

ABSTRACT

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Competition in the Freight Transport Sector – a Channel Perspective

This thesis deals with a phenomenon that often is described in a very simple way in literature. In these books, the phenomenon is often described in the following way: “→”. Sometimes several arrows are used and each arrow indicates a separate carrier working in a freight transport channel. Even though this is a short and sometimes powerful way of describing a freight transport movement, I will, in the following, expand on this arrow.

The thesis has a competitive perspective on Swedish freight transport channels. The Swedish market is viewed as movements originating and/or destined from/to Sweden respectively. No restriction is placed on the nationality of the carriers and coordinators involved in the channels. The thesis and its findings rest on three pillars. These are – the theoretical-, the empirical-, and the “the-buzz-of-the-industry” pillar. Even though these pillars have different dimensions, all of them are important in constructing the research.

This thesis gives suggestions regarding how to view competition and how it can be treated in analytical texts. The form of analysis presented does a better job in describing, explaining, and predicting competitive behaviour than the classical perspectives used for analysing competition. The freight transport industry is an industry that in some respects does not work “theoretically correctly” when it comes to competitive matters as will be seen in this thesis.

Some of the contributions of the thesis are (i) the description of obstacles that inertia constitutes to efficient competition, (ii) the description of how competitive phenomena can be analysed in business administration settings using a combination of Resource-Advantage theory and the classical concept of Contestable Markets, (iii) the finding that the shippers (the buyer of the freight transport service), coordinators, and carriers, often perceive competition, and the variables in which the competitive action occurs, asymmetrically, and lastly (iv) the finding that cooperation within channels often are reduced to a minimum level.

Keywords: freight transport, channel, competition, competitive advantage, transportation, shipper, carrier, surface of competition, theory of competition, cooperation, R-A theory, contestable markets.