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Notes and debates

Taking the leap from dyads to triads: Buyer’s supplier relationships in supply networks

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Abstract

A network is made up of nodes and links. The smallest unit that consists of both these network elements is a dyad made up of two nodes (a buyer and a supplier) and the link that connects them (a buyer’s supplier relationship).

Naturally, the focus of the supply chain management literature has been on this dyad. For instance, a buyer affects a supplier through its supplier evaluation and certificate programs, as well as long-term agreement practices. The relationship between a buyer and its supplier has been characterized as cooperative or adversarial. We have learned a great deal about supply chains through such studies in dyadic context.

However, we submit that in a network, a dyad is *not* the smallest unit of a network. In fact, the smallest unit is a triad, made up of three nodes and the links that connect them.

If so, how would this recognition guide us as we move forward to investigate supply chains as a network? What would be its implications to the genre of the literature on buyer–supplier relationships?



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Keywords

Triads; Dyads; Supply networks; Buyer-supplier relationships

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