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Managing the triple tension: effectiveness, resilience and sustainability in fast fashion logistics

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Problem, aim and questions

Fast fashion logistics must remain effective, resilient and sustainable at the same time. Decades of research tell managers how to choose between these demands; almost none tell them how to hold all three at once.

Aim To establish whether, and through what organisational mechanism, the paradox mindset of individual logistics managers is associated with perceived multidimensional performance across effectiveness, resilience and sustainability in fast fashion logistics.

RQ1 How intensely do fast fashion logistics managers perceive tensions among effectiveness, resilience and sustainability, and which tension pair is strongest?

RQ2 Does individual paradox mindset predict integrative (both/and) behaviour in operational decision scenarios?

RQ3 Does perceived organisational paradox capability mediate the relationship between individual paradox mindset and perceived multidimensional performance?

Research methods

Design Cross-sectional survey of individual managers, with seven forced-choice scenarios capturing decision behaviour alongside self-reported cognition. Model specified in full before data collection.

Population Middle and senior managers with direct responsibility for logistics operations in fast fashion firms (design-to-retail interval ≤ 8 weeks, continuous assortment replacement, price below mid-market) and the 3PL providers serving them. Eligibility follows scope of operational responsibility covering Europe, not nationality.

Sample At least 200 clean responses; 235–270 raw, allowing 15–25% exclusion. Target set by simulation of the indirect effect, the binding requirement: power exceeds .80 where both constituent paths reach ≈ .25. Purposive, non-probability; three recruitment channels.

Instrument Eight sections: 48 Likert items, seven scenarios, seven profile questions, one attention check; ~15 minutes. Paradox Mindset Scale (Miron-Spektor et al., 2018) plus three researcher-developed scales - tension perception, dimension necessity, and organizational paradox capability after Gibson and Birkinshaw (2004) — each with expert review and a practitioner pilot.

Analysis Two-step: confirmatory factor analysis across 29 indicators establishes the measurement model before any structural path is estimated (R, lavaan). Indirect effect by bias-corrected bootstrap, 5,000 resamples. One pre-specified test per hypothesis.

Conceptual framework and the model under test



β_3 direct path, retained so that full and partial mediation can be distinguished.
H4a the indirect effect $\beta_1 \times \beta_2$ — the central claim. Cross-sectional design: association, not causal order.

H1, H1a Perceived tension exceeds the neutral mid-point, and the effectiveness–sustainability pair is the strongest of the three.

H2 A stronger paradox mindset predicts more frequent integrative choices across the seven decision scenarios (Paradoxical Thinking Score, 0–7).

Triple tension A falsifiable construct. Five conditions are proposed as jointly necessary and sufficient:

1. Simultaneity - all three demands bear on the same decision at the same time.
2. Structural contradiction - advancing one degrades another for reasons inherent in the operation.
3. Mutual necessity - no allocation that systematically neglects one dimension remains viable.
4. Persistence - no decision discharges the tension.
5. Irreducibility - a response to any one pairing alters the terms on which the remaining pairings must be settled.

Conditions 1–4 follow from Smith and Lewis (2011) and are satisfied by any paradox, including bilateral ones. Condition 5 is developed in this study and is what the triadic claim rests on.

What the conditions exclude Competing objectives fail Condition 3; trade-offs fail Condition 4; dyadic paradoxes fail Condition 5.

Verification Condition 3 is tested directly — three reverse-coded items against the scale mid-point, reported before the hypothesis tests (Busse, Kach, & Wagner, 2017).

Expected contribution

Central claim The first empirical test, to the author's knowledge, of the full cross-level chain from individual paradox mindset, through perceived organisational paradox capability, to perceived multidimensional performance in fast fashion logistics.

Theoretical A falsifiable specification of the triple tension, extending paradox theory from bilateral to triadic tensions.

Methodological Behavioural validation of the paradox mindset construct against scenario choices, addressing the field's reliance on cognitive self-report (Schad et al., 2016).

Practical Possible guidance for manager development. Use in selection would require further validation.

Status and next steps

Complete Chapters I–IV, instrument v6, specified model, power simulation. Mid-term evaluation passed.

Under way Expert content review, then practitioner pilot.

Next Validation and data collection, then the measurement model and hypothesis tests. Submission 30 September 2028.

References

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