

RESEARCH SEMINAR PROCUREMENT

OPM 791, MMM Fall 2018

Responsible lecturer

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Overview

This seminar examines current procurement topics from a research perspective. By writing a paper on a specific topic, students will deepen their understanding of procurement and supply chain research and its implications for practice. The suggested topics emphasize research rather than application, take an empirical perspective and are related to the current research interests of the Endowed Chair of Procurement.

The main intended learning outcome is to attain the competences for writing a high-quality (empirical research-oriented) master thesis about a topic in the broader procurement arena. Participants will learn how to structure a research question systematically and how to independently gather the knowledge of the foundations, structures, and methodologies underlying a given topic. In addition, participants will learn how to present research findings.

Organization

1. For each participant, there are **three grade-relevant deliverables**:
 - A **written report** of about 25 to 30 pages that explains and summarizes the related literature, the research approach, and the results. The written report – in the form of two hard copies and a soft copy (MS Word or LaTeX source files) – has to be submitted by **November 5, 2018** (11:59 am).
 - An **in-class presentation** with about 20 min presentation plus 15 minutes of discussion. The presentations will be held in a blocked session around **calendar week 46/47** (exact times and the room will be announced to the participants). Attendance of the presentation session is obligatory.
 - A service as **discussant for another seminar paper**: Each participant will also act as a discussant for one of the other seminar papers. The discussants are responsible for critically assessing the presented work and for opening the ensuing discussion.
2. The **final grade** for the seminar is composed as follows: Written report (60%), presentation (30%), contribution to discussion (10%).
3. Both the written report and the presentation have to be delivered in **English**.

4. A **general kick-off meeting** for all participants will be held on May 23, 2018 (8:30 – 10:00 am in SO 322). During this meeting, participants will obtain an introduction to empirical research and to scientific writing in the context of supply (chain) management.
5. A **specific kick-off meeting** for each participant will be scheduled bilaterally with the supervisor of the respective topic.
6. There is a **joint application process** for the seminars offered by the chairs of the **Area Operations Management**. In the HWS 2018, this includes the following seminars:
 - OPM 701: Research Seminar Supply Chain Management (Chair of Logistics and Supply Chain Management), **topics labeled with ‘L’**
 - OPM 761: Research Seminar Production Management (Chair of Production Management), **topics labeled with ‘P’**
 - OPM 781: Research Seminar Service Operations (Chair of Service Operations), **topics labeled with ‘S’**
 - OPM 791: Research Seminar Procurement (Chair of Procurement), **topics labeled with ‘B’**
7. Students can apply for the seminars by completing the survey “Application” in the following ILIAS-Group:
https://ilias.uni-mannheim.de/goto.php?target=crs_792293&client_id=ILIAS
In addition, applicants for OPM 791 must send a **current CV**, an **official B.Sc. grades overview**, and a **current M.Sc. grades overview** by e-mail to procurement@bwl.uni-mannheim.de, mentioning “Seminar Application Documents” in the subject row.
8. Applications will be accepted **starting April 30 until May 13**. The admission to the seminar is binding and will be confirmed by e-mail by May 22.
9. For questions concerning the seminar, please contact Michael Westerburg (westerburg@bwl.uni-mannheim.de).

Topics

Topic B01: Board attributes and corporate environmental and social performance

In recent years, the topic of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has received broad attention in research and practice. The board of a public corporation, as its major decision making body, plays an important role in addressing stakeholder claims with regard to CSR. Scholars working in the field of corporate governance have examined the link between various board attributes and measures of corporate environmental and social performance. However, there is a need for developing a better understanding of which board attributes contribute to a firm's CSR performance.

The aim of this study is to empirically investigate board attributes and their CSR implications for corporate environmental and social performance.

For more information, please contact Maximilian Merath (merath@bwl.uni-mannheim.de).

Topic B02: Exploring the ASSET4 ESG data to investigate the link between sustainability and the financial performance of firms

The ASSET4 ESG measures are recognized as the most complete ratings of sustainability. They comprise key performance indicators assessed by independent external social audits that examine different dimensions of sustainability. These measures reflect a firm's social, environmental, economic, and corporate governance strengths and weaknesses. The data has been rarely used in the context of supply chain management and procurement. Combining ASSET4 ESG data with financial data from Datastream could provide insights into the link between sustainability and the financial performance of firms, which is still unclear. The aim of this seminar work is to explore the ASSET4 ESG data, combine it with financial data, and show relationships in the data to investigate this link.

For more information, please contact Maximilian Merath (merath@bwl.uni-mannheim.de).

Topic B03: Effects of firm structure and employee skills on resilience capabilities

Global sourcing has become the new normal and this globalization trend has led to an increase in the complexity of supply chains, but complexity makes supply chains more vulnerable. This vulnerability can lead to disruptions. When a disruption occurs, firms need to react quickly in order to keep the negative impact on their performance low, which requires resilience capabilities. Resilient supply chains are prepared for unexpected events, they are able to respond to disruptions and recover from them. Literature shows that many capabilities exist that contribute to increasing a supply chain's level of resilience. However, there are several elements of firm structure and employee skills that have not been considered as capability factors of resilience thus far.

The aim of this study is to investigate attributes of firm structure and employee skills and their effects on resilience capabilities based on existing empirical data.

For more information, please contact Sebastian Gehrlein (gehrlein@bwl.uni-mannheim.de).

Topic B04: Determinants of supply chain complexity and resulting implications for firm performance

Complexity is ubiquitous in modern, globalized supply chains. Supply chain complexity can be a main driver of supply risks, and prior research has shown that complexity has negative effects on firm performance and is related to adverse outcomes. Therefore, it is essential to understand which factors influence the complexity of a firm's supply chain. In the literature, various concepts and measures of complexity exist. In the supply chain context, complexity has been measured along the three dimensions vertical, horizontal, and spatial complexity.

The aim of this study is to identify crucial parameters of upstream supply chain complexity and to collect the according data to measure them from secondary data sources. This data should then be linked to corporate financial data in order to detect coherences between the different complexity parameters and firm performance.

For more information, please contact Sebastian Gehrlein (gehrlein@bwl.uni-mannheim.de).

Topic B05: Creating a risk profile of firms

Firms publish information about the risk that they face in a dedicated section of their annual reports. Such risk factors cover a wide range of topics from macro-economic factors down to product related factors. However, there exist disclosure differences over time, between firms, or between different topics.

The objective of this study is to employ different similarity measures (Jaccard similarity, Cosine similarity) across a range of extracted textual risk factors. Based on the derived similarity measures, firms have to be grouped to gain further insights into which types of firms face which types of risk. This topic requires some basic programming skills.

For more information, please contact Michael Westerburg (westerburg@bwl.uni-mannheim.de).

Topic B06: The supply network of US-manufacturing firms

Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) increasingly rely on their tier-1 suppliers to provide key elements of their final product. At the same time, the suppliers also become more dependent on their suppliers. As a result, entire value chains become more intransparent and can even break down if the production of a small far upstream supplier is disrupted. However, many OEMs are not aware of all interdependencies in their value chain.

The aim of this study is to analyze the supply networks of US-manufacturing firms. To this end, data is collected from the value chain module of Thomson Reuters Eikon available at the University of Mannheim. Based on the data collected, the number of tiers, interdependencies, and loops among certain suppliers can be identified and analyzed.

For more information, please contact Michael Westerburg (westerburg@bwl.uni-mannheim.de).