

Agile Supply Partnerships

**Corrado Cerruti,
Torvergata University (Rome),**

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Abstract

The concept of supply chain agility is centred on mastering uncertainty and change in markets characterized by high volatility, intense competition, and changing customer requirements – conditions that prevail in the fashion industry. In an agile supply chain strategy, suppliers play a central role as they allow firms to access new resources to improve their performance in terms of responsiveness and time-to-market. For this reason, partnerships are often presented as a pillar of agility. In the fashion industry, such supply partnerships are particularly important, given that most fashion companies have limited in-house capabilities and rely heavily on their supply network.

Despite the general consensus on the relevance of partnerships to supply chain agility, the literature reveals disagreements and contradictions regarding the specific role and characteristics of supply relationships in an agile strategy. Some authors propose long-term partnerships, while others recommend short-term relationships, as current suppliers might not have the required skills and capabilities to deliver future strategies.

Given such contradictory theoretical positions, this paper investigates how fashion firms leverage on supply relationships to deliver their strategies using three in-depth case studies of Italian footwear manufacturers. In doing so, the study aims to explore the conditions and characteristics that support the development of agile supply partnerships (ASPs), which we define as high-involvement, short-term supply relationships.

Reference:

Corrado Cerruti, Carlos Mena, Heather Skipworth, Ernesto Tavoletti, (2016), "Characterizing agile supply partnerships in the fashion industry", International Journal of Operations & Production Management, Vol. 36 Iss 8 pp. 923 – 947.

Speaker Profile

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