

## **Value Creation through Cross-functional Collaboration: Making a Case for SCM and Marketing Integration.**

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### **Abstract**

The paper aims to focus on and discuss the issues of cross-functional collaboration pertaining to SCM and marketing. In many firms, the SCM still seems to be disconnected from the marketing or demand side as it has only a faint idea of the drivers behind customer demand. Firms that have integrated their SCM and marketing capabilities are more successful in bringing often-conflicting objectives more closely together. This paper aims to investigate between the renewed emphasis and interests in integration of SCM and marketing. The prior literature on SCM and marketing integration is reviewed and a framework is presented which shows the benefits of SCM and marketing integration and provides a basis for further empirical validation.

**Keywords:** Collaboration, Customer value proposition, Marketing, Supply chain management

### **Introduction**

As firms become larger and more internally complex, their functional departments often integrate to better organizational objectives (Griffin and Hauser 1996; Liedtka 1996). Therefore, the greater the operational interdependence between functional areas, the more their success will be dependent on coordination (Van de Ven 1976) and communication (Daft and Huber 1987). Cross-functional collaboration is an informal and integrative approach that involves functional departments working together, having a mutual understanding, sharing a common vision, sharing resources, and achieving common goals collectively (Kahn 1996; Tjosvold 1988). Collaborative behavior is based on cooperation (willingness), rather than compliance (requirement), and its success is dependent on the ability to build meaningful relationships and shared interpretations of business objectives (Liedtka 1996; Tjosvold 1988).

Supply Chain Management (SCM) refers to all of the processes, technologies, and strategies that together form the basis for working with internal as well as external sources of supply. Historically, firms have invested their resources to develop a core competitive advantage in one or other functional area such as SCM or marketing – but rarely in both – often resulting in mismatches between SCM process (what is available in the marketplace) and marketing process (what is need of customers). This paper suggests that successfully managing the SCM to create customer value requires extensive integration between SCM and marketing that is based on a foundation of value creation through cross-functional collaboration. Integration of SCM and marketing helps firms in prioritizing and ensuring fulfillment of objectives based upon the shared generation, dissemination, and interpretation of SCM and marketing strengths as well as constraints.

### **Literature Review**

A supply chain is defined as “the integration of key business processes from end users through original suppliers that provides products, services, and information that adds value for customers and other stakeholders” (Lambert *et al.*, 1998). Here, a supply chain includes all the value chain processes from suppliers to end customers. It is imperative that each supply chain participant adds value from the perspective of the end customer in the supply chain. This assumes integration of both supply and demand side activities in the value chain (Jeong and Hong, 2007). SCM is the collaborative design and management of seamless value-added processes to meet the real needs of the end customer (Fawcett and Magnan,

2004). A number of organizations have focused their efforts on developing sophisticated supply chains such that their managerial focus became myopic, and many lost sight of their markets and their customers, missing the fact that the customers, failing to realize their expectations, switched their loyalties (Walters, 2006). Thus, it is essential to understand the marketing perspective also instead of solely focusing on SCM decisions.

The notion of the SCM as the new corporate mantra, championing reduced costs, improving efficiencies, and rewarding end customers with reduced prices, seems somewhat inappropriate to those who are influenced by the notion that marketing was the dominant corporate philosophy (Walters, 2006). The notion that an effective supply chain alone will ensure adequate end customer satisfaction by reducing costs and therefore prices is not necessarily an adequate model by itself (Childerhouse and Towill, 2000). Competitive advantage from SCM emanates primarily from the dual-edged sword of cost reduction and revenue enhancement (Green *et al.*, 2006). SCM evolved from a traditional focus on purchasing and logistics to a broader, more integrated emphasis on value creation. According to Kampstra *et al.*, (2006), leading firms increasingly view SCM excellence as more than just a source of cost reduction – rather, they see it as a source of competitive advantage. Many researchers argue that SCM creates competitive values through the active involvement of supply chain entities (Jeong and Hong, 2007). SCM is an integrated philosophy, spanning boundaries in the organization and crossing departments without regard to the functional silos that have existed for many years (Parente *et al.*, 2008).

Successful SCM initiatives require cross-functional integration and marketing must play a critical role. The challenge is to determine how to successfully accomplish this integration (Lambert and Cooper, 2000). Lummus *et al.*, (2003) examined the impact of marketing initiatives on the SCM. Their study showed that marketing initiatives can have a significant impact on supply chains. For example, the ‘bullwhip’ effect occurs when a firm’s marketing actions, such as price discounts and trade deals, cause greater variance in sales for upstream suppliers, and the distortions are amplified back through the supply chain. These authors demonstrated that not only does SCM affect marketing efforts, but that marketing efforts also affect the SCM. Ryals and Rogers (2006) pointed out that substantial developments within SCM such as strategic procurement and marketing logistics (Christopher, 2005) remained largely unnoticed by marketing. Integration of SCM and marketing decisions should be a prime concern of any profit maximizing firm. Supply chain actions, should always be aligned with the business strategy of the firm and include upstream and downstream activities (Sahay and Mohan, 2003) in order to facilitate the integration of the supply chain (Lummus and Demarie, 2006). According to Ryals and Humphries (2007), many research constructs and best practices within SCM and marketing seem to be converging. Although most of these studies have focused on importance of SCM and marketing in the value chain on a standalone basis, integration of SCM and marketing is not explored much. This paper works in this direction and provides framework for enhancing and evaluating integration between SCM and marketing.

### **Conflict between SCM and Marketing: Major Causes**

Conflicts arise between SCM and marketing due to differences in their viewpoints. SCM focus on cost control while marketing stresses on the revenue enhancement. The main areas of conflict between SCM and marketing are summarized below:

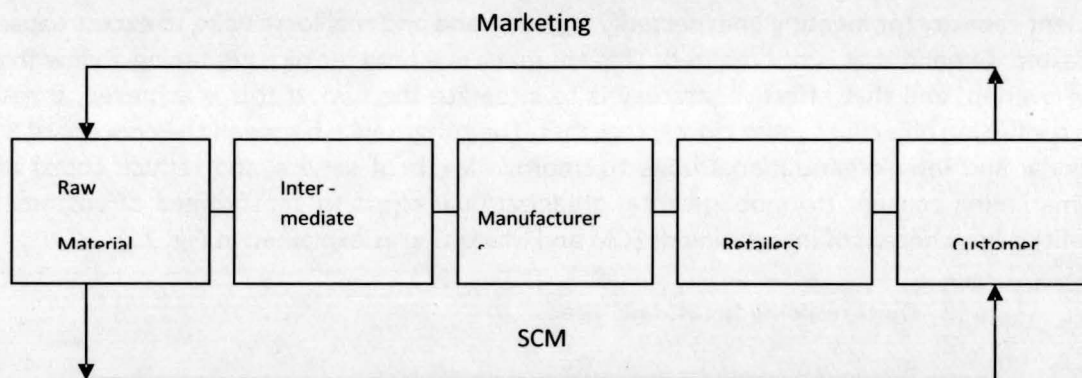
1. *Control*  
It is regarding who monitors what process, ownership of functions, sub functions and activities for better performance.
2. *Availability of data and information*  
Limited data availability restricts better control, hinders decision-making capability and ultimately results in increased level of conflicts.
3. *Risk mitigation*  
Difference in definitions of strategy for mitigation of risk.
4. *Crisis handling*  
Crisis conditions and event handling roles during such situations remains undefined.
5. *Failure handling*  
Responsibility and ownership in case of underperformance of targets and failure.

### **Mismatch of SCM and Marketing Efforts: Major Impacts**

The deleterious results of not integrating the SCM and the marketing efforts are becoming increasingly evident. A firm can't reach its full potential in terms of developing, refining, supporting, or delivering products and services without using marketing insights to shape and refine the SCM. For example, unnecessary quarterly variability in dispatch of products in the market causes either sluggish sales for the most of quarter followed by end of quarter surge or brisk sales for the most of the quarter followed by slack sales in the quarter end. These phenomena are caused by marketing strategies that are misaligned with SCM (Slone *et al.*, 2007). Similarly, it's difficult to execute a marketing strategy that meets the unique needs of customers – cost, quality, variety, delivery, and service – if the underlying support capabilities of SCM can't deliver. SCM should be core component of sales and marketing promotions. SCM and marketing that is not effectively tied to each other results in:

1. *Under delivering*  
Marketing processes increase customer interactions and raise customer expectations. But if the SCM can't deliver on marketing promises, customer satisfaction declines.
2. *Over delivering*  
Marketing initiative that don't provide information sharing on cost transparency with SCM results in delivering products or services that are unprofitable.
3. *Lost share of customer opportunities*  
Without SCM and marketing integration, the SCM can't capitalize on the customer needs information that marketing uncovers, and marketing can't implement new product or market development strategy that profitably increase the scope of its offerings.

The failure of SCM and marketing integration is significant barriers to identifying and responding to customer demand, optimizing inventories, exploiting sales and product development opportunities, and servicing the customer base. The formation of SCM and marketing efforts that tend to be linear and sequential causes the inability for an individual firm to excel at more than one discipline at a time. At the same time data and information can't be effectively shared among supply chain partners, customer-driven insight can't be utilized in the system, operational inefficiencies can increase manifold, and opportunities for value creation can be lost permanently. Hence, the SCM function should be held equally accountable with the marketing function for customer service and inventory (Slone *et al.*, 2007). SCM and marketing decisions in many consumer products firms are made in a sequential and uncoordinated manner, as shown in Fig.1.



**Fig. 1: Sequential Network - Mismatch of SCM and Marketing Efforts**

(Source: Developed by author)

### **Integration of SCM and Marketing: A Research Framework**

Countless consumer product manufacturers and retailers have overhauled the 'back end' of their businesses over the last decade, instituting new SCM processes that have lowered costs and reduced cycle times in manufacturing, distribution, and procurement. Other consumer businesses have focused on the 'front end' through marketing initiatives that have boosted customer retention and profitability. When the SCM side of supply efficiency is combined with marketing insight, a number of benefits emerge. These benefits include:

1. Reduced level of inventory from having precise information of inventory availability.
2. Reduced lead times from better visibility of demand for products.
3. Improved customer service and retention resulting from an improved ability to meet delivery on time.
4. Increased sales from being able to confirm availability and delivery of standard and enhanced products in real time.

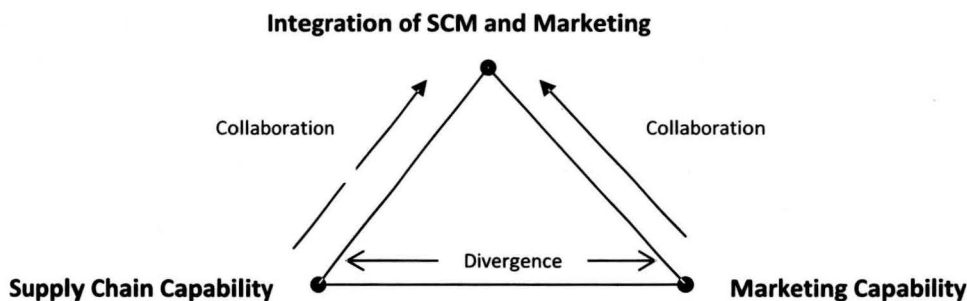
Increased responsiveness by working across various sales channels, while taking into consideration production constraints.

The synergies between SCM and marketing have been widely acknowledged (e.g. Ellinger, 2000; Soonhong and Mentzer, 2000; Svensson, 2002), leading Piercy (2002) to conclude that their better coordination could define competitive advantage in new ways. Within the supply chain as well as the marketing literature, the

need to link both sides has already been emphasized. Influence of SCM in areas which were originally domain of marketing, is increasingly recognized. Lee (2001) emphasizes the problems of SCM acting independently of marketing. According to Flint (2004), effective marketing strategy demands sound SCM. The argument for integrating SCM and marketing strengths is strong and compelling. According to (Lee, 2001), the influence of marketing activities on SCM, and vice versa, has to be understood and coordinated. Similarly, supply chain costs strongly impact marketing success of product and ultimately firm profitability. SCM and marketing have not always been seen to be closely linked in many firms. (Rainbird, 2004). In many firms, the SCM still seems to be disconnected from the demand side as it has only a faint idea of the drivers behind customer demand.

Integration of SCM and Marketing helps SCM and marketing reconcile the issues between opportunity losses due to insufficient capacity for meeting unexpectedly high demand and real losses due to excess capacity for meeting forecasted demand that is not realized. This approach is a broader picture, taking a view that SCM and marketing overlap, and that effective strategy is to integrate the two. If this is achieved, it results in bringing often conflicting objectives more closely together. The congruence between the concept of SCM (to link organizational and inter-organizational units to improve levels of service and reduce costs) and the objectives of marketing concept (to mobilize total organizational effort to satisfy need of customers and generate a profit) is key concept of integration of SCM and Marketing as explained in Fig. 2.

- Quick response to customer needs
- Best-in-class products and services at lowest price
- Key success factor:



- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Operational efficiency</li> <li>- Low cost</li> <li>- Key success area:</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Respond quickly to customer needs</li> <li>- Deliver total solutions</li> <li>- Key success area:</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

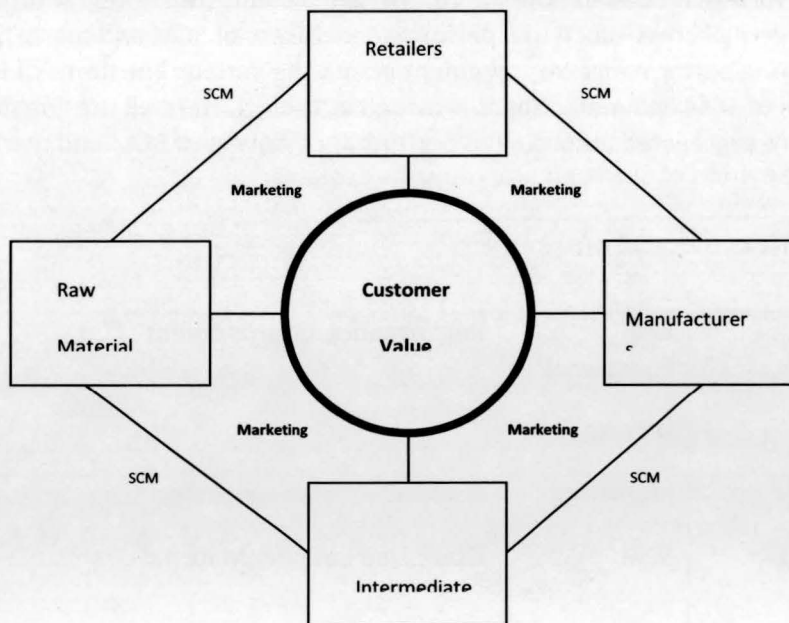
**Fig. 2: Integration of SCM and Marketing**

(Source: Developed by author)

Integration of SCM and marketing is increasingly being recognized by business firms as a key driver for improving financial and operating performance. As this recognition emerges, SCM is becoming much more

closely linked with marketing and leading edge firms are making SCM a competitive differentiator by integrating marketing efforts of demand creation activity with SCM capability.

According to Sawhney and Piper (2002), firms with a high customer value focus achieve a higher level of business performance outcomes than those that show weaker customer value emphasis. Customer value is created through well planned, systematic use of market knowledge to shape flexible logistic and supply chain systems. The flow of goods and services must be adjusted constantly according to the development of the customers and the market. It is through the integration of SCM and marketing that customer value, unique competitive advantages and increased profitability are achieved. In integration of SCM and Marketing makes, supply chains much more customer focused - they deliver great service at lower cost and a key ingredient of their success is strong collaboration between SCM, as well as marketing where all are focusing on the customer value proposition as explained in Fig. 3.

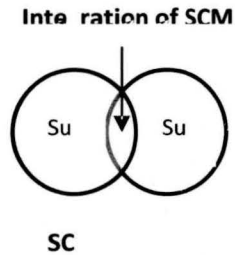


**Fig. 3: Ring Network – A Framework for Integration of SCM and Marketing**

(Source: Developed by author)

### **Research Methodology: An Evaluation Framework for SCM and Marketing Integration**

It is relatively common to find discrete functional excellence in SCM side by side with marketing. They frequently operate as separate, self-optimizing – even adversarial – entities. Integration of SCM and marketing links SCM decisions with marketing decisions, so that demand can be anticipated and met with the right amount of inventory. Otherwise, either excessive leftover inventory or stock-outs will result. With such initiatives, SCM facilitates task of marketing by delivering the right product - in the right quantity, at the right location, and at the right price. The SCM and marketing functions are not separate rather they are intertwined as explained below in Fig. 4.



**Fig. 4: Integration of SCM and Marketing for Optimal Outcome**

(Source: Developed by author)

This paper supports the emerging view that SCM and marketing are highly connected. Integration of SCM and marketing will impact positively all cross-functional performance drivers of SCM and marketing. An evaluation framework for measuring performance improvement across the various line items of income statement of a firm having integration of SCM and marketing is provided in Table 1. Here all the line items of income statement are segregated according to performance drivers of SCM and marketing.

Income Statement Line Item	Key Functional Drivers	Performance Improvement
Sales Revenue	Marketing	Better Customer Response
<u>– COGS (Cost of Goods Sold)</u>	SCM	Optimized Labor & Material
<b>Gross Profit</b>		
– Depreciation	SCM	Improved Asset Utilization
– Selling Expense	Marketing	Improved Sales Force Productivity
– G & A Expense (General & Administrative)	Marketing	Reduced Transaction Expenses
–Logistics Expense	SCM	Optimized Transportation Expenses
<b>Operating Profits</b>		
<u>– Interest Expense</u>	SCM	Reduced Working Capital
<b>Net Income</b>		

**Table 1: Integration of SCM and Marketing: An Evaluation Framework**

(Source: Developed by author)

## Integration of SCM and Marketing: Major Barriers

Although it is often assumed that functional areas of firm work together effectively, reality is that, they do not always think alike or hold the same values (Ellinger *et al.*, 2006). Rather, each functional area acts as a specialist that provides unique resources to the firm but also tends to pursue its own goals (Esper *et al.*, 2010). As a result, functional areas often have trouble coordinating and strategic conflicts can occur (Anderson, 1982). This has made collaborative cross-functional integration difficult to implement (Hansen and Nohria, 2004; Nunes and Cespedes, 2003), poorly understood (Bowersox *et al.*, 2003; Tjosvold *et al.*, 1992) and markedly rare (Hitt *et al.*, 1993; Sabath and Fontanella 2002).

The challenges of integration of SCM and Marketing are big: vastly different cultures between SCM and marketing (customer relationship, sales and service) functions; hard-to-match information, measurements, and incentives; and increased concerns about relentlessly accelerating customer needs and expectations. Understanding these barriers is crucial before setting out road map for integration of SCM and marketing initiatives. Following are three such barriers:

### 1. *Vastly Different Culture Between SCM and Marketing Operations*

Many firms have had big success in SCM and marketing initiatives when measured in isolation as a standalone function. SCM in most firms have made significant progress in reducing time and costs in production, procurement, and distribution, while improving product and service quality, and managing inventory. At the same time, marketing, sales and services have been improving customer loyalty mainly through marketing and CRM initiatives. However, in most firms these SCM and marketing/CRM initiatives typically have operated independently. In part, this is due to the long-established practice of functional excellence as SCM and marketing focused on improving their piece of the overall value chain. Fearing loss of control, they often become resistant to cross functional initiatives that may tamper with their finely tuned close loop operations.

Further amplifying the gap between the SCM and marketing are differences in their working styles. Because they are continually measured on improving the way goods are produced and delivered, SCM is process-oriented and thus more focused on operational details and enhancing operational efficiencies. On the other hand, marketing people are product oriented and thus focus more on identifying needs of customer segments, buying patterns, new product introduction, product enhancement and marketing communications.

### 2. *Performance Measurement and Rewards System*

The performance measurement and incentives of SCM and marketing functions often don't match. Performance measurement and reward systems can be so incongruous that SCM and marketing won't even identify ways of creating mutual benefits. For example SCM rewarded on achieving the lowest costs of production and distribution, will view products and delivery customization as a threat to their operating performance. On the marketing side, the monthly sales incentives that drive higher sales also drive huge artificial peak in product demand, followed by drastic drop-offs as the next delivery cycle gets underway, causing much higher production and logistics costs in the supply chain.

### 3. *Constantly Increasing Customer Expectations*

In this era of globalization, customers are getting overly accustomed to faster delivery times, customized products and delivery options, and continually ask for more, thereby causing greater uncertainty in customer demand. In today's retail consumer environment, it's consumers who



rule. These consumers are a diverse lot and finicky, too. Equipped with a wealth of product information and reviews, they demand a wide selection of products.

### **Antecedents and Consequences of SCM and Marketing Integration**

To be truly consumer driven, SCM must also enable collaboration both within enterprises by forging alliance with marketing and sales activities and with key trading partners of supply chain. Firms realize that in order to remain competitive, they need to stay focused on meeting the needs of consumers. This is possible with integration of SCM and marketing as it helps firms in building consumer-driven supply chains that will enable them to sense consumer demand and respond to it in real time. Hence, it is possible to build supply chain that is flexible and responsive, along with low cost. This represents a fundamental shift from the past in which they often focused more on maximizing their own internal systems than on working together to meet the needs of consumers. The objective of integration of SCM and marketing is to provide high levels of service and a superior consumer experience at every opportunity while also decreasing time to market, trimming overall costs and optimizing productivity.

Firms that effectively integrate their SCM and marketing activities are more profitable than competitors that do not. They are much more likely to achieve superior corporate performance in terms of sales, profitability, market share, customer satisfaction, and other key measures, and much more likely to generate higher shareholder returns. Such firms can continuously improve their lead over competitors, boost profits margins and enhance shareholder value. Integration of SCM and marketing has enabled firms to satisfy different customer needs with supportive supply chain capabilities. Integration of SCM and marketing proactively address emerging customer needs – before competitors have an opportunity to discover them. With integration of SCM and marketing, firms can offer customers an experience that is seamless in all three aspects: service delivery, effective pricing, and product quality. Following are major benefits of integration of SCM and marketing:

#### *1. Improved customer intimacy*

Customer needs and expectations are becoming more and more unstable and difficult to identify as customers have many choices, frequently similar in terms of quality and price. (Fassoula and Neoset, 2006). Martin and Grbac (2003) claimed that SCM is very critical to the responsiveness to customer needs. In the era of shortening product lifecycles and a shifting balance of power from the supplier to the customer, the informed customer dictates what they want, where and why (Juttner *et al.*, 2006). Increasingly, firms are required to become more customer-oriented through their SCM practices. (Deshpande *et al.*, 1993; Shapiro, 1988; Spekman *et al.*, 1998).

#### *2. Enhanced operational efficiencies*

In addition to matching resources with customer value, integration of SCM and marketing

can improve SCM's planning phase, further optimizing production runs and inventory.

Greater insight into demand – what orders will be placed and when – to facilitate this optimization will improve return on assets (ROA).

#### *3. Understanding the effectiveness and profitability of promotions*

Firms with effective integration of SCM and marketing are more likely to know how well retailers participated in promotions schemes and how consumers responded to it. Thus, marketing department is able to know if the promotion plan met their return on investment (ROI) criteria and other objectives.

#### 4. *Improvement in the bottom line*

Integration of SCM and marketing initiatives has strong impact on productivity and profitability of firms. It helps firms in creating the value they seek. The primary forces for driving this are cost reduction and revenue generation achieved by superior performance of cross-functional drivers' viz. SCM and marketing.

### Conclusion

Today's market competitiveness is growing more and more complex to deal with. Due to the long lead times that most firms deal with, it is getting difficult to produce the right products at the right time. With the fast developing world economy and globalization, there has been a drastic increase in the pressure on organizations to find new ways to create and deliver value to customers through SCM. (Seth *et al.*, 2006). Industrial customers demand Just-In-Time (JIT) deliveries and retail market customers seem to be more willing to choose from a competitor with similar products (Christopher, 1998). This is due to the combination of forces viz. the technology advancement, increased pressure for firm profitability and cost effectiveness. For products with short product life cycles, such as fashion apparel, personal computers and automobiles, effective integration of SCM and marketing is very important. Increased level of competition and shorter product life cycles make the link between SCM and marketing all the more critical.

The goal of Integration of SCM and marketing is to create unique competitive advantages by linking together customer values with a more effective flow of products. The flow must always be refined and create customer value proposition in a constantly changing market. By encouraging SCM and marketing meet in new interesting scenario, firms can develop unique competitive advantages. This Paper provides an evaluation framework for measurement of performance improvement observed with integration of SCM and marketing. Paper also highlights role of better integration in resolving conflict between SCM and marketing. Being a conceptual paper, further research is required in this area of SCM and marketing integration. Finding of this paper can be further strengthened by analyzing data of firms adopting this approach along with measurement and evaluation of key cross-functional drivers of SCM and marketing.

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