

Introduction to the special issue on the ADACI-Smart conference

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In times of scarce resources, efficiency is a crucial matter. This concerns not only material flows in production processes, but also time, money, creativity and other intangible resources that might lead to progress in the relationship between academia and industry.

The search for such efficiency has been the guiding force behind the organization of the ADACI's (Associazione Italiana Acquisti e Supply Management) SMART (Supply Management Academic Research Table) conference, held in Rome on 9th November 2018. The conference introduced a new format of collaboration between practitioners and scholars aimed at enhancing synergies between supply chain managers, who can provide access to relevant research environments and the benefits of privileged access to scientific stimuli, and researchers, who can apply scientific methods to solve urgent problems and are constantly challenged to advance their research and teaching performance. This format consists of a two-year cycle with periodical meetings among practitioners supervised by a Scientific Committee (Table 1) that stimulate collaboration between companies and academia and prepare the grounds for a bottom-up definition of the key topics to be discussed during the final conference. The SMART conference follows a call for papers and a peer-review process where contributions are selected based on their scientific and practical relevance, which is a prerequisite for enabling synergies among the conference attendees. The best contributions are then divided into thematic panels where both practitioners and researchers act as discussants so as to ensure the necessary interaction and stimuli for improvement within a lively and dynamic environment.

Tab. 1: SMART 2018 Scientific Committee

Alessandro Ancarani	Università di Catania
Barbara Gaudenzi	Università di Verona
Corrado Cerruti	Università degli Studi di Roma Tor Vergata
Francesco Rizzi (coordinator)	Università di Perugia
Francesco Testa	Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna
Ivan Russo	Università di Verona
Lorenzo Zanni	Università di Siena
Luca Ferrucci	Università di Perugia
Luciano Fratocchi	Università dell'Aquila
Luigino Filice	Università della Calabria
Marco Frey	Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna
Riccardo Lanzara	Università di Pisa
Ruggero Golini	Università di Bergamo
Silvia Bruzzi	Università di Genova
Marco Giannini	Università di Pisa

Source: ADACI, 2018

This format is applied to avoid duplications and overlapping with existing community-specific events, and to generate added value in terms of increased capability to design and develop meaningful and timely research.

The 2018 SMART conference, despite its experimental nature, attracted contributions from over 40 scholars from 12 different universities. Selected contributions were divided into 4 thematic round tables: new perspectives on public procurement, purchasing and business development, supply chain risk management and sustainable supply chain management. More than 60 managers, from such companies as -just to cite a few- Aptar Group, CONI Servizi, CONSIP, DeWalt Industrial Tools, Eli Lilly, Hugo Boss, Stanley Black Decker, and TUV Rehiland, attended the conference and contributed to the discussion by sharing their personal experience and comments.

This Special Issue aims at disseminating the main outcomes of this process. To this end, it collects the full-length version of the selected papers that, under the approval of the Scientific Committee, have been submitted to Sinergie-Italian Journal of Management for a regular peer review process.

The first paper, authored by Ivan Russo and Nicolò Masorgo (University of Verona), is entitled “Searching for the right operations strategy to manage the repair process across the reverse supply chain”. It builds on the definition of reverse logistics by Rogers *et al.* (2002) to compare different outsourcing and insourcing strategies in the repairing process. The case study provides managers with an analytical framework to evaluate the pros and cons of open and closed-loop supply chains.

In the second paper, entitled “Managing Resources and Innovation inside the Industry 4.0 Revolution: the role of the Supply Chain”, Niccolò Fiorini, Matteo Devigili, Tommaso Pucci and Lorenzo Zanni (University of Siena) investigate to what extent digitalization and the application of artificial intelligence to supply chain management processes drive firms’ innovation process (Terjesen and Patel, 2017). The study’s results contribute to the discussion on the rationale for Industry 4.0 by highlighting the importance of investments in the development of 4.0-related internal resources and of horizontal partnerships.

The third paper, entitled “The structuration of sustainable supply chain strategies for innovative technologies: An analysis of corporate sustainability reports in the energy sector”, authored by Eleonora Annunziata (Scuola Superiore Sant’Anna), Francesco Rizzi (University of Perugia) and Marco Frey (Scuola Superiore Sant’Anna), sheds light on the collaborative dynamics throughout the supply chain that might lead to the long-term sustainability of resource-intensive products. In particular, this study adopts an extended producer responsibility perspective (Hickle, 2017) to provide evidence of the vulnerability of a booming -and resource-intensive- technology, namely Lithium-ion batteries, to the consequences of difficulties in coordinating investments in proper end-of-life management.

In the fourth study, entitled “Building long-term supplier-retailer relationships in the jewellery sector: antecedents of customer loyalty”, Elisa

Martinelli (University of Modena and Reggio Emilia) provides an analysis of the power vs. trust dichotomy in supplier-retailer relations (Kumar *et al.*, 1998). The results confirm the importance of building trustworthy and long-term relationships to realize the full market potential of luxury products.

The fifth paper, entitled “New frontiers of procurement in the digital age: a presentation of the results of an empirical investigation into Procurement 4.0 in Italy”, authored by Silvia Bruzzi (University of Genova), Vincenzo Genco and Nicola Balbi (ADACI Lombardia-Liguria), provides a first attempt to describe what Italian supply chain managers know and think about Industry 4.0 and its potential for innovation in procurement processes (Ronchi *et al.*, 2010). The results - and lack thereof - reveal that, despite increasing interest and investments in e-procurement, the fourth industrial revolution is still at its infancy stage.

In the sixth paper, entitled “Manufacturing reshoring and sustainability: an analysis of the literature”, Cristina Di Stefano and Luciano Fratocchi (University of L'Aquila) review current literature on back-shoring (Wiesmann *et al.*, 2017) in order to build a conceptual model that depicts the motivations, drivers, outcomes, barriers and enabling factors of improvement in environmental performance.

Luca Ferrucci and Antonio Picciotti (University of Perugia), in their paper entitled “The social safeguard clause in public tenders: an analysis of strategic interdependence between companies and distortive economic effects”, analyze possible distortions in the strategies that companies implement to benefit from the social clause (Ghera, 2001) of public tenders. The results draw implications for employees' management, innovation and service quality, as well as recommendations for improving the quality of public tenders.

The last paper, entitled “Social enterprise and opening pathways to the market: roles and relations for the management of sustainable supply chains”, authored by Marina Gigliotti, Antonio Picciotti and Andrea Runfola (University of Perugia), describes the ways in which social enterprises (Kerlin, 2013) manage sustainability throughout their supply chain in order to deliver ethical products capable of obtaining enduring legitimacy among consumers.

As a whole, this collection of papers covers the most relevant Italian industries and opens a debate on some priority challenges for the evolution of procurement in view of modern supply chain management (Kraljic, 1988). The Scientific Committee of the 2018 SMART conference is thus confident that this special issue will help strengthen relationships between the Italian community of researchers in management sciences and the ADACI community, while laying the valuable foundations for the 2020 SMART conference.

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Academic or professional position and contacts

Francesco Rizzi

Associate Professor of Management
University of Perugia - Italy
e-mail: francesco.rizzi@unipg.it

