

THE ADOPTION/ADAPTATION OF THE „SUPPLY CHAIN” CONCEPT IN ROMANIAN

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There are several terms used in Romanian for the English term supply chain. We have counted eleven. It has been adopted in several ways and it is perceived (adapted) in several ways in Romania. There are several causes which have determined this fact: the English terminology inconsistency regarding supply chain has been translated into other languages, professionals roots determine the usage (logistics professionals use it for logistics, strategic logistics use it in general etc.), the lack of Romanian discussions regarding the new professional terminology at general level and supply chain and logistics in particular. We expose the different ways by which supply chain is reflected in Romanian, we discuss the causes which have generated this total confusion and then we suggest a proper term for supply chain in Romanian, considering the real meaning of the term and the strategies adopted by other countries regarding supply chain adoption. In conclusion, we propose a general adoption and adaptation for the term in Romanian.

Keywords: supply chain, logistics, strategy, adoption, adaptation.

JEL: M29, M19, L19, M31

Introduction

One major and troublesome issue that we are confronted within all branches of the economy is finding adequate equivalents for the Anglo-American terms that prevail in the global terminology of economic theory. This is far from being solely our problem; in fact, all nations that do not use English as their native tongue have to cope with it, either by adopting the Anglo-American term as such or by designating an equivalent term in the local language.

For a variety of reasons, such as nationalism, educational necessity, local customs, each nation has developed its own approach to this matter, either accepting or rejecting the Anglo-American terminology and producing substitute terms that render the meaning of the English term more or less accurately.

We believe that it is the experts' duty to discuss and clarify such issues. Unfortunately, a significant amount of knowledge and information relevant to this topic (including lectures, conferences, etc.) is delivered in foreign languages and Romania is no exception. As a result, the terminology reaches the practitioner in an inconsistent and confusing form, generating chaos and lack of professionalism on the long term. This haphazard adaptation to local economic cultures more than often results in the loss of certain meanings that the term may convey in the original language. The terms are thus adapted to the precarious level of knowledge pertaining to the area in question.

The purpose of this article is to clarify the usage of the terms „supply chain” (SC) and „supply chain management” (SMC) in Romanian. If any such term would make the object of a similar article, the magazines would definitely become chock-full with trivia. However, this term is

crucial to several areas. The Romanian equivalents of these terms are used by professionals and researchers from various branches of management: strategy, logistics, production, service, and also by researchers from different areas of economy, such as marketing, finance, accounting, economic IT, engineering. These terms owe their importance not only to their extensive usage, but also to their relevance in the daily economic routine. A significant number of companies do not exist as autonomous entities anymore, but rather as links of these supply chains (SC). Competition occurs now between supply chains, rather than between individual companies (Verduijn, 2004).

This article is designed to clarify the problem of these two terms and to suggest adequate Romanian equivalents for them. The aim of this paper will be approached in several steps:

1. In the first part of the article, we will define the SC and SCM according to foreign researchers. The aim of this first part is to identify the multiple facets of these terms. The English notion of SC appears to be quite problematic and so does the consistent and comprehensive understanding of the SCM concept;

2. The second part of the article includes examples of this term's usage in Romanian, highlighting the variety of terms used and the randomness that seems to govern such usage. The term was appropriated by the Romanian language in a disorderly fashion, through a variety of arbitrary adaptations. We found a number of eleven terms that are supposed to render the Anglo-American term of supply-chain, which will generate in turn eleven possible interpretations of SCM;

3. There are two alternatives for an adequate appropriation: we either keep the Anglo-American term or suggest an optimal Romanian equivalent. Our suggestion is based on the common understanding of the term SC in English. It is vital to find a term that will be accurately construed by the majority of experts and convey, after the word „management” is added, the generic content of the SCM in English.

1. SUPPLY CHAIN AND SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT – ACCEPTED INTERNATIONAL DEFINITIONS

The term „supply chain” does not exist per se. It was highlighted by several researchers in the area of Supply Chain Management (SCM). First of all, we will introduce the main SCM schools and their SCM implementation paradigms. We will then shift the focus of our attention to the globally-accepted definitions pertaining to the supply chain, emphasizing several aspects regarding the perception of the SCs. We will conclude this section of the paper by presenting the main definitions of SCM and the processes normally included in the scope of SCM.

1.1 Supply chain management schools

From an organization theory point of view, the concepts of SC and SCM have emerged simultaneously with their systemic perception. The system theory of the 20th century provides a radically different organization-related paradigm, i.e. the transition from an atomistic representation of a company's constituents to a relational representation that marks a leap forward rather than a superficial improvement of older theories regarding organizations. The organization is a system made up of several sub-systems that may in turn be made up of several sub – sub – systems that interact. The organization is part of a greater whole, being a system open to its environment.

There are several groups of authors (generically called schools) that interpret the place and role of SCM at organizational level. Bechtel and Jayaram have initially identified four schools (p. 2):

1. The first school among those mentioned by the authors is the one **that is primarily aware of the functional chain** that has to be coordinated. A definition was provided by Houlihan in 1988: „SCM enables the flow of goods from the supplier to the manufacturer, to the seller and to the

final consumer". The emphasis is therefore laid on both flow of materials and agents involved in this flow. One source of this view is Porter's value chain (Delffman and Albers: 2001, p. 3);

2.The partner relationship or logistics school is the next mentioned school. This one focuses on the coordination of the relations between the partners, which may lead to the improvement of the competitive advantage. According to Turner (1993) „SCM is a process that includes all the relations within the chain between the suppliers, various levels of production, storage and distribution to the final consumer". With its authoritative voice, this school has succeeded in dominating the discussions on SCM for years, taking credit for coining the term and often claiming that SCM basically means logistics management at SC level (as an example. And yet, SCM means more than the flow of goods management within a SC (Cooper et al., 1997, Ilieş and Crişan, 2008b);

3.The informational school emphasizes the flow of information between the partners of a SC. Johansson defines the SCM in these terms (2004): „The SCM's primary requisite is that all members of a SC are well informed. With the SCM, information flow becomes a critical element of a SC's overall performance";

4.The integration or process school looks past the various agents of the SC and emphasizes the processes carried out along the supply chain. Cooper, Lambert and Pagh provide a definition in 1997: „the integration of the processes within a SC is what we call SCM". Bowersox and his collaborators also take notice of this aspect: „SCM is the collaboration between companies to the purpose of improving the strategic position and operational efficiency of a SC". They regard the SCM as a universal strategic alternative, as any company is able to choose this integration and informational & managerial dependence alternative.

A new school of thought pertaining to SCM has recently emerged: the collaboration school (Verduijn, 2004), with Mentzer as a notable representative. He defines collaboration as a long-term relationship between organizations, in the sense of a common pursuit. Collaboration has become evident in practice, as several companies work together in order to exercise an adequate management of the SC: planning, execution, performance assessment, all these are performed jointly. In our view, there are no significant differences between the integration school and the collaboration school. These schools have brought the concept into popular awareness, making a valuable contribution to the development and improvement of the public perception of SC and SCM. The use of these terms is relatively recent. In 1995, at the annual conference of the Council of Logistics Management, only 13,5% of the papers contained the term „supply chain", whereas in 1997, the term was already contained in 22,4% of the papers (Mentzer et al., 2001). However, it was the globalization of the big corporations' activities, the global competition and the advances in IT, rather than the popularization efforts of these experts that persuaded most of the practitioners that collaboration is the only viable solution for the future. This collaboration generically designated as SC and SCM was and still is subject to an ever-evolving perception.

1.2. International definitions of supply chain

In fact, the definitions regarding the SC are scarce in the international specialist literature, as most authors rather insist on clarifying the concept of SCM. For a given company, three levels of SC can be defined (Mentzer et al., 2001): direct supply chain – it includes the company, a supplier and a customer that participate in the upstream or downstream flow of a product, extended supply chain – it includes the company, the supplier's immediate suppliers as well as the customer's immediate customers and fundamental supply chain – it includes all the suppliers and customers involved in the production and delivery of the product, both downstream and upstream.

A similar perception is that a SC can be identified as company-related (the totality of closely-related partner companies upstream and downstream), product-related (the totality of companies

that contribute to the manufacturing of a specific product of the company) or generically company-related (all the partners involved in the production and delivery of all products (Quyale, 2006).

It should be noticed that the differences concern the perception of the SC, not the SC itself. Some perceive and understand it to be rather narrow (the extent of the SC depends on the collaboration between the companies), while others think that a SC is extended, as it exists regardless of the collaboration between partners or the lack thereof. Mentzer's analogy is fully fitting (Mentzer et al., 2001): the river exists and the water flows downstream just like the products in a SC, regardless of the fact that someone becomes aware of the possibility of a global management of the river basin or not. If several states share the same river basin, only cooperation enables them to achieve clearly-defined goals pertaining to it, as none of them taken separately would be able to implement decisions for the entire basin because of existing state borders. The SC (the riverbed) and the flow of goods (the water) exist anyway, with or without SCM. A company is usually part of several SCs. A company acts as a supplier for many customers and each of them represents a new SC with its customers. The companies create supply for the customers together, irrespective of whether they do it in a coordinated or uncoordinated manner.

The graph below depicts a generic SC in Wisner's view. It should be noted that a SC is a network consisting of suppliers of raw materials, manufacturers of semi-finished goods and parts, manufacturers of finished goods and distributors that are in charge of supplying the goods and services to the final consumer. In addition to the main flow of the SC, there is also a reverse flow of products (in the form of scrap or recycling materials – referred to in the Anglo-American literature as „reverse logistics”), as well as the flows that support these main flows: planning, information, activity integration .

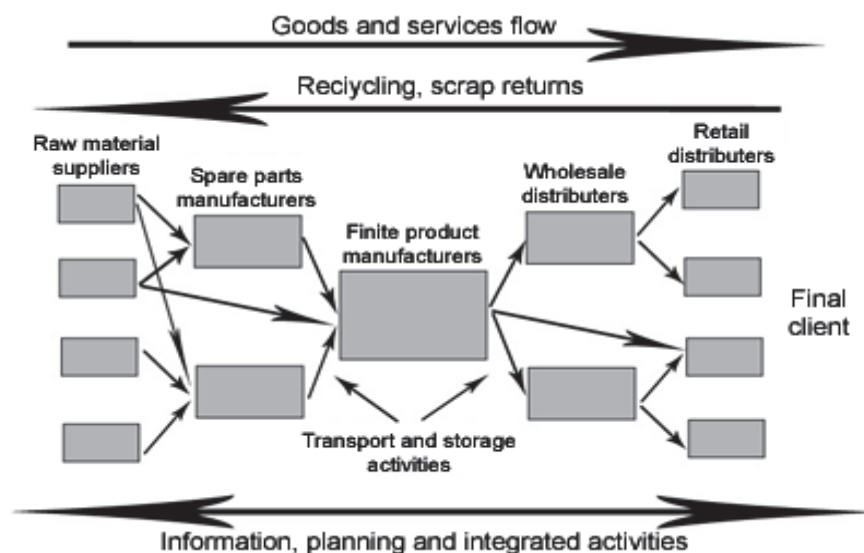


Fig. nb.1 Generic SC

Source: Wisner, J., Leong, K., Tan, K., Principles of Supply-Chain Management, South Western Publishing, Ohio, 2005, p.6

Frazzelle provides a definition of the SC, emphasizing its logistics side. With the fact that logistics is „the game that is played in the arena called SC” as a starting point, he defines SC as a network of locations (warehouses, production facilities, terminals, ports, shops, homes) vehicles (airplanes, trains, trucks, cars) and logistic data transmission and processing systems interconnecting not only the company's suppliers and the supplier's suppliers, but also the company's customers and the customers' customers (Frazzelle, 2001). However, Bowersox and his

collaborators (Bowersox et al., 2002, p.4) define the supply chain as a value chain or as a supply-generating chain made up by several companies, with no special emphasis on the logistic side of the SC.

It must be noted that most researchers stress the fact that a SC equals the group of companies that participate in the creation and delivery of a product, in the creation of supply and do not insist (Frazelle stands out as an exception) that SC refers only to those companies involved in the flow of goods, i.e. logistics. It is, in fact, the group of companies that participate in the creation of supply. For that reason, it is called a demand chain. In our view, logistics is only one of the many games that are played within a SC, such as marketing, production, R & D, SC quality and overall performance assurance.

1.3. International controversies regarding the designation „supply chain”

Although the explanations provided above seem to converge towards the acceptance of the fact that a supply chain is a group of companies that contribute to the creation of supply, things are conceptually more convoluted than they appear to be, as there are several controversies addressed below:

Controversy 1: Why supply chain rather than demand chain? Marketing experts have been recently trying to bring a deservedly neglected aspect back into public consideration, namely the fact that the term „supply” would imply that the group of companies work to produce a certain good for the customer (Jüttner et al., 2007, Thublier et al., 2010, De Treville et al., 2004, Charter et al., 2001). Marketing theories suggest that the company works to satisfy the customers' needs, i.e. the demand, therefore „demand chain” would be a much more appropriate term. Although we fully agree with that detail, it is now too late to change this designation because the term „supply chain” already has a long history behind and it's widely used to refer to this group of companies. Oliver and Weber have coined the term SC in 1982, while the critics of this term raised their objections as late as the 2000's, when SC and SCM were already widely-circulated notions. Demand chain continues to be used in SCs to designate the need of a marketing orientation towards the customer within the SC (De Treville et al., 2004).

Controversy 2: Why supply chain rather than value chain? The term „value chain” was devised by Porter in 1985 to highlight the company's sources of competitive advantage, that create value in the customer's perception, discerning primary and auxiliary activities. There are many similarities: both views, SC and value chain are systemic, process-orientated and aim to create value for customers. Although the value chain best describes the basic process within the SC, namely the creation of value, it may be argued that this term was doomed to fail in competition with SC from the very start, because of its primary function to describe activities within an individual company.

Both options demand chain and value chain roughly convey the same aspects: several partners and product manufacturing / delivery and even certain additional details: compliance with customer needs and creation of value. But things have been settled to a certain degree: SC is the term favored by most experts.

1.4. Defining supply chain management at international level

Supply chain management is one of the most used concepts in business. But, despite its popularity there isn't a general understanding of its meaning. SCM is seen either as a collaboration philosophy, either as management processes within a SC, either as just an operational concept from logistics (Mentzer et al., 2001, Burgess et al., 2006).

As a philosophy, SCM is perceived as seeing a SC as a single entity, not as a conglomerate of several companies. The degree to which SCM is implemented should be reflected in the way the partners are collaborating, the success of the operation as a whole. SCM philosophy would require

synchronization and convergence , both inter and intra organisational (Mentzer et al., 2001). It should be rather an orientation of a SC, a philosophy that can be implemented further .

As management processes, SCM is defined as all the activities concerning planning, organizing, coordinating, and controlling at supply chain level, aimed at serving customers better and meeting their needs. We refer to management of materials , information, and all business functions at SC level. If we have an integrated management, then we have a successful SCM. Among the managerial processes, we recall (Mentzer et al., 2001): customer relationship management, customer service management, order management, production management, supply management, innovation management, sales management, logistics management.

SCM is less often confused with logistics operations at SC level. We will not dwell on this issue, but we will give definitions according to this view of SCM.

The definitions that we found are consistent with international perception of SCM:

1. We found the following definitions that reflect SCM as a philosophy, as a strategic alternative for any organization:

- Christopher (2008) (Jüttner et al., 2007): SCM is the relation management with partners upstream and downstream, in the sense of creating value for the end customer, at a minimal cost, on the whole SC.

- Handfield și Nichols (Van Goor, 2001): In order to obtain a competitive advantage, companies need to operate on SC level. Only a SCM at SC level enables faster delivery, achievement of better and cheaper products than the competition;

- Croxton (2001) (Gundlach et al., 2006): Integration of key business processes from end customer to the most distant suppliers, with the purpose of creating value for customers and stakeholders as a whole;

2. Most definitions are at the level of management processes within the SC:

- Mentzer (Mentzer et al., 2001): SCM is the strategic and systemic coordination of the conventional functions, and also the tactical coordination of these functions, both at the firm level and at the SC level, in order to improve the company's long term performance and the SC as a whole;

- Chan și Lee (2005) (Gundlach et al., 2006): SCM is the efficient management of the complete processes (from customers to suppliers) of design, planning, supply;

- Institute of SCM (2005) (Gundlach et al., 2006): SCM is the design and ongoing management of processes crossing organizational boundaries to meet customers' needs;

3. At operational level, SCM is defined mainly by logisticians, who see SCM as a logistics management at SC level:

- Novak și Simco (1991): SCM covers the flow of materials from supplier to manufacturer to end customer;

- Lee și Covey (1995) (Jain et al., 2010) define SCM as the integration of the activities taking place within a network of facilities for the purpose of materials' supply, their processing, and delivery of products through a distribution system;

- CSCMP (Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals): SCM is the management of all activities related to supply, conversion and all logistics activities at SC level (Gundlach et al., 2006);

- Charter (2001) argues that practitioners perceive SCM as only the management of the flow of goods at SC level .

What is apparent in these definitions is their evolution. Three issues were included in all definitions, the evolution making sense by extending the coverage of these issues (Stock et al., 2010): the activities within SCM, SCM benefits and SC actors. Activities under SCM have evolved from the management of logistics activities to information management, management of the relationship with partners and of the overall performance. The benefits have evolved from

cost and service related to logistics to strategic benefits, increased customer satisfaction, increased effectiveness and efficiency at SC level. The actors have evolved according to perceptions of a SC exposed in this article.

In addition to the definitions of SCM, we believe that are important the processes assigned to SCM by specialists. We used multiple sources to see if SCM refers only to logistics management at SC level. The conclusion is clear: no, SCM is much more. SCM includes the following processes (Burgess et al., 2006, Verduijn, 2004, Van Goor, 2001): strategic leadership, intra- and inter-organizational relationship management, logistics management, continuous improvement - quality management, management information systems, performance management, marketing processes, R & D, product design.

In conclusion, the inconsistency concerning the terms of SC and SCM is caused in part by an ongoing evolution of the business terminology on international level, due to economic development, its globalization, to the high interest from specialists from many related areas connected to these terms. Each tries to shoot fire from his pot and thus create confusion.

Majority rules - this is what we think on the perception of SC and SCM. It is obvious that this first part of the article shows that a supply chain is a group of companies (conglomerate, network) involved in production - delivering a product and that SCM is the management of the relationship between companies. Not only it refers to logistics, nor just the logistics management system or group of companies, being a much broader concept.

2.USING IN ROMANIAN THE TERM CORRESPONDENTS OF SUPPLY CHAIN

Further on, we still insist on what we found in the literature and especially on the Internet on SC and SCM in Romania. We have not found any author who insisted on this issue, we never found an author outraged by using more terms to fill the corresponding English one.

Adoption of the terms SC and SCM in Romanian took two forms:

I. Not translating in Romanian is the first form. This aspect we noticed in the following cases: Vicepresident ARILOG (Romanian Association of Logistics) does not translate this term (Dumitru, 2008), retaining the Anglo-Saxon form; the logistics magazine retains the term supply chain (eg. Tutunaru, 2010); at Alexandru Ioan Cuza University in Iași, in 2010, is a Management specialization course, third year, called supply chain management;

II. A second form involves finding correspondent words for SC and SCM and hence their adaptation to the context used, the experience of the researcher. There is no lower or wider use of these terms, further exposing them alphabetically:

1. „Lanț de aprovizionare – desfacere” - procurement- sale chain is a term used in the same paper in which there is the term „lanț de distribuție” (Fotache and Hurbean, 2006);

2. „Lanț de aprovizionare – distribuție”, procurement- distribution chain is a term used by several consulting firms in the field (Tradeconsult, 2010, CAT, 2010);

3. „Lanț de aprovizionare – furnizare”, procurement-supply chain is a term used at the Polytechnic University of Timisoar (Mocuța, 2009);

4. „Lanț de aprovizionare”, procurement chain is a term used at the Academy of Economic Studies (Pelau, 2007);

5. „Lanț de aprovizionare și producție”, procurement and production chain is the term used by the experts from Romania for SC Unilever (Unilever, 2010);

6. „Lanț de aprovizionare-livrare”, procurement-delivery chain is a term used in the Academy of Economic Studies in one of the most extensive work on logistics in Romania (Bălan, 2006);

7. „Lanț de distribuție – aprovizionare”, distribution-procurement chain is a term used by some consulting firms in the industry (Training&Consulting, 2010);

8., „Lanț de distribuție”, distribution chain is a term used at Iași for SC (Fotache and Hurbean, 2006), but also by those who drew up a glossary of terms at the University of Târgoviște (ECR, 2008);

9., „Lanț de ofertă”, offer chain is a term used also in the Academy of Economic Studies, in collaboration with a teacher in the U.S. (Glasser et al., 2006);

10., „Lanț logistic”, logistics chain is used both at the Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj (Ilieș and Crișan, 2008a), and at the Academy of Economic Studies (Belu, 2008, Țarțavulea and Bănac, 2009);

11., „Procese de aprovizionare și livrare”, Supply and delivery processes is a term used by Microsoft representatives in Romania (CG-GC, 2010) at a presentation of Microsoft Dynamics Nav.

From these details we can see following:

-There is no uniform designation for SC and SCM in Romania;

-Change does not take into account the geographical area of origin nor the affiliation to academia or business of authors ;

-There is a lack of standardization and lack of correlation between the work of multiple authors;

-English translation of the term supply is deficit, in this context supply means offer and not procurement. Supply is the offer created by members of SC.

-There is an almost general mistake of charging a SC, insisting on the logistics side of it. Except the term of section 9 (offer chain), we can see that things took a nasty turn. On the one hand that supply is translated as procurement, and on the other hand the limitation of perceiving SC as a logistics chain or logistic relationship (procurement, delivery, distribution, supply, sale) is an aspect that affects negatively the research, reducing the activities at SC level ;

In an attempt to clarify the situation, we looked to see what happened in other Latin languages borrowing the two terms:

-In Italian the term has remained untranslated, AIOLOG (Association in Italy) has the original name: Associazione Italiana di Logistica e di Supply Chain Management;

-In French the term was adopted by a regulatory body language (general delegation of French and other languages of France - DGLFLF): SC is used as "Chaîne logistique", and SCM is used as „la gestion de la chaîne logistique”. However, what we noticed is the parallel use of another term for SCM: „management et économie des réseaux”;

-The Spanish language uses two names: „Cadena de Suministro” (procurement) and “Cadena de Abasto” (distribution);

-The Portuguese used the term “Cadeia de fornecimento” (supply chain).

We can notice the similarities between the translation attempts in Romanian and in other Latin languages. It is also apparent that there is a larger unit for the treatment of these terms, in our research we discovered no more than three terms in each language corresponding to the Latin for SC or SCM. We believe that we need a larger unit also in Romania.

3. Conclusions

The proposals that we make below are rather pragmatic and not one hundred percent correct from grammar or literary point of view. It is clear that the Romanians feel the need to translate these terms, that's why we deal with such confusion at both academics and the business environment. Italian option to not translate this term cannot be taken into consideration.

For the term supply chain we must consider what it really means: all the companies participating in production and delivery of a product, in creating supply. This supply chain exists even if there is coordination between firms, and even if this cooperation between companies is not present. It is obvious that all terms used in Romanian reflect the operational side – at the 2000s level in international logistics. How we currently not have a term like supply chain that will not reflect

reality (ie reality demand chain or value chain), any term which will not narrow the academic and business vision only to operational, logistics aspects, is welcome .

Another problem is the use of the term “chain” until now. The chain is rather a linear form of links between different nodes. The term chain is right at the operational level, from where he was taken. Neither the term “rețea” network is appropriate because the network would require direct interconnection of all its members, this aspect being more or less noticeable at SC level because of the sharp division between the raw material suppliers, manufacturers, distributors etc. At the strategic level was used often the term distribution channel. We believe that companies that create together the offer, are making at the same time a downstream channel towards upstream of the materials and products to the customer. But the term channel is not usable because of the connotations related to distribution and logistics.

Proposal 1: We propose keeping the term “lanț”, chain in English, due to the widespread use of this term already. Although does not reflect reality, but rather the structure of the SC as a tree, we believe that the term chain suggests the links between partners.

The long form of the supply chain in Romanian would be “lanțul creării ofertei”, in English the chain of creating the offer, but it has three words and things would become too long.

Proposal 2: To customize the chain and give a similar connotation to SC, we propose to use the association „lanțul ofertei”-“supply chain” to denote in Romanian the term supply chain from management. It reflects all the definitions set, and can be converted into “Managementul Lanțului Ofertei”- supply chain management without diminishing and affecting theoretically any of the relevant points for both concepts, at international level.

Regarding the supply chain activities, as outlined in the study of literature, it is clear that not only logistics “play” in it. Management implementation of supply chains at first is to be made at operational level and the benefits of cooperation between companies are particularly relevant by optimization of logistics activities. But these are the first step towards an efficient SCM. Other processes can be integrated, according to international literature: marketing, quality, sales, innovation, etc..

Definition 1: “Lanțul ofertei”-the supply chain represents all firms participating in the production and delivery of products or services, in other words creating the market-supply.

Definition 2: “Managementul lanțului ofertei”- supply chain management is perceived as all managerial processes at the supply chain level (inter-organizations). It includes several processes: strategic management, marketing, production management, innovation management, research and development, computer network management, logistics management, customer relationship management, sales management etc. These processes can be performed at the supply chain level to a lesser extent or may be implemented in full. These things depend on the coordination of a unified supply chain or a less coordinated existence of it.

We believe that the two terms and general definitions are clear and comply with international requirements, in order to be widely used in Romania. We are willing to consider other solutions scientifically justified.

4. Notes

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