

## ***Recent Evolutions in the Supply Chain: Transition from Traditional Logistics to Green Logistics***

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### ***Abstract:***

*This article provides an overview of recent developments in supply chain management, highlighting the transition from traditional logistics to green supply chain practices. The objective of the study is to analyze the growing environmental concerns associated with logistics activities and to examine how supply chain stakeholders respond to these challenges by adopting sustainable practices. The research is based on a qualitative and descriptive methodology, relying on an extensive review of the relevant literature in the fields of logistics, supply chain management, and environmental sustainability. The study identifies the main drivers and barriers influencing the implementation of green logistics initiatives, both within and outside organizations.*

*Furthermore, it emphasizes key dimensions of green supply chain management, including internal environmental management, green purchasing, collaborative relationships with environmentally oriented customers, eco-design, and eco-packaging. The results indicate that integrating environmental considerations into supply chain strategies contributes to reducing environmental impacts while enhancing organizational performance and long-term competitiveness.*

***Keywords:*** *traditional logistics; supply chain; green supply chain management; sustainable logistics; reverse logistics.*

***JEL Classification Codes:*** *Q56; L91*

## **1. Introduction :**

In recent years, various actors in the supply chain, including suppliers, subcontractors, logistics service providers, B2B and B2C customers, local communities, interest groups, and non-governmental organizations, have increasingly focused on sustainable development issues. Many companies consider themselves directly involved in these matters, as they are often accused of contributing to environmental pollution through logistics and transportation activities; however, transportation alone cannot be held responsible, as the environmental burden extends across the entire supply chain. Motivated by multiple pressures, stakeholders have shown a willingness to integrate environmental considerations into their strategic planning.

This study aims to examine the evolution of the supply chain from traditional logistics to green supply chain management, to identify the main drivers and barriers influencing the adoption of green logistics practices, to assess the impact of implementing green supply chain strategies on environmental performance and organizational competitiveness, and to explore the role of reverse logistics in creating a holistic and sustainable supply chain.

It is hypothesized that adopting green supply chain practices contributes to reducing environmental impacts, that organizational, technical, and financial barriers significantly affect their implementation, that integrating environmental considerations enhances organizational performance and long-term competitiveness, and that reverse logistics is a critical mechanism for achieving a comprehensive sustainable supply chain. The research follows a qualitative and descriptive methodology based on a thorough review of scientific literature, including peer-reviewed articles and industry reports, to provide insights into the evolution, best practices, challenges, and strategic implications of green supply chain management.

## **2-From Logistics to Supply Chain**

### **2.1 Historical Evolution**

Originally, the term logistics derives from the Greek adjective *Logistikos*, meaning “related to reasoning from a mathematical perspective.” It also has a Greek root, *logisteuo*, which primarily means “to administer.” These two complementary meanings capture the essence of logistics, which can be summarized in four notions: “reflection, strategy, management, and optimization” (amalo-recrutement, 2020). Historically, logistics has largely been oriented toward this optimization focus, as numerous theoretical and empirical studies concentrated on optimizing routes, pallet loading, and costs (Lyonnet & Sankel, 2015). In this context, logistics was initially confined to optimizing secondary practical problems (Lièvre, 2007, p. 3), particularly inventory management and material flows during the 1970s and 1980s (Gozé-Bardin, 2009, p. 217).

Subsequently, by the mid-19th century, the term logistics shifted into the military domain (Lyonnet & Sankel, 2015, p. 9), characterized by centralized management of troop movements across large territories. It came to signify the ability to meet the needs of armies and coordinate all means of

transportation, supply, and accommodation of battalions, whether in combat or military exercises (Sohier & Sohier, 2017, p. 3; Lyonnet, Senkel, M.-P, & Clamens, 2019, p. 1).

After World War II, logistics became rooted in the business world, following a long trajectory marked by profound transformations. Its modernization was driven primarily by highly competitive sectors such as automotive and retail (Lièvre, 2007, p. 3). The way logistics organized itself during this period was shaped by three main factors: the economic context, prevailing management principles, and technological advancements in telecommunications and computing (Lièvre, 2007, p. 28).

The discipline began to structure itself in the United States during the 1960s, intersecting with multiple specialties such as marketing, strategic management, and information systems (Lavastre, Carbone, & Ageron, 2016). Logistics thus expanded its mandate to coordinate the different functions involved in the flow of materials within the company, a trend continuing through the 1980s and 1990s (Gozé-Bardin, 2009, p. 217). From the 1970s, distributors leveraged logistics as a tool of competitiveness (Filser, Des Garets, & Paché, 2001), and by the 1990s, it had emerged as a strategic asset, managing cross-functional and cross-organizational flows of physical goods, information, and finances under optimal cost and service quality conditions (Gozé-Bardin, 2009, p. 217).

Another perspective on the historical evolution of logistics is offered by Lièvre (op. cit.), who distinguishes three periods: intra-functional logistics (1950–1975), inter-functional logistics (1975–1990), and open logistics (1990 to the present) ((Lièvre, 2007p. 28). Other scholars have proposed different periodization's: Colin (Colin, *La logistique : histoire et perspectives*, 1996, p. 100) identifies initialization (1950–1960), launch (1970), growth (1980–1990), and maturity (1990–2000); Akbari Jokar et al distinguish separated logistics (before 1975), integrated logistics (after 1975), and cooperative logistics (after 1990); Shapiro (1993) identifies four cycles tailored to American companies (Shapiro, 1993): internal operations, integrated logistics, structural modifications, and supply chain management. (Akbari Jokar, Frein, & Dupont, 2002)

## **2.2 Concept and Definition**

Today, the supply chain tends toward a networked, dynamic configuration, with occasional adjustments driven by flexible market demand, evolving from a previously linear and stable structure (Fabbe-Costes, 2007). Supply Chain Management (SCM) represents an innovative framework and a source of value for the supply chain (Colin, 2005), emphasizing collaborative participation to create added value for the customer while minimizing market constraints.

As mentioned earlier, logistics sits at the crossroads of multiple disciplines, leading to numerous and sometimes conflicting definitions of SCM that deserve consideration and comparison (Brun & Picard, 2014, p. 51; Lavastre, Carbone, & Ageron, 2016, p. 4).

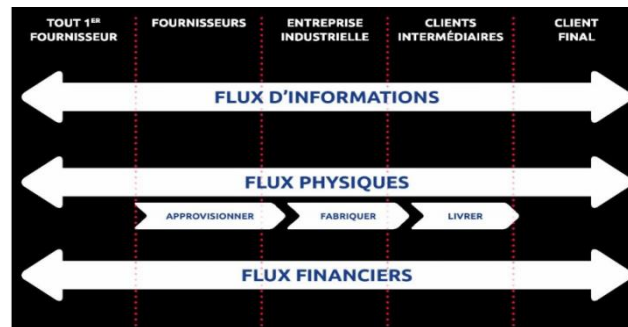
Mathe and Tixier present a functional approach, defining logistics in a company as “ensuring, at the lowest cost, the coordination of supply and demand at both strategic and tactical levels, while maintaining the quality of supplier–customer relationships involved” (Mathe & Tixier, 2014, p. 9). Similarly, Sohier and Sohier describe logistics as “the function that organizes material flows—in

other words, the art of delivering the right product, at the right place, at the right time, and at the lowest cost” (Sohier & Sohier, 2017, p. 3).

A broader conception is offered by Lyonnet et al. (2019), who view logistics as encompassing multiple facets: (Lyonnet, Senkel, M.-P, & Clamens, 2019)

1. A sector of activity, covering transportation and logistics service providers (nPL);
2. A function, which considers the company and inter-organizational relationships through the lens of coordinated flows—physical, informational, and financial—aimed at achieving process efficiency (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Overall Approach of the Supply Chain



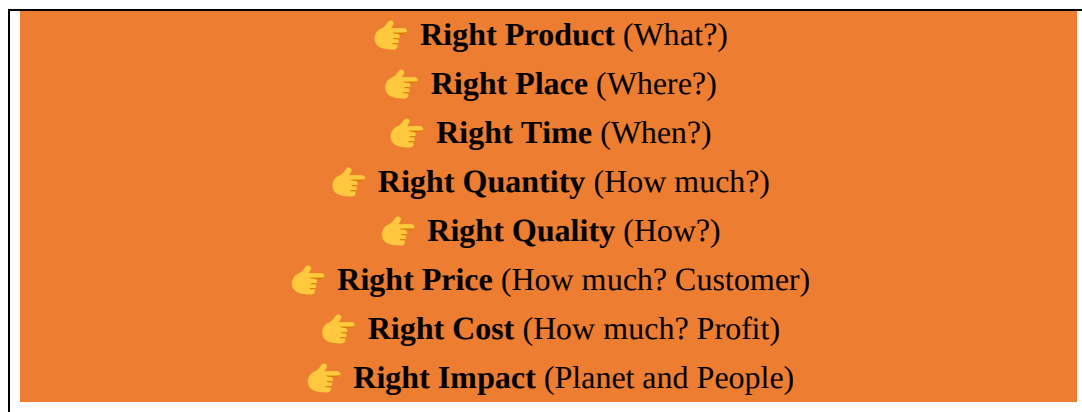
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### 3) A Set of Professions

The supply chain encompasses a range of professions—transportation, order processing, handling, packaging, warehousing, inventory management, consolidation and deconsolidation of goods, etc.—all of which contribute to value creation by addressing the following questions:

**what? where? when? how much? how? and what impact?** (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2.** Value Creation Questions



Source: <https://abcsupplychain.com/fr/definition-de-la-supply-chain/> (accessed 26 December 2026)

### 3. From the Supply Chain to Sustainable Development

### 3.1 What is the Link?

The logistics sector centralizes professions that have significant environmental impacts, particularly in transportation and related activities. “With the globalization of the economy, transport was often considered a sector of unlimited growth; until the 1980s, well-being was associated with increased mobility” (Breka & Gaultier-Gaillard, 2013, p. 17). However, sustainable actions are undertaken across the entire supply chain, from stores to production sites. This concern has grown with increased awareness of the environmental impacts of transportation (Wackermann, 2005, p. 430). Efficiency in the flow of goods thus aligns with implementing sustainable development strategies.

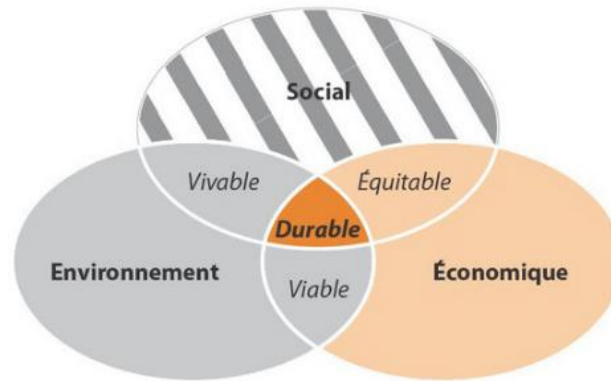
The concept of sustainable development emerged from the Meadows Report in the 1970s. The Club of Rome, founded in 1968, published in 1972 the report *The Limits to Growth*, highlighting that “the Earth is rapidly approaching its limits” (Caminel, 2021). Its members argued that economic growth negatively impacts the environment and could profoundly disrupt ecological balance while exacerbating social inequalities (Fagnart & Hamaide, 2012). This led to the widely cited definition in the Brundtland Report (1987): “Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brunel, 2018, p. 42).

From the 1992 Rio Conference to the 2002 Johannesburg Summit, sustainable development became entrenched in international discourse and cooperative policies. The definition emphasizes long-term equilibrium between economic growth and human and environmental ecosystems (Dakkak, Chater, Guennoun, & Talbi, 2013, pp. 2–3). In essence, it reconciles present needs with those of future generations without endangering them (Jacquet & Tubiana, 2006, p. 248).

### 3.2 Emergence of Sustainable Logistics

Beyond its economic contribution, Supply Chain Management (SCM) plays a critical role in ecosystem protection (Paché & Colin, 1999) while incorporating corporate social responsibility (CSR) across suppliers, subcontractors, producers, and distributors. Sustainable SCM intersects three dimensions—economic, environmental, and social—to optimize goods, information, and financial flows as well as inter-organizational coordination along the supply chain (Seuring & Müller, 2008, p. 1700) (see Figure 3). The principle can be summarized as: “doing more with fewer resources.”

**Figure 3. The Three Pillars of Sustainable Development**



*Source: Jacquet & Tubiana (2006, p. 248)*

Although these authors emphasize the link between logistics and sustainability, they overlook the customer's role, which is a key element of the supply chain and must be integrated (Hill & Jones, 1992, p. 144). Over time, sustainable SCM has transitioned from theory to practice, driven by multiple incentives (Taibouch & Ouriachi, 2018, p. 515), including:

- Stakeholder initiatives through charters, codes of conduct, and standards;
- Government regulations and financial incentives;
- Environmental pressures to reduce pollution and balance ecosystems;
- Social motivations, including corporate reputation and human factors protection.

However, SCM faces constraints that can slow or prevent implementation, such as high investment or operating costs and difficulties in inter- and intra-organizational coordination.

### 3.3 Key Areas of Action in Logistics & Sustainability

Techniques and solutions are gradually emerging that allow logistics operators to achieve economies of scale while meeting sustainability requirements, including:

- Adoption of **multimodal transport** and cleaner transportation modes, fleet renewal, alternative automation, and eco-driving training;
- Eco-design of facilities, certification, and environmental standardization of production or service sites;
- Territorial optimization of warehouses and distribution centers, favoring proximity to major consumption areas;
- Waste and residue management;
- Reduction of energy-intensive equipment and prioritization of **renewable energy sources**.

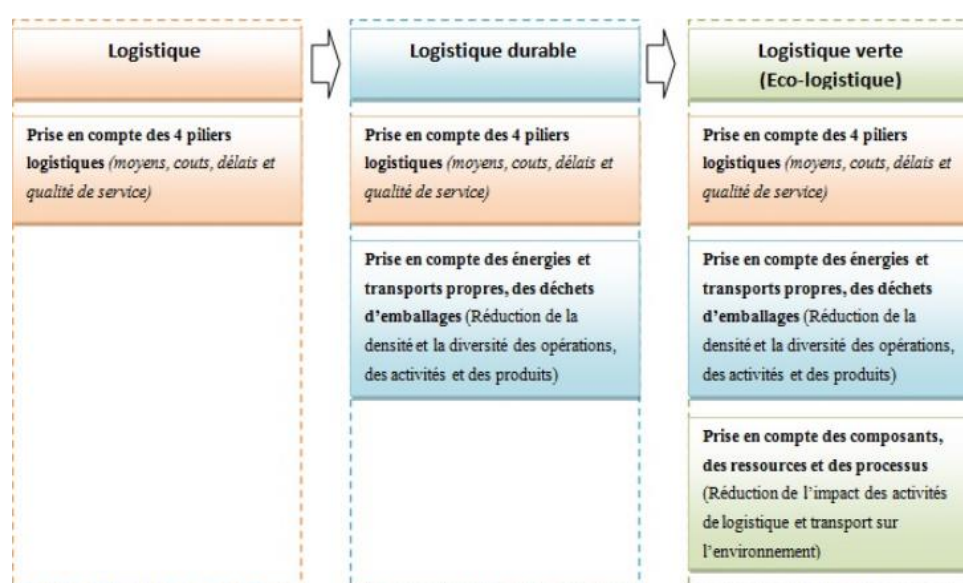
Today, many companies recognize the environmental impact of logistics and are implementing green supply chain management practices.

## 4. From Sustainable Development to the Green Supply Chain

### 4.1 The Concept of the Green Supply Chain

Green logistics is the natural evolution of sustainable development (see Figure 4). It acknowledges the environmental and societal impacts of logistics activities and seeks solutions to mitigate them. It aims to optimize information flows, physical flows, and interactions among stakeholders (producers, suppliers, subcontractors) to ensure product or service availability while minimizing environmental degradation (Ennaji & Jaad, 2021, p. 462).

**Figure 4. Levels of Logistics Growth**



*Source: <http://www.logistiqueconseil.org/Articles/Logistique/Eco-logistique-durable.htm>  
(accessed 26 December2025)*

The definition and scope of the green supply chain (GSC) in the literature are numerous and diverse. Its starting point often involves green or responsible purchasing, taking into account impacts from suppliers to the end customer, covering production and reverse logistics.

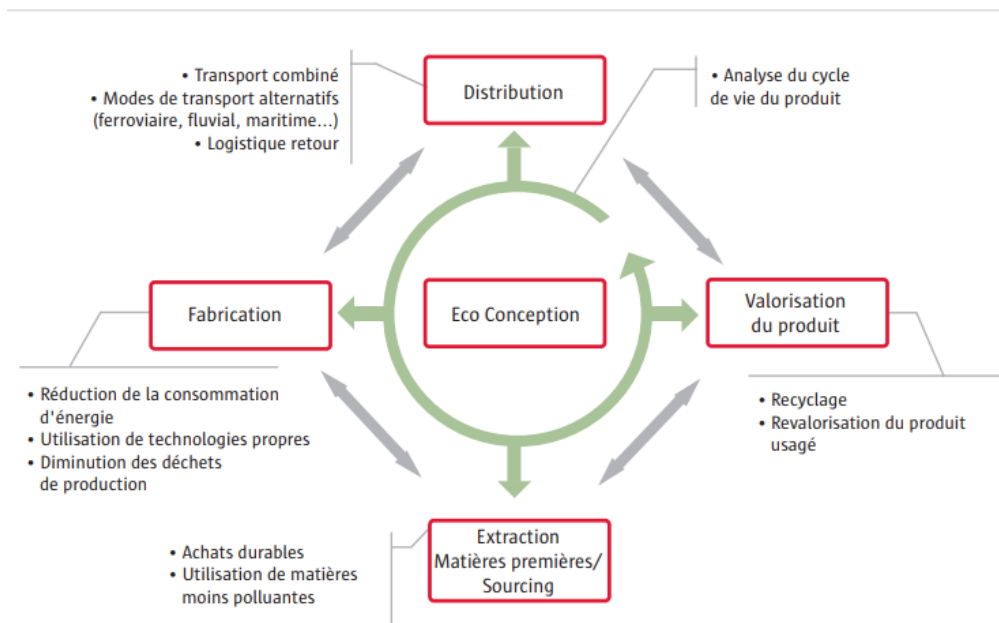
Aberre et al. define the green supply chain as an approach aimed at reducing the ecological footprint of a product or service throughout its life cycle (Aberre, Carbone, Donval, Moatti, & Wei, 2008, p. 17). Rodrigue et al. (2020) narrow green logistics to an optimized distribution and transport system (Rodrigues, Alves, & Silva, 2020, p. 10). Green logistics is not neutral; Cosimato and Troisi (2015) demonstrate that it affects logistical systems across thirteen areas: distribution, warehousing, material handling operations, packaging, inventory control, order processing, procurement, demand forecasting, building construction (warehouses and platforms), customer service, production

planning, waste recovery and recycling, product return handling, and international logistics. (Cosimato & Troisi, 2015)

By definition, it is a transversal activity across all company functions. The green supply chain concept encompasses all phases of a product's life cycle: from raw material extraction to end-of-life treatment (reconditioning, reuse, recycling, etc.), including design, production, distribution, and consumer use. In other words, it is no longer a linear, one-way cycle but rather a two-way cyclical process.

The green supply chain provides a new perspective on the product life cycle. Each stage should be considered equally important, as each generates negative environmental impacts. Therefore, the traditional linear supply chain model is replaced by a cyclical one. This approach targets all economic actors: suppliers, subcontractors, logistics providers, customers (B2B and B2C), local authorities, interest and research groups, NGOs, and other stakeholders (Figure 5).

**Figure 5. Scope of the Green Supply Chain**



**Source: Aberre, Carbone, Donval, Moatti, & Wei, 2008, p. 17**

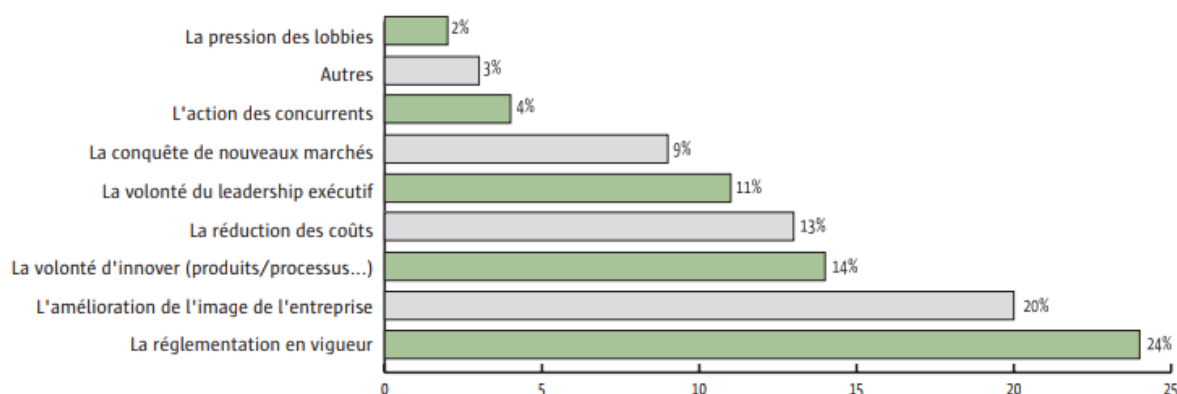
If companies today are considering implementing a green supply chain, it is essential to examine the motivations and constraints associated with addressing environmental concerns in strategic decision-making.

#### **4.2 Motivations and Constraints of Green Logistics**

In this context, a study conducted in 2008 surveyed Supply Chain Directors and Managers from large corporations as well as smaller companies, totaling 600 respondents. The survey was carried out simultaneously in France, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, the Nordic countries, Belgium, and Japan, across various industries including transportation, energy, distribution, automotive, textiles, electronics/computing, and fast-moving consumer goods. Aberre et al

highlighted multiple motivations, with regulations and brand image playing a decisive role (Figure 6).

**Figure 6. Main Motivations for Implementing Green Logistics**



*Source: Aberre, Carbone, Donval, Moatti, & Wei, 2008, p. 20*

The primary motivation is compliance with existing regulations, accounting for 24% of responses. Following this is the improvement of corporate image (20% of responses). The next two motivations—innovation and cost reduction—can sometimes conflict. The fifth motivation is executive leadership commitment (11% of responses). Surprisingly, competitor pressure (4%) and lobbying influence (2%) are the least cited factors in implementing green environmental actions.

On the other hand, certain obstacles hinder the implementation of Green Supply Chain Management (GSCM). Ennaji and Jaad 2021 identified and categorized these constraints based on extensive literature on the topic. Table 1 summarizes the constraints with their respective descriptions. (Ennaji & Jaad, 2021 P 473-474)

**Table 1. Constraints to Implementing Green Logistics**

| Group    | Constraint                           | Description                                                                                            |
|----------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| External | High cost of eco-friendly packaging  | The cost of adopting eco-friendly packaging materials is relatively high.                              |
|          | Lack of technological infrastructure | The lack of technological infrastructure is considered an obstacle to managing the green supply chain. |
|          | Lack of innovation                   | The lack of technological innovation hinders the implementation of green practices.                    |
|          | Lack of qualified human resources    | Green supply chain management cannot be implemented effectively without a qualified workforce.         |
|          | Low supplier engagement              | Suppliers are not committed to providing environmentally friendly goods and                            |

|             |                                      |                                                                                                                        |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|             |                                      | services.                                                                                                              |
|             | Lack of transparency among suppliers | Industries are reluctant to share commercial information with each other.                                              |
|             | Lack of government support           | Government regulations may discourage innovation, as governments set environmental standards for the industry.         |
|             | Lack of technological knowledge      | Insufficient implementation of ICT is a major obstacle to effective SCM management.                                    |
|             | Lack of ethical standards and CSR    | Companies often lack ethical values and social responsibility.                                                         |
| Clients     | Lack of customer demand              | One of the main obstacles in the Indian automotive industry is the lack of customer awareness about green products.    |
| Competitors | Competition and market uncertainty   | High competition and market uncertainty exist due to international competitiveness and flexible customer requirements. |
| Society     | Lack of societal awareness           | Customers are often unaware of green products and their benefits.                                                      |

**Source : (Ennaji & Jaad, 2021, pp. 473-474)**

**Table 1 (continued). Constraints to Implementing Green Logistics**

| Group    | Constraint                                       | Description                                                                                                   |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Internal | Cost reduction at the expense of the environment | Lack of management commitment is a major obstacle to implementing GSCM.                                       |
|          | High costs                                       | Investment costs are high for implementing eco-friendly practices such as eco-design and green manufacturing. |
|          | Lack of understanding of green logistics         | Implementation fails due to insufficient understanding of the green logistics concept.                        |
|          | Inadequate organizational structure              | Most organizations have not adopted GSCM due to inappropriate organizational structures.                      |
|          | Lack of training                                 | Lack of training is a primary obstacle to implementing GSCM in industries.                                    |
|          | Implementation complexity                        | GSCM practices are too difficult to implement.                                                                |
|          | Low or no return on investment                   | Low or absent ROI is considered a major barrier to green logistics implementation.                            |
|          | Pressure for lower prices                        | Market demand for cheaper products comes at the expense of environmental considerations.                      |
|          | Low supplier commitment                          | Suppliers are reluctant to adopt green supply chain management, affecting                                     |

|                  |                                          |                                                                                         |
|------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                  |                                          | overall chain performance.                                                              |
| <b>Suppliers</b> | Lack of knowledge and experience         | Industries lack the necessary information and skills, preventing them from going green. |
|                  | Lack of understanding among stakeholders | Stakeholders often do not understand GSCM practices.                                    |
|                  | Sector-specific challenges               | Different sectors and industries face different barriers in adapting GSCM.              |
|                  |                                          |                                                                                         |

**Source: Ennaji & Jaad, 2021, p. 474**

## **5- Conclusion**

Due to its natural orientation toward customers, the primary goal of the logistics function is to satisfy their needs under optimal economic conditions for the company while ensuring a high level of service. Achieving this requires a multidisciplinary approach, with competencies aimed at managing and controlling physical, financial, and informational flows, as well as resources. Logistics professionals and service providers are tasked with innovating decision-support tools, production and distribution processes, and information systems to gain customer trust while optimizing both economic and ecological outcomes.

Since its emergence in the business world, the logistics function has evolved to align with economic, organizational, and technological transformations. Consequently, it now integrates sustainable development considerations into strategic decision-making. Strategic decisions must aim to balance the expressed and latent needs of current and future generations while incorporating environmental priorities into management practices. As a strategic management approach, logistics relies on intra- and inter-organizational networks to ensure long-term performance of both the company and its supply chain.

By the end of the 20th century, logistics had become a competitive asset for businesses. Each country and sector exhibits unique characteristics, challenging logistics managers to generate added value and customized services. Topographical factors (road infrastructure, transport lines, logistics buildings, etc.), socio-demographic variables (age distribution, income, education level, etc.), macroeconomic indicators (purchasing power, growth rate, unemployment rate, etc.), as well as meteorological and technological factors, represent distinct pressures and often significant challenges for logistics professionals.

Field studies suggest practical proposals such as adopting eco-friendly transportation, optimizing distribution networks, enhancing information systems, and investing in training programs for logistics personnel. The study emphasizes that integrating sustainable logistics practices not only contributes to environmental protection but also enhances long-term business competitiveness. Future research could further investigate sector-specific challenges, quantify environmental gains, and explore digital innovations to strengthen sustainable supply chain management.

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