10th International Workshop on Sustainable Road Freight Transport

Enhancing Competitive Advantage Through Horizontal Collaboration in Urban Last-Mile Logistics

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Abstract:

The rise of e-commerce and urbanisation has placed immense pressure on last-mile logistics (LML). As a result, many significant challenges are emerging in achieving sustainability goals and maintaining a competitive edge. This study aims to explore the potential of horizontal collaboration (HC) in urban LML as a means to enhance environmental sustainability and improve the competitive advantage of logistics organisations with a focus in the UK and beyond.

The research is grounded in a comprehensive review undertaken as part of a PhD thesis of the existing literature on HC, LML, and sustainability. This review has facilitated the formulation of research questions and hypotheses, providing a robust understanding of the current state of knowledge in the field. The research then looks to employ a qualitative approach, utilising semi-structured interviews with professionals in various roles within the logistics sector. The data gathered will undergo thematic analysis to identify patterns and insights, leading to the development of a comprehensive framework for sustainable HC in urban LML.

The theoretical lenses of Transaction Cost Economics (TCE) and the Resource-Based View (RBV) are incorporated into the research. TCE focuses on minimising transaction costs associated with coordinating economic activities, providing a rationale for HC. RBV emphasises the importance of leveraging unique resources and capabilities within a firm to achieve a competitive advantage. In the context of HC, the RBV can be employed to analyse how logistics companies can combine their resources and capabilities to create synergies and enhance their overall competitiveness in the LML market.

The anticipated findings of this study will contribute to the understanding of sustainable LML and offer valuable insights for practitioners, policymakers, and academics in the field. By examining the drivers, strategies, challenges, and potential impact of HC in LML, the research is expected to inform the development of a sustainable framework that can promote more efficient and environmentally friendly logistics practices. This framework could lead to improved environmental outcomes and increased competitiveness for organisations involved in urban last-mile delivery.

This research aligns with the themes of the 10th International Workshop on Sustainable Road Freight Transport, particularly in relation to improving the sustainability and resilience of logistics and freight transport, and the transition to net zero logistics. The study will provide a comprehensive understanding of the drivers, strategies, and challenges involved in HC, as well as the potential benefits of such collaboration for both environmental sustainability and competitiveness in the urban LML sector. The findings will inform the development of a sustainable framework that can promote more efficient and environmentally friendly logistics practices, contributing to the global transition to a net zero future.