equity across the value chain, while GSCM focuses specifically on reducing environmental impacts through initiatives such as green procurement, eco-design, renewable energy use and reverse logistics. This chapter examines the fundamentals of SCM and logistics, tracing their evolution and analyzing their role in today's interconnected markets. It then explores SSCM and GSCM in depth, discussing their principles, drivers, global trends, and implementation challenges. Through case studies of leading companies in manufacturing, retail and e-commerce, the chapter demonstrates how sustainability is being embedded in supply chains to create value for both businesses and society. The discussion also presents a comparative analysis of SSCM and GSCM, highlighting areas of overlap and distinction. The findings underscore that sustainable supply chains are not only an ethical imperative but also a competitive advantage in a volatile market environment. By integrating innovative technologies, collaborative partnerships and transparent practices, organizations can build supply chains that are

economically viable, environmentally responsible, and socially inclusive. The chapter concludes by emphasizing the importance of adaptability, cross-sector cooperation and continuous improvement in achieving long-term sustainability goals.

**Keywords:** Supply Chain Management, Logistics, Sustainable Supply Chain Management, Green Supply Chain Management, Sustainability.

## Introduction

Supply Chain Management (SCM) and logistics are integral to the functioning of modern economies. They ensure that products, services, and information flow efficiently from suppliers to consumers, optimizing costs, quality and delivery times. Traditionally, the primary focus of SCM was operational efficiency—reducing costs, minimizing delays, and ensuring product availability. However, with the increasing urgency of global environmental and social issues, supply chain strategies are undergoing a fundamental shift toward sustainability.

The rise of Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) and Green Supply Chain Management (GSCM) reflects a growing recognition that economic growth must be aligned with environmental conservation and social welfare. SSCM takes a triple-bottom-line approach, balancing economic, environmental and social objectives, while GSCM concentrates on environmental performance, particularly reducing carbon emissions, waste, and resource consumption.

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of SCM, logistics, SSCM, and GSCM, supported by real-world examples and case studies. It will also examine the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing these concepts in a rapidly changing global environment.

## Concept of Supply Chain Management

SCM refers to the planning, coordination and management of all activities involved in sourcing, procurement, production, and logistics, as well as the flow of information and finances along the supply chain. The ultimate goal is to deliver products and services that meet customer needs while optimizing cost, quality, and efficiency.

SCM involves the planning, design, execution, control, and monitoring of supply chain activities to create net value, build a competitive infrastructure, and synchronize supply with demand (Christopher, 2016). It encompasses five core components:

- **Planning** – Forecasting demand, balancing supply and demand.
- **Sourcing** – Selecting suppliers that meet cost, quality, and sustainability criteria.

- **Manufacturing** – Converting raw materials into finished goods efficiently.
- **Delivery and Logistics** – Coordinating transportation, warehousing, and distribution.
- **Returns** – Managing reverse logistics and product lifecycle completion.

The **Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals (CSCMP)** defines SCM as "the planning and management of all activities involved in sourcing, procurement, conversion and logistics management activities and includes coordination and collaboration with channel partners."

**Key characteristics of SCM**

Supply Chain Management (SCM) is not merely the management of logistics activities; it is a holistic, integrative approach that coordinates the movement of goods, services, information, and finances across organizational boundaries. Effective SCM aims to deliver the right product, in the right quantity, to the right place, at the right time, and at the right cost—while maintaining quality and customer satisfaction.

The following are the **key characteristics** of SCM:

- **Integration of Processes**

A defining feature of SCM is the integration of various functions such as procurement, manufacturing, warehousing, transportation, and distribution into a seamless system. Instead of working in isolated silos, all stages of the chain—from suppliers to end customers—operate in synchronization. Integration ensures that demand and supply are balanced, reducing inefficiencies and enhancing responsiveness.

- **Coordination and Collaboration**

SCM thrives on close coordination between all stakeholders, including suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, retailers, and customers. Collaboration may involve sharing demand forecasts, production plans, and inventory levels. Strategic partnerships help build trust, reduce conflicts, and enable the development of joint problem-solving mechanisms.

- **Customer-Centric Orientation**

Modern SCM is driven by customer expectations, focusing on delivering superior value. This involves understanding consumer preferences, offering personalized solutions, and ensuring reliability in product availability and service quality. Customer-centric supply chains are more adaptable and resilient to demand fluctuations.

- **Efficient Information Flow**

Real-time, accurate, and transparent information sharing is vital for SCM success. Information technology systems such as ERP (Enterprise Resource

Planning), RFID (Radio Frequency Identification), and blockchain enhance visibility and traceability across the chain. This helps in proactive decision-making and minimizes disruptions.

- **Demand-Driven Planning**

Traditional supply chains often followed a push-based approach, producing goods based on forecasts. Modern SCM increasingly adopts a demand-driven approach, where production and distribution decisions are made based on actual customer demand data, thus reducing excess inventory and wastage.

- **Sustainability and Responsibility**

In contemporary business environments, SCM is expected to incorporate environmental and social considerations. Sustainable SCM focuses on minimizing environmental impacts, ensuring ethical sourcing, reducing carbon footprints, and promoting circular economy practices such as recycling and remanufacturing.

- **Agility and Flexibility**

Agility refers to the supply chain's ability to respond quickly to changes in demand or disruptions in supply. Flexibility enables the reconfiguration of processes, sourcing, and logistics arrangements to adapt to market changes, emergencies, or new opportunities without compromising service levels.

- **Cost Efficiency with Value Maximization**

While cost reduction remains a fundamental goal, SCM also emphasizes value creation. Efficient use of resources, optimization of logistics, and elimination of non-value-added activities lead to lower costs, but maintaining quality and service levels ensures long-term competitiveness.

- **Technology Integration**

Advanced technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), blockchain, and robotics are transforming SCM. These tools enhance forecasting accuracy, automate repetitive tasks, improve inventory management, and increase transparency in supplier relationships.

- **Risk Management and Resilience**

SCM operates in a complex global environment exposed to risks such as supplier failures, natural disasters, political instability, and pandemics. Proactive risk management involves identifying vulnerabilities, developing contingency plans, and building resilient networks that can recover quickly from disruptions.

- **Global Orientation with Local Responsiveness**

Many supply chains span multiple countries and regions, requiring global integration while catering to local market needs. This dual focus ensures efficiency

through global sourcing and production, while also offering customization for regional preferences.

- **Continuous Improvement Culture**

An effective supply chain adopts a continuous improvement philosophy, often using methodologies like Lean, Six Sigma, and Kaizen. This drives the ongoing identification and elimination of waste, improvement of processes, and enhancement of customer satisfaction.

**Evolution of SCM and Logistics**

SCM has evolved through several stages:

- **1950s–1960s** – Focus on physical distribution, with logistics largely concerned with transportation and warehousing.
- **1970s–1980s** – Introduction of materials requirements planning (MRP) and just-in-time (JIT) systems.
- **1990s** – Globalization increased supply chain complexity; technology and ERP systems enabled better integration.
- **2000s–Present** – Emphasis on agility, resilience and sustainability; digital tools like AI, blockchain and IoT are transforming supply chain visibility and efficiency.

**Core Functions and Components of SCM**

- **Procurement** – Strategic sourcing of raw materials and components.
- **Production Planning** – Aligning production schedules with demand forecasts.
- **Inventory Management** – Balancing stock availability with storage costs.
- **Logistics and Transportation** – Managing the movement of goods.
- **Information Management** – Ensuring transparency and real-time data sharing.

**Global Perspectives on Sustainable and Green Supply Chains**

In the European Union, the Green Deal and circular economy policies drive corporate decarbonization and product stewardship. North American firms increasingly disclose Scope 1–3 emissions, aligning supplier requirements with science-based targets. Japanese manufacturers couple lean with environmental management, illustrating complementarity between waste elimination and emissions reduction. Globally, consumer expectations for ethical sourcing and low-impact delivery are rising, reshaping procurement criteria and logistics design. However, fragmented metrics and heterogeneous regulations complicate multinational execution, creating demand for interoperable standards and supplier enablement.

**Indian Context: Policies, Adoption, and Barriers**

India's rapid growth and diverse industrial base create distinctive sustainability challenges and opportunities. National policies—such as the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), Perform Achieve and Trade (PAT) scheme, and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging and electronics—have accelerated adoption of energy efficiency and circular practices. Large Indian enterprises in automotive, steel, FMCG, and IT services have advanced targets on renewable energy, water positivity, and zero waste to landfill. Yet structural constraints persist: fragmented logistics, infrastructure bottlenecks, a large SME supplier base with capability gaps, and uneven enforcement. Public–private partnerships, skill development, and digital public goods (e.g., logistics platforms) are improving traceability and compliance.

**Relationship Between SCM and Logistics**

Logistics refers to the detailed coordination of complex operations involving people, facilities, and supplies (Ballou, 2007). It includes inbound logistics (procurement and transport of materials) and outbound logistics (distribution to customers). Effective logistics management is critical to reducing lead times, lowering costs, and improving customer satisfaction.

Logistics is a subset of SCM, focusing on the movement and storage of goods and related information. SCM encompasses logistics but also integrates procurement, production, and customer relationship management. In sustainable frameworks, logistics becomes a key lever for reducing carbon emissions through route optimization, alternative fuels, and consolidated shipments.

**Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM)**

- **Definition and Scope**

SSCM incorporates environmental and social considerations into supply chain operations without compromising economic performance. It emphasizes ethical sourcing, waste reduction, and fair labour practices.

- **Principles and Drivers**
  - **Triple Bottom Line** (People, Planet, Profit)
  - **Stakeholder Engagement** – Inclusion of suppliers, communities, and regulators in decision-making.
  - **Life-Cycle Thinking** – Assessing environmental and social impacts from raw material extraction to product disposal.
- **Global Trends**
  - Increased demand for traceability and transparency.

- Regulatory frameworks like the EU Green Deal and UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Adoption of renewable energy and circular economy practices.

**Green Supply Chain Management (GSCM)**

- **Concept**

GSCM focuses on reducing the environmental footprint of supply chains. This includes:

- Green procurement
- Eco-friendly product design
- Cleaner production processes
- Energy-efficient transportation
- Waste reduction and recycling
- End-of-life product management

GSCM is often viewed as a subset of SSCM, with a primary focus on environmental dimensions, whereas SSCM considers broader socio-economic impacts alongside environmental outcomes.

- **Strategies and Practices**
  - **Green Procurement** – Purchasing from suppliers with certified environmental practices.
  - **Eco-Design** – Designing products for easier recycling and reduced energy use.
  - **Reverse Logistics** – Reclaiming products for reuse, remanufacture, or recycling.
- **Benefits and Challenges**
  - **Benefits:** Cost savings from waste reduction, improved brand image, compliance with regulations.
  - **Challenges:** Higher upfront costs, supplier resistance, and technological barriers.

**Case Studies**

**Case Study 1: Amazon's Shipment Zero Initiative**

Amazon aims to make 50% of all shipments net-zero carbon by 2030 through electric delivery vehicles, renewable energy use, and sustainable packaging.

**Case Study 2: Unilever – Sustainable Sourcing and Zero Waste Manufacturing**

Unilever's Sustainable Living strategy integrates responsible sourcing with factory-level eco-efficiency. Tea, palm, and soy supply chains are audited against

sustainability standards; factories deploy energy-saving technologies, heat recovery, and water recycling. The company reports substantial reductions in manufacturing emissions and waste sent to landfill since 2008, while programs to improve farmer livelihoods demonstrate SSCM's social pillar. Lessons include the importance of supplier engagement, credible certification, and continuous measurement.

**Case Study 3: IKEA – Designing for Circularity**

IKEA pursues a 2030 goal to be fully circular and climate-positive. Products are designed for disassembly; renewable and recycled materials substitute virgin inputs; and take-back pilots enable refurbishment and resale. Packaging optimization reduces material use and transport emissions. The case illustrates how early design decisions lock in downstream logistics and end-of-life outcomes.

**Case Study 4: Apple – Supplier Clean Energy and Material Recovery**

Apple's Supplier Clean Energy Program finances and aggregates renewable electricity for manufacturing partners across Asia. The firm's material recovery lab pilots advanced recycling of rare earths and aluminum, feeding secondary materials into new devices. Supplier scorecards align commercial incentives with environmental performance, demonstrating how lead firms can mobilize upstream decarbonization at scale.

**Case Study 5: Toyota – Lean-Green Synergy in Automotive**

Toyota extends the Toyota Production System to environmental metrics: elimination of over-production, defects, waiting, and transport translates into lower energy use and emissions per vehicle. Water reuse and solvent recovery projects, combined with hybrid and fuel-cell product strategies, connect operations with market decarbonization. The case shows that efficiency and sustainability can be mutually reinforcing.

**Case Study 6: Tata Steel – Responsible Sourcing and Resource Efficiency**

Tata Steel institutionalizes supplier sustainability audits, energy management systems, and closed-loop water circuits. Blast furnace optimization and waste heat recovery improve energy intensity; slag is upcycled for cement, reducing waste and creating by-products markets. Community programs and safety performance complement environmental progress, reflecting SSCM's integrated perspective.

**Case Study 7: ITC – e-Choupal and Low-Impact Packaging**

ITC's e-Choupal connects farmers with market information, improving incomes and reducing waste in agri-supply chains. Across FMCG lines, the firm reduces packaging grammage, scales recyclable materials, and invests in afforestation. ITC has reported multi-year carbon and water positivity, demonstrating that rural development and environmental stewardship can align.

**Case Study 8: Mahindra & Mahindra – Renewables and Green Logistics**

Mahindra deploys rooftop solar, energy-efficient equipment, and rainwater harvesting across plants, while electrifying internal logistics and piloting EV-based outbound transport. Supplier capability building and green purchasing norms anchor progress beyond the firm's boundaries. The case highlights stepwise decarbonization through operational excellence and ecosystem engagement.

**Case Study 9: Flipkart – E-commerce Packaging and Last-Mile Emissions**

Flipkart phases out single-use plastics in marketplace packaging, introduces recycled mailers and right-sizing tools, and expands electric two- and three-wheeler delivery fleets. Warehouse energy management and route optimization further cut footprint. The case underlines the role of digital retailers in influencing thousands of sellers and millions of deliveries toward greener outcomes.

**Comparative Analysis: SSCM vs GSCM**

While SSCM covers a broad spectrum of sustainability issues, GSCM focuses specifically on environmental aspects. GSCM can be seen as a subset of SSCM. The main difference lies in scope: SSCM includes social dimensions like labor rights, whereas GSCM is primarily about ecological performance.

| Aspect | SSCM | GSCM |
|---|---|---|
| Focus | Environmental, social, and economic sustainability | Primarily environmental sustainability |
| Scope | Broader – includes labour rights, community impact | Narrower – environmental impacts only |
| Key Drivers | Triple bottom line goals | Environmental regulations, eco-conscious markets |
| Benefits | Long-term resilience, brand reputation | Reduced ecological footprint, compliance |

**Literature Review**

The study of Supply Chain Management (SCM) has evolved considerably since its emergence in the 1980s as an extension of logistics and materials management. Early research (Houlihan, 1985; Cooper &Ellram, 1993) focused on operational efficiency, cost minimization and supplier–buyer coordination. However, by the late 1990s, the integration of environmental and social dimensions began to reshape academic discourse, particularly following the publication of Elkington's (1997) *Triple Bottom Line* concept.

- **Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM)** gained prominence in the early 2000s as scholars began recognizing the role of supply chains in achieving corporate sustainability objectives (Seuring & Müller, 2008). Research emphasized that sustainability in supply chains is not merely a

compliance requirement but a strategic differentiator, influencing brand reputation, stakeholder trust, and long-term profitability.

- **Green Supply Chain Management (GSCM)** emerged as a specialized subset within SSCM, with researchers such as Zhu and Sarkis (2004) and Hervani et al. (2005) highlighting environmentally-focused supply chain practices. These included eco-design, green procurement, and reverse logistics—essential in meeting regulatory demands like the European Union's Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive.
- **Christopher (1992)** emphasized that early supply chain management was primarily efficiency-driven, focusing on minimizing operational costs and reducing lead times. The research established the foundational concepts of integrated logistics, supplier coordination, and lean inventory, which became the basis for later sustainability adaptations. This work highlighted that while operational optimization was a key goal, environmental and social aspects were largely absent from early frameworks.
- **Mentzer et al. (2001)** presented a comprehensive definition of supply chain management that stressed collaboration among all supply chain members. Their work suggested that integration, trust, and shared goals between partners could significantly improve competitiveness. However, they also recognized that without sustainability considerations, these advantages could be short-lived in environmentally and socially conscious markets.
- **Elkington (1997)** introduced the **Triple Bottom Line (TBL)** framework, which expanded performance measurement to include environmental, social, and economic dimensions. This was a critical theoretical shift that influenced later Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) models by pushing companies to balance profit with responsibility toward the planet and people.
- **Carter and Rogers (2008)** proposed a clear definition of SSCM as "the strategic integration and achievement of an organization's social, environmental, and economic goals through the systemic coordination of key inter-organizational business processes." Their model became one of the most cited frameworks linking corporate strategy with sustainability in the supply chain context.
- **Srivastava (2007)** defined **Green Supply Chain Management (GSCM)** as integrating environmental thinking into supply chain operations, including product design, material sourcing, manufacturing, delivery, and end-of-life management. His work positioned GSCM not just as a compliance measure but as a driver of competitive advantage.

- **Zhu and Sarkis (2004)** conducted empirical studies in Chinese manufacturing firms, revealing that GSCM adoption was driven by regulatory pressure, customer demand, and potential operational benefits. They also noted that while environmental performance improved, economic benefits were not always immediate, making top management commitment critical.
- **Rao and Holt (2005)** demonstrated through Asia-Pacific studies that integrating environmental initiatives in the supply chain could simultaneously improve competitiveness and sustainability. Their research proved that eco-efficiency often led to cost savings, innovation, and enhanced brand reputation.
- **Walker et al. (2008)** identified common barriers to SSCM adoption, including high implementation costs, lack of awareness, and inadequate supplier engagement. Their findings emphasized the importance of leadership commitment, training, and incentive systems to overcome resistance.
- **Govindan et al. (2014)** reviewed the literature on SSCM drivers and barriers, concluding that stakeholder pressure, corporate image enhancement, and long-term cost savings were the strongest motivators. They also noted the growing role of supplier collaboration and digital technologies in enabling green practices.
- **Queiroz et al. (2020)** explored the intersection of SSCM and Industry 4.0 technologies such as IoT, blockchain, and AI. They found that digital transformation enhanced transparency, traceability, and data-driven decision-making, which in turn improved environmental and social governance across the supply chain.
- Recent research emphasizes the role of **Industry 4.0 technologies**—such as blockchain, IoT, AI, and big data—in enabling transparency, traceability, and efficiency in sustainable supply chains (Bag et al., 2020). Digital tools have accelerated the measurement and management of environmental impacts across the supply chain, allowing for real-time monitoring of carbon footprints and energy usage.

Despite the academic progress, gaps remain in practical implementation, particularly in developing economies like India, where cost pressures, fragmented infrastructure, and regulatory enforcement challenges can hinder adoption.

**Challenges in Implementing SSCM and GSCM**

- Lack of awareness and expertise.
- High initial investment costs.
- Inconsistent regulations across regions.
- Resistance from supply chain partners.
- Difficulty in measuring sustainability performance.

**Future Trends and Research Directions in Supply Chain Sustainability**

- **Digital Transformation** – AI, blockchain, and IoT for greater transparency.
- **Circular Economy Models** – Designing waste out of the system.
- **Decarbonization Initiatives** – Net-zero targets by major corporations.
- **Collaborative Platforms** – Shared logistics and multi-company sustainability projects.

Several trends will shape sustainable supply chains over the next decade.

- Circularity by design will expand remanufacturing, reuse, and materials marketplaces.
- Carbon-aware planning will optimize networks using emissions as a constraint alongside cost and service.
- Digital product passports will carry provenance and repairability data through the value chain.
- Autonomous and electric transport will decarbonize freight, supported by smart charging and green hydrogen corridors.
- Nature-based solutions and water stewardship will complement carbon strategies in regions facing scarcity. Research opportunities include causal links between digital traceability and emissions outcomes, incentive design for multi-tier supplier engagement, and robust methods for Scope 3 accounting.

**Policy and Managerial Recommendations**

Governments can accelerate progress through predictable carbon policies, tax incentives for retrofits and fleet electrification, public procurement that rewards low-impact products, and funding for SME capability centers. Regulators and standards bodies should harmonize reporting (e.g., GHG Protocol, ISO), promote digital product passports, and strengthen EPR. Managers should embed sustainability into category strategies and S&OP, deploy internal carbon prices, and align executive compensation with science-based targets. Procurement teams can create supplier development roadmaps, co-invest in renewables, and use outcome-based contracts. Academia can expand multidisciplinary curricula and living labs that test circular models with industry partners.

**Conclusion**

Sustainable and green supply chain management are no longer optional; they are strategic imperatives for long-term business survival. Organizations that embrace these approaches will not only comply with regulations but also gain customer trust, operational efficiency, and market competitiveness. SSCM and GSCM reframe supply chains as platforms for value creation that respects planetary and social boundaries. Evidence from multiple industries shows that environmental and economic

performance can advance together when design, data, and incentives are aligned. While barriers persist—especially for SMEs and in infrastructure-constrained settings—the combination of clear targets, digital visibility, supplier enablement, and supportive policy can deliver rapid progress. Organizations that act now will not only comply with emerging rules but also secure resilience, customer loyalty, and investor confidence in a low-carbon future.

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