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EDITORIAL

Competitive Advantage in Liner Shipping: A Review and Research Agenda

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Liner shipping is a rather unique and idiosyncratic sector of the shipping industry. As such, it has attracted much attention from both researchers and policy makers. The purpose of this special issue of the International Journal of Maritime Economics is to investigate current thought in liner shipping economics and strategy. The papers included address what are and have been the major concerns of practitioners and academics, viz. market structure and regulation as well as vessel deployment and integration strategies. In an effort to induce research in another important direction, the aim of this paper is to address the issue of competitive advantage by considering the main themes that appear in the literature, viz. vertical integration and logistics strategy, strategic alliances, mergers and acquisitions, cost reduction, networks, economies of scale, regulation, pricing and shipper relationships. In so doing, this Editorial emphasises the importance of the firm as the unit of analysis and concludes by drawing attention to the need for the empirical investigation of the strategy-performance relationship.

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