

# The Impact of Supply Chain Agility and Supplier Integration on Firm Performance and Competitive Advantage: A Study on Fast Food Restaurants in Chittagong

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## ABSTRACT

Supply Chain management, coordination of several multifaceted activities, is the main determiner of a firm's overall functional efficiency. Supply Chain Agility and Supplier Integration are two major dimensions of a firm's supply chain. This paper endeavored to discover the influence of these two variables on Competitive and performance of fast-food restaurants in Chittagong city area. To measure these variables data was collected on several attributes of these variables. Drawing an intensive review of previous literature, Supply chain Agility and Supply Integration were found to be major determiners of both Competitive Advances and performance of fast-food restaurants. Survey questionnaires were sent to 106 fast food restaurants in Chittagong city area. Of them, 63 filled questionnaires were returned. The reliability of the data were tested by IBM SPSS. Cronbach's alpha was found to be .704 which indicates a good reliability of collected data. We analyzed the data through IBM SPSS.25.0 version software. The correlation coefficient indicates that there is significant and moderate influence of Supply Chain Agility on both Competitive Advances and firm's performance. However, the results also revealed no significant impact of Supply Integration on Competitive Advances and performance of fast-food restaurants. The findings of the present study seek to offer guidelines for restaurant owners and managers on realizing the significance of supplier agility and largely contribute to the restaurant industry.

**Keywords:** Supply Chain Management, Agility, Integration, Efficiency, Performance

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## 1.1 Introduction and Background

The primary factor influencing a firm's overall performance is thought to be its supply chain. Supply chain is envisioned and used as the integration of all business operations across the supply chain, according to Yusuf et al. (2014), A company's capacity and flexibility to respond to consumers largely rests on the Supply Chain. Firms can adapt to a fast-changing environment thanks to the capabilities of the supply chain. Flexibility, on the other hand, enables the company to respond swiftly to shifting demand trends. These two have an immediate impact on how agile the company is. According to Goldman, Nagel, and Preiss (1995), an agile supply chain enables its member firms to be more market-sensitive, more capable of synchronizing supply with demand, and better able to achieve shorter cycle times. As a result, Supply Chain Agility is widely regarded as the most significant success factor in today's competitive marketplace (Christopher, 2000).

## 1.2 Problem statement

Supply Chain Agility - equipped organizations are better able to react to unanticipated situations. Moreover, because they are better equipped to match supply and demand, agile supply chains are by nature more focused on the market. Additionally, mass customization has the capacity to provide customers - customized goods at or near the prices of mass production drives the requirement for agility in a supply chain (DaSilveira et al., 2001). Being more agile entails being more focused, responsive, and adaptable while addressing consumer demands. It finally improves the performance of the company. Additionally, agility may have a variety of effects on a firm's Competitive Advances. The ability of a corporation to generate distinctive value through special value-adding activities is often what determines Competitive Advances. Companies must coordinate with their supply chain partners to accomplish Competitive Advances in the present business climate. This study focuses on the direct and indirect connections between agility, Competitive Advances, and business performance, even though the influence of agility has been highlighted in multiple studies as a mediating component. Prior research described the effects of Supply Chain Agility

antecedents including flexibility, capacity, and integration on agility as well as the ultimate effects of agility on Competitive Advances and Firm Performance. (Khan & Wisner 2019) discovered that Supply Chain Agility cannot be accomplished without sufficient integration when firms concentrate on tracking and enhancing the performance of their supply chain. Achieving effective integration will ultimately improve the performance of the company and the Competitive Advances. The management of the supply chain's upstream and downstream levels, on the other hand, is referred to as Supply Chain Integration (Naslund & Hutlen, 2012), and it entails both internal and external integration (Stevens, 1989; Vargas, Cardenas, & Matarranz, 2000; Germain & Iyer, 2006; Koufteros, Vonderembse, & Jayaram, 2005; Quesada, Rachamadugu, Gonzales, & Martinez, 2008; Basnet, 2013). Supply Chain Integration enables supply chain organizations to reach customers with products and services in an efficient and effective manner (Gimenez & Ventura, 2005; Seo et al., 2014). In the restaurant industry, the company deals with a wide range of unpredictable demand fluctuations. Due to the shorter lifespan of raw resources, the company and its suppliers must work together constantly. This partnership increases the company's capacity to adapt to a changing environment. However, a significant danger of supply chain integration is the potential for trade secrets to be revealed and leaked to rival businesses, which can be expensive for some enterprises because such knowledge can be harmful when used to get Competitive Advances (Kumar et al., 2017).

To guarantee the supply of goods from specific fresh farms in contemporary supermarkets, Yun & Aziz (2020) concluded that excellent cooperative ties are formed by fostering good collaboration with local wholesalers, including collectors as intermediaries and farmers. According to earlier studies by Yusuf et al. (2014) and Abeyssekara et al. (2019), Supply Chain Integrity only significantly affects Firm Performance and Competitive Advances when it is mediated by Supply Chain Agility. Other studies, however, solely paid attention to the internal integration of various divisions inside the company. The goal of this article was to examine how external supplier integration

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directly relates to business success and Competitive Advances.

## 1.3 Research Questions

1. What is the direct relationship between Supply Chain Agility and Firm's performance?
2. How is Supply Chain Integrity related with Firm's performance?
3. How does Supply Chain Agility affect Firm's Competitive advantage?
4. How does Supply Chain Integrity influences Firm's Competitive advantage?

To find concise answers to the above questions this study presents a theoretical model to gauge the deep insights of the relationship between Supply Chain Agility, Supply Chain Integrity, Firm Performance and Competitive Advance. This study argues that firm's performance and Competitive Advance can not only be indirectly influenced by antecedents of Supply Chain Agility and Supply Chain Integrity but also directly affected by firm's integration and agility. This study tries to narrow the gap of previous studies through investigating the relationship of mentioned variables with the help of survey data collected from restaurants in Chattogram city. Though several studies outlined the hypotheses, this study will regenerate the in-depth relationship in restaurant business where the market is more dynamic, fast and sensitive than previously explored fields – apparel, oil and gas, grocery stores etc. The motivation of this study came from contradictory results of the hypotheses by previous researchers and little study on restaurant industry.

## 1.4 Research Objective

Thus, the **research objectives** of this study were, mainly:

- I. Understand the correlation of Supply chain agility with fast food restaurants of Chittagong city.
- II. Find out the impact of Supply chain agility on Competitive advantage of fast-food restaurants.
- III. Measure the influence of Supply chain integrity on restaurants' performance
- IV. Find out Supply chain integrity overall impacts of Competitive advantage of fast food

restaurants in Chittagong city.

## 1.5 Research scope

The next part of the paper has been organized through different sections dealing with the topic. Section 2 conceptualizes the constructions and provides related definitions. Section 3 proposes the research hypothesis of the study. Section 4 deals with research methodology. Section 5 gives detailed analysis and provides summary of the results. Section 6 concludes the study, laying the path for future research.

## 2.0 Literature review

Despite being a tertiary business, the café or hospitality sector has an impact on the environment because it is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions, especially carbon dioxide. To lessen the associated environmental impact on the environment in the restaurant or hospitality sector, measures must be taken. As a result, many businesses have progressively announced their environmental and social responsibility in response to growing environmental consciousness. If not, businesses should focus on their awareness and response capabilities because of the food and beverage industry's environmental effect. Businesses are crucial in preventing environmental damage; for instance, they bear responsibility for environmental deterioration brought on by the industrial process and supply chain. Because of this, a lot of NGOs have the data they need to make businesses disclose the environmental impact, and consumers are starting to demand that businesses have a green system and search for eco-friendly products to buy Chiu, J. Z., & Hsieh, C. C. (2016).

## 2.1 Agility

Customer agility (Sambamurthy, Bharadwaj, & Grover, 2003), operational agility (Amit & Zott, 2001), partnering agility (Sambamurthy et al., 2003), enterprise agility (Overby, Bharadwaj, & Sambamurthy, 2006), organizational agility (Goldman et al., 1995), and Supply Chain Agility are just a few examples of the extremely broad and multifaceted concept known as agility (Agarwal et al., 2006b). Supply Chain Agility is described by Sharp, Irani, and Desai (1999) as the capacity of a supply chain and its members to quickly realign the network and its operations to meet the highly dynamic customer requirements, and by Ismail and Sharifi (2006) as the capacity of a supply chain and its members to quickly

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realign the network and its operations. The Iacocca Institute coined the term "agility" in the context of business, suggesting that an organization succeeds by operating in an agile manner in an environment of rapid and unpredictable change (Nagel & Dove, 1991). According to Goldman et al. (1995), agility is a benefit in providing value to consumers, adapting quickly to changes, respecting human knowledge and abilities, and establishing virtual collaborations. While the question of how effectively these measures can be implemented remains, Supply Chain Agility addresses how quickly a firm responds to the key supply chain outcome measures, such as the decrease in manufacturing lead-times, the increase in new product introductions, and the improved level of customer service. (Chan et al. 2017) The Iacocca Institute was the first to introduce the term "agility" in a business context, suggesting that a firm survives by operating in an agile manner in an environment of rapid and unpredictable change (Nagel & Dove, 1991). In delivering value to clients, quickly adapting to change, valuing human knowledge and abilities, and establishing virtual collaborations, Goldman et al. (1995) believed that agility was a competitive advantage.

## 2.2 Supplier Integration

For Competitive Advances, purchasers integrate suppliers. Cost savings and quality enhancements are two examples of this (Liker and Choi, 2004) When combined with other resources, personal knowledge and talents become more valuable (Hitt et al., 2001). Supply Integration is for suppliers' Competitive advantage: Porter (1985:3) states that "Comparative Advances grows fundamentally out of the value a firm is able to create for its buyers that exceeds the firm's cost of creating it. Value is what buyers are willing to pay, and superior value stems from offering lower prices than competitors for equivalent benefits or providing unique benefits that more than offset a higher price. There are two basic types of Competitive Advances: cost leadership and differentiation." Although Competitive Advances in cost or differentiation may increase the likelihood of better performance, Competitive Advances per se is not the same as performance. At least, cost advantage and differentiation advantage, two generic types identified by Porter (1980), are not necessarily the ultimate

determinants of performance. Ma (2000) argues that Competitive Advances is a relational term between a focal firm and rival(s) within a specific context of competition. Most studies have focused on financial performance, like profitability ratio, market value, etc. (Yang, 2012). Jun and Rowley (2014), however, stated that using financial performance has some limitations and difficulties in evaluating the actual performance of firms. Thus, in our study, we adapt Li et al.'s (2006) to measures for Competitive Advances and organizational performance.

## 2.3 Firm Performance

Firm Performance measures how well businesses accomplish their financial, marketing, human resource, and production objectives. Different measuring scales have been suggested by researchers that have studied Firm Performance in the context of Supply Chain. There may be more research that has tried to provide a more comprehensive perspective on supply chain performance. AMR Research (Frischia et al., 2005) used return on assets (ROA), inventory turns, corporate growth, and the expert opinions of AMR specialists to quantify supply chain performance, with the expert opinions bearing the highest weight. Financial performance, such as profitability ratio, market value, etc., has been the focus of most research (Yang, 2012). According to Chan et al. (2017), Firm Performance shows how successfully Firm Performance was. It is a metric used to assess whether a company will succeed or even have a chance of surviving. According to Rumelt, Schendel, and Teece (1994), the ultimate product of a business model is usually regarded as one of the most important concepts in the subject of business studies (Richard, Devinney, Yip, & Johnson, 2009).

Instead of focusing just on financial success, Chan et al. (2017) looks at a company's operational excellence, revenue growth, and customer connections. Chan et al. (2017) concluded that Supply Chain Agility has a significant role in improving Firm Performance and that both strategic flexibility and manufacturing flexibility are important factors in assisting organizations in adapting to the fast-changing environment of the global fashion sector. This research provides more evidence that Supply Chain Agility has a crucial role in improving Firm Performance and that manufacturing flexibility and strategic flexibility are important factors in assisting

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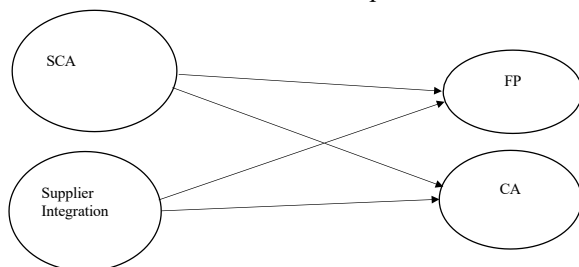
businesses in adapting to the fast-changing environment of the global fashion industry.

**2.4. Hypothesis Development** The researcher develops a series of hypotheses on the relationship between Supply Chain integration, appetitive advance and Firm Performance. Figure 2.1 presents the conceptual model.

**H1: Agility and FP have positive relationships in fast food restaurants.**

Yusuf et al. (2014) showed that only three of the agility attributes correlates with business performance. However, they (Yusuf et al., 2014) outlined specifically that agile supply chains have a significant influence on business performance and competitive objectives of the respondents to the study. While Çemberc, (n.d.) found that the technological uncertainty statistically affects the Supply Chain Agility in a positive way. And agility in the supply chain statistically affects the performance of the company in a positive way. In this study the agility of the firm acts as mediator between Firm Performance and technological uncertainty. Therefore, this study did not consider the direct impact of agility on Firm Performance. In another study, Chan et al. (2017) indicated that strategic flexibility and manufacturing flexibility have a positive and significant effect on Supply Chain Agility. The results further support the notion that Supply Chain Agility plays an instrumental role in enhancing Firm Performance and that both strategic flexibility and manufacturing flexibility are key factors in helping firms adapt to the rapidly changing environment of the global fashion business. (Subhan, K. M. A., & Hossain, M. E. 2021)

They concluded that there is no significant direct relationship between Supply Chain Agility and Firm Performance, while other studies have at least argued for the existence of this relationship.



**Figure 2.1: Structural Model [Source Author]**

Thus, it is imperative that we consider the significant

ignorance of previous researchers on direct relationship between Supply Chian Agility and firm's performance. In our review of previous study. The researcher found that some researchers found significant relation between these two variables, while others could not reveal the relationship. Also, most of the previous researchers studied the mediation role of agility on business performance. This ignores the direct relationship of these two variables.

**H2: Agility has significant positive relationship with fast food restaurants' Competitive Advance.**

Wu et al. (2017) revealed that collaboration and information integration are the major drivers to affect the performance of Supply Chain Agility which helps the firm to achieve more competitiveness. They applied fuzzy set theory, Delphi method, DEMATEL and closed-loop ANP as a hybrid method under uncertainty which transfer the qualitative information into quantitative figures for further analysis. It excluded the analysis of quantitative data to measure the impacts. Abeysekara et al. (2019) concluded that agility had a positive impact on Competitive Advance only when it partially mediates the relationship between Supply Chain Re-engineering and Competitive Advance. Yusuf et al. (2014) showed that all the four dimensions (Customer Enrichment, Cooperation Mastering registered some level of positive significant correlation with all the competitive objectives except customization. This study points that customization within the industry, to such an extent that the ability to deliver customized products is not perceived as a Competitive Advance while customization may play significant role in other industry like food or restaurant. It presents great motivation to explore the relationship of customization in food industry.

**H3: Supplier Integration and Firm Performance has positive relationship in fast food restaurants**

Supplier integration is considered one of the major determiners of Firm Performance. However, Khan & Wisner (2019) concluded that Supply Chain Integration was found to have an insignificant impact on Firm Performance. Previous studies support a mediation role of agility between Supply Chain Integration and Firm Performance. Thus, they outlined that Supply Chain Integration significantly impacts Firm Performance when mediated by the firm's agility. Another study conducted by Talavera (n.d.) on

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Philippine manufacturing firms shows that Supply Chain Integration (SCI index) was found significantly associated with supply chain performance. According to a study by Liu et al. (2018), there is no significant influence of Integration on Firm Performance. These results addresses the need for more intense study for its contradictory results with previous study done by Khan & Wisner (2019). However, this study focused mainly on internal interaction during the preparation of demand and materials forecasts. The integration of the firm and its suppliers was not captured by the study. The study addresses several further questions on the direct influences of Supply Chain Integration on Firm Performance.

### ***H4: Supplier Integration has positive impact on fast food restaurants in CA.***

Supplier Integration is meant as a major enabler of gaining Competitive Advance by a firm. Huo et al. (2016) demonstrated that internal integration is related to customer and Supply Integration, and that internal and customer integration are related to competitive performance. Sinaga et al. (2019) showed that direct and indirect relations appear positive and significant. A more comprehensive description can be found in study conducted by Abeysekara et al. (2019) on apparel industry. They also concluded that influence of collaboration on Firm Performance was insignificant, but collaboration had a significant positive relationship with Competitive Advance. A critical open question is whether restaurant industry will show the same result as apparel Industry. A study by Vanpoucke et al. (2014) confirms that the effect of Supply Integration on Competitive Advance is stronger when environmental dynamics are higher and comparatively lower when the number of suppliers is lower. But this study excludes other types of Integration such as new product development, trust and socialization. The author suggested additional studies that expand the focus of the analysis to include inter-firm integration, as well as customer integration. In another study by Otchere et al. (2013) outlined that relationship between improved performance and internal integration and between Competitive Advance (CA) and internal integration were both negative. By reviewing all the relevant literature, we can conclude there were very few studies conducted on the impact of SI over firm's Competitive Advance.

Almost all previous studies were conducted on

manufacturing firms and generated contradictory results. To fill this literature gap, this paper tried to identify the direct relationship between SI and firm's CA in restaurant industry.

Cross sectional survey technique was adopted for data collection process and proposed hypothesis testing. The scale was developed based on extensive review of the published literature. Restaurants of Chattogram district were the population of this study. Sample sizes were determined through random sampling techniques. The ideal respondents of this study were the owner and manager of the selected restaurant. The survey questionnaire was provided to 105 fast food restaurants located in Chattogram through communicating via WhatsApp, messenger and direct contact. Of them, 62 questionnaires were correctly filled by the respondents. The survey instrument was made up of 34 items. And 6 items in the demographic's parts. All the scales for measuring the constructs were adapted from previous studies. All the questions concerning the four constructs above were designed to elicit a subjective response, that is, to get the respondents to express their own views on each measurement item. Following an extensive literature review, the measures of each construct were taken from well-developed scales with questions relating to Supply Chain Agility, Supply Integration, Competitive Advance and Firm Performance. All measures were rated on a five-point Likert scale. The questions on Supply Chain Agility, Supply Integration and Firm Performance formulated by Liu et al. (2018) were adopted to reflect the concept from different perspectives related to agility, Supply Integration, financial performance of the firm. Items on Competitive Advance of the firm were collected from survey questionnaire provided by Abeysekara et al. (2019) based on several perspective of CA of the firm.

For reliability testing, Cronbach's alpha was utilized. According to Sekaran, reliability testing is used to indicate the instrument's stability and consistency. In general, the agreed- upon lower limit for Cronbach's alpha is 0.704 (Tippins and Sohi, 2003). To further ensure the validity of this research instrument, a pilot study was conducted among 16 target respondent firms prior to the formal survey process. The results indicated no major structural design errors in the questionnaire. The data, collected through survey questionnaire, were analyzed through IBM SPSS

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software. The relationship was analyzed by bivariate correlation method.

## 5 FINDINGS

Prior to data analysis, Cronbach's alpha test was carried out to measure the internal consistency of the scale items, and alpha value was found to be 0.704. This satisfies the minimum acceptable criterion of coefficient alpha is 0.7 as suggested in previous literature. In this study, IBM SPSS 25.0 was used to analyze the data. Tabel 1 shows the demographic information of the respondents. In order to examine the relationship among the dimensions of Supply Chain Agility, Supply Integration, Competitive Advance and Performance of fast-food restaurants, correlation analysis of the dimensions of agile supply chain attributes, SI attributes, Competitive Advance and firm's performance was carried out.

**Table 1 Profiles of sample restaurants**

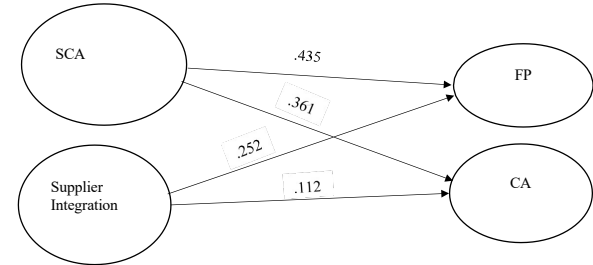
Construct	Item	Frequency	Percent
Position	Owner	21	33.9
	Manager	40	64.5
	Employee	1	1.6
	Total	62	100.0
Educational Qualification	SSC	15	24.2
	HSC	11	17.7
	Hon's	20	32.3
	Masters	16	25.8
	Total	62	100.0
Age of doing business	1-3 years	7	11.3
	3-6 years	28	45.2
	More than 6 years	27	43.5
	Total	62	100.0
Items served	1-5	11	17.7
	6-10	6	9.7
	11-25	6	9.7
	More than 25	39	62.9
	Total	62	100
Sales of Previous Year	1-10 Lakh	8	12.9
	10-25 Lakh	24	38.7
	25-50 Lakh	21	33.9
	More than 50 Lakh	9	14.5
	Total	62	100.0

**Table 2 Correlation between dependent and independent variables**

Correlations				
	Agility	Integration	CA	FP
Agility	1	.343	.361	.435
Integration	.34	1	.112	.252
CA	.36	.112	1	.42
FP	.43	.252	.429	1

Table 2 shows the relationship between the variables of this study. A correlation coefficient of  $r=.435$  demonstrates that Agility has significant relationship with firm's performance. Thus, it supports our first hypothesis H1. This result also indicates that Agility has moderate positive relationship with CA with  $r=.361$  at

significance level=.01. This finding offers significant proof to accept our second hypothesis H2.



**Figure 5. 1 Direct relationship of variables**

On the other hand, Supply Integration, with correlation coefficient of .112 and .252 indicates that integration has no significant relation with both Firm Performance and Competitive Advance. This finding, thus, suggests we reject our hypothesis H3 and H4.

## DISCUSSIONS

To examine the relationship between Agility, Integration, Competitive Advance and Fast-Food Restaurant's performance, correlation analysis was carried out on attributes that contribute in shaping these variables. The findings indicated that Agility has significant impact on Competitive Advance of the firm. Previous researchers (Liu et al., 2018; Yusuf et al., 2014) demonstrated that Supply Chain Agility has significant impact on firm's Competitive Advance both directly and indirectly, which directly supports the results of our study. Thus, in line with the ideas of previous studies on several other industries, it can be concluded that agility has significant impact on Competitive Advance. This finding helped us to meet first objective of this research which is to measure the influence of Agility on Fast Food Restaurant's Competitive Advance. Therefore, conclude that restaurant owners will face significant changes in Competitive Advance if they emphasize other factors besides agility. However, it cannot be denied that agility may have impact on other factors that may influence Competitive Advance as prior studies suggested the mediating effects of agility on Competitive Advance.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study contributes to the literature by putting forward relevant findings on Supply Chain Agility and Supply Chain Integration dimensions, Competitive Advance and Firm Performance measures, and provided strong indication of the significant

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association of Supply Chain Agility with both Competitive Advance and Firm Performance highlighting the experience of the fast-food restaurants in Chittagong city. Although, most of the previous studies concluded the significant impact of Supply Chain Agility and Supply Chain Integrity on both Competitive Advance and Firm Performance, this study suggests little influence of Supply Chain Integrity on Competitive Advance and Firm Performance. However, positive impact of Supply Chain Agility on both Competitive Advance and Firm Performance provide a significant guideline for restaurant managers to emphasize disparate dimensions of Supply Chain Agility. Based on the research findings, there is a need for industry-academe linkage so that both groups can understand better the following: (1) the value key success factors of both Supply Chain Agility and Supply Chain Integrity, (2) the capabilities needed to achieve agility and integration. This study suggests companies pay attention to agility (including their sensitivity to the business environment, their response to market changes, and even their partners' ability to react). Because these factors directly affect firm's agility which have direct relationship with Competitive Advance and Firm Performance. This study has some limitations, as well as some opportunities for future study. First, the research sample was drawn from fast food restaurants in Chittagong. Future research could conduct an national comparison to enhance the generalization of the research findings. To strengthen the generalizability, it is recommended that for future studies researchers consider a longitudinal approach with a larger sample –that is, with a broader representation of firms in other manufacturing sectors (such as manufacturing, electronic products, or home appliances) as well as in other Cities. Second, this study evaluated the direct impact of Supply Chain Agility and Supply Chain Integrity, it excluded the antecedents of these variables. Future research could be done on the impact of Supply chain flexibility and supply chain adaptability which were considered as major determiners of Supply Chain Agility and Supply Chain Integrity in previous studies. Moreover, further studies are needed to generate more in-depth knowledge regarding how to enhance Supply Chain Agility in the fast-food industry.

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