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Influence of Supplier Management on Performance of Retail Chain Stores in Nairobi City County, Kenya

Bob Evans Ochieng

School of Business and Human Resource Development

Rongo University, Kenya

Corresponding Author email: bevans@rongovarsity.ac.ke

Cell Phone: +254721146614

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Abstract

The retail industry, contributes up to 30% of the employment in formal and informal establishments in Kenya. However, Kenya's retail industry has in the recent past experienced fluctuations in performance. Regardless, scholars indicate that better procurement management practices can help improve firm performance. This study therefore sought to establish the influence of supplier management on performance of large retail enterprises in Nairobi City County, Kenya. This study was informed by the Resource Based theory and Transaction Cost Economics theory. A descriptive research design was used in the study. The study was confined to the retail chain stores in Nairobi County, Kenya. There are 125 licensed retail chain stores spread across Nairobi City County. The target unit of observation was the procurement and logistics heads of the supermarkets as the unit of observation. A census survey was conducted on the 125 licensed retail chain stores spread across Nairobi City County. A questionnaire was used to collect primary data which was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 22. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used. The findings of this study indicated that supplier management positively and significantly influences performance of retail chain stores in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

Key Words: *Supplier Management, Retail Chains, Performance*

Introduction

Large scale enterprises have adopted procurement management practices which mainly entail the strategies followed when making procurement decisions. According to Sollish and Semanik (2012), procurement management is described as the process of obtaining goods and services for a firm according to the set policies governing the selection of products, suppliers, and methods aiming to utilize sound business methods which maximize the value of the organization.

Procurement management is critical to organization. It not only benefits the organization by reducing costs but also focuses on managing lead time and enhancing quality sourcing (Sanders, 2007). Implementation of procurement management best practices in large scale enterprises improves the effectiveness of procurement decision-making. Procurement practices cut across all departments of large scale enterprises as it involves the putting into practice the knowledge of sound management. It requires good governance of relations as well as personal initiatives to comply with given rules and regulations. According to Christopher (2012), efficient procurement practices contribute highly to the competitive advantage of the organization by operating at a lower cost, hence maintaining profitability and improved performance.

The process through which a firm selects its suppliers best on various factors such as price, time of delivery, experience, financial positions as well as having a contract with them is called supplier management by Arthur (2009). Better supplier management practices help a firm to cut costs and time thus enhancing efficiency. Supplier management enables a firm to maintain information exchange with the supplier and as a result, there is no shortages since there are timely orders.

In a supplier relationship management, there is a need for the parties to focus on building their delivery mechanisms, packaging practices, management of time, having better documentation and information sharing systems, reporting and logistics. When a firm feels that the suppliers are not delivering the required goods, they can engage in supplier development (Christopher, 2016). Other supplier development practices involves improving the abilities of the suppliers through financing which can come in terms of paying a deposit or linking the suppliers to institutions of finance, training them on the best production activities and equipping them accordingly (Lawson, Krause & Potter, 2015 ; Luzzini, Amann, Caniato, Essig, & Ronchi, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

The retail industry, both wholesale and retail, contributes up to 30% of the employment in formal and informal establishments in Kenya. However, the industry has of late faced serious operational challenges which have led to fluctuations in performance (Kiboro & Karanja, 2015). The retail sector is said to have a huge untapped potential where the population of retailers is only up to 30 percent of the entire market (PWC, 2014). A report by Cytons (2016) indicated that despite the growth potential in the industry, regional retail malls are able to yield up to only 11.7% returns. Similar statistics are reported by African Consumer Insights report (2016) that the market share / penetration rate of retail chains is still low at a figure between 25% - 30%.

Uchumi supermarket for instance, has experienced frequent stock outs and performance challenges (PWC, 2015). Others for instance, Tusky’s Supermarket has often experienced operational inconsistencies (PWC, 2015). More recently, one of the biggest supermarkets that has dominated the Kenyan market for more than 10 years, Nakumatt, collapsed with debts estimated to be upwards of Sh15 billion. Some of the reasons cited for the failure were poor procurement management (PWC, 2015). However, it cannot conclusively be argued that there has been exhaustion in the studies focusing on the concept since a lot of gaps exist in the previous studies. This is because a lot has been researched on the developed economies (McKinnon, Edwards, Piecyk & Palmer, 2009; Sanchez-Rodrigues, Cowburn, Potter, Naim & Whiteing, 2009) with only a handful of studies focusing on the developing world such as Kenya. The effort to provide generalizations and comparison therefore lied on this study to focus on finding out how supplier relationship management affect performance of retail chains with a focus on the Kenyan context.

Objective of the Study

To establish the influence of supplier management on performance of retail chain stores in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

Theoretical Review

The Resource Based Theory Originating from the idea of Penrose in 1959 places emphasis on the importance of a firm having rare resources which can only give it a competitive advantage over competitors and the same cannot by any chance be imitated by the competitors. Basically, the theory provides a basis for understanding the mechanisms of how competitive advantage, resources and performance of firms come in.

Wong and Karia (2010) have argued that despite having resources, a firm also needs the capacity to manage the resources as well as having networks or better relationships in order to attain a competitive advantage. Therefore, it’s not only the resources that matter, but also the relationships between the firms and other firms which is referred to as social resources as well as the capacity of the employees which is called human resources that matter (Paulraj, 2011). In relation to this study, the theory presents an avenue of better understating whether and how supplier relationships relate to the performance of retail chain stores since as argued out, it provides a social resource. Therefore the theory links to supplier management variable of the study.

Transaction Cost Theory is also relevant to the study. The theory of TCE is attributed to Oliver Williamson working on works first originated by Ronald Coase (Emmanuel, 2013). For any outsourcing activity, firms need to consider the costs of such an arrangement. This way the firm can justify the need and eventually realize the cost benefits achieved through the outsourcing process. Transaction Cost theory focuses on the reasons to firm’s existence, most effective strategies for maximizing profits, the core function of firms and what should be acquired by firms in relation to the firm’s goals.

Conceptual Framework

Supplier Management

- Supplier Selection
- Supplier partnerships
- Supplier development

Performance of Retail Chain Stores

- Profitability
- Customer Satisfaction
- Market share

Independent Variable **Dependent Variable**

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Empirical Review

Caritas, Julius and Zenon (2016) researched the impact of procurement practices on performance of Rwandan governmental construction project. They found out that procurement practices such as supplier relationship management has a positive effect on performance in the construction firms is achieved. Gadde's (2007) study revealed that many public training institutions in India employed poor supplier appraisal methods and this hindered implementation of effective procurement practices.

A study by Mulwa (2009) revealed that the use of poor supplier appraisal methods and application of ineffective supplier selection process discourages implementation of effective procurement practices in many public training institutions in Kenya. Oyugi (2010) notes that many public training institutions lack effective supplier relationship management strategies and do not collaborate with suppliers and this impacts negatively towards implementation of cost-effective procurement practices. The study, therefore, deduced that the key notable factors influencing supplier management to affect implementation of effective procurement practices in tertiary public training institutions include; poor supplier appraisal techniques, poor supplier selection strategies, poor supplier selection process, lack of effective supplier performance rating method, lack of supplier relationship management, lack of supplier development and lack of supplier collaboration

Research Methodology

The study employed a descriptive research design. The study population was all the retail chain stores in Kenya. There are 125 licensed retail chain stores spread across Nairobi City County, which formed the unit of analysis of the study. The unit of observation was heads of procurement and logistics functions of each supermarket. Due to the fact that the target population is small, 125 which is less than 200 as recommended by Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler (2014), this study used a census survey and therefore ruled out use of specific sampling technique. The research used questionnaires to collect mainly quantitative data. Quantitative data collected was analyzed using SPSS (Version 24). Descriptive statistics such as mean and frequencies were used to describe the population. On the other hand, inferential analysis such as correlation and regression were used to establish the relationship between the variables.

The regression equation was as shown below:

$$\mathbf{Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon}$$

Whereby

Y = Performance of retail chain stores, $\mathbf{X_1}$= Supplier Management, $\boldsymbol{\beta_1}$ is beta coefficient, $\boldsymbol{\beta_0}$ is constant and $\boldsymbol{\varepsilon}$ is the error term.

Research Findings

In order to obtain the required data, 125 questionnaires were administered to the heads of procurement and logistics who were the respondents of this study. Out of the questionnaires administered, 92 of them were filled and returned representing a response rate of 73.6% with only 26.4% not filled and returned. This was in line with Orodho (2009) that a response rate above 50% suffices to collect data for analysis for the purpose of generalization of the results to the entire population. On the same note, the response rate is in agreement with the recommendations of Fincham (2008) that a response rate of above 70% is adequate to conduct statistical analysis.

Reliability Analysis

Before carrying out the main study, a pilot study was conducted on 10% of the sample size (12 respondents) which was for ensuring that the questionnaire which was the main research instrument used for data collection. This study excluded the participants of the pilot study from the main study to avoid bias. In ensuring reliability of the instrument, the study measured internal consistency of the items of 12 questionnaires that were subjected to pilot test using Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.7. This is the threshold suggested by researchers such as Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) and Taber (2017). The Cronbach alpha coefficient values of the five variables used in this study all were greater than 0.7 (α>0.7) implying that the instrument was reliable for data collection. The results are as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Reliability Test

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Supplier Management	0.754	7
Performance of Retail Chain Store	0.811	7

Descriptive Findings and Analysis

The study used mean as well as standard deviation descriptive statistics to capture the responses based on a Likert scale of 1-5 (5= strongly agree; 4 =agree; 3= neutral; 2= disagree and 1= strongly disagree). This section therefore presents the average responses on each of the variables whereas the standard deviation indicates the magnitude of variations in the responses.

Supplier Management

Respondents were asked to rate various supplier management statements based on the rating of 1-5 (5= strongly agree; 4 =agree; 3= neutral; 2= disagree and 1= strongly disagree). The average responses are as shown on Table 2. Majority of the respondents, 37% and mean 3.62 strongly agreed that the supplier's efficiency in service delivery is evaluated before short listing. A value of 1.43 for standard deviation is an indication of low spread in the responses to this statement.

The results also showed that 41.3% of the respondents who were the majority in this case as supported by a mean of 4.03 strongly agreed that the supplier's experience in offering certain services/ products is evaluated before short listing. Similarly, a standard deviation value of 0.94 signifies low variation in the responses on this statement. Majority of the respondents according to the results shown on Table 2 strongly agreed that the supplier's financial position is evaluated before short listing. This is shown by 42.4% and a mean of 4.28 while a standard deviation of 0.79 shows low variation. The results from the table also indicate that 54.3% of the heads of procurement and logistics functions of the supermarkets who the majority respondents in this case strongly agreed that the supermarket has partnered with suppliers to streamline procurement process. This is reinforced by a mean value of 4.32.

Majority of the respondents further strongly agreed that the supermarket has supplier committees who engage in developing the suppliers. This is confirmed by a 30.40% and a mean of 1.32. The results on this variable finally showed that 45.7% and mean of 4.13 representing the majority of the respondents of this study strongly agreed that the organization manages data base of supplier contracts and information sharing. A standard deviation value of 1 is an indication of low spread of the responses from the respondents. On average, the mean of 3.98 indicated that the supermarket is involved in supplier management in order to improve supply chain performance. The results of the study are consistent with the argument by Mulwa (2009) that the use of poor supplier appraisal methods and application of ineffective supplier selection process discourages implementation of effective procurement practices in many public training institutions in Kenya affecting their performance.

Table 2: Supplier Management

Statements	Strongly disagree	Dis agree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std Dev
There is evaluation of supplier's efficiency in service delivery	15.20%	6.50%	16.30%	25.00%	37.00%	3.62	1.43
There is evaluation of supplier's production experience	0.00%	4.30%	29.30%	25.00%	41.30%	4.03	0.94
There is evaluation of supplier's financial position	1.10%	3.30%	4.30%	48.90%	42.40%	4.28	0.79
There is partnership with suppliers to streamline procurement process	2.20%	2.20%	12.00%	29.30%	54.30%	4.32	0.92
There exist supplier development	7.60%	20.70%	16.30%	25.00%	30.40%	3.50	1.32
There is management of supplier information data base	3.30%	1.10%	20.70%	29.30%	45.70%	4.13	1.00
Average						**3.98**	**1.07**

Performance of Retail Chain Stores

The study finally established the performance of retail chain stores in Nairobi City County. Respondents were asked to rate various statements regarding the performance of the supermarket based on the rating of 1-5 (5= strongly agree; 4 =agree; 3= neutral; 2= disagree and 1= strongly disagree). The average responses are as shown on Table 3. Majority of the respondents, 30.4% and mean 3.74 strongly agreed that the supermarket's market share has considerably expanded. Majority of the heads of procurement and logistics functions also strongly agreed that there has been an improvement in the sales turnover. This is shown by 38% and mean of 4.02.

Further, 62% of the respondents who were the majority in this case strongly agreed that the profitability of the supermarket has significantly increased supported by a mean of 4.38. Majority of the respondents, 41.3% and mean 3.51 also strongly agreed that the supermarket's returns on investments has improved with the standard deviation of 0.84 signifying low variation in the responses provided regarding this statement. The results finally indicated that 46.7% and mean of 3.89 representing majority of heads of procurement and logistics function of the supermarkets strongly agreed that there has been an increase in the supermarket's number of employees. This is consistent with the findings Kariuki (2011) that the retail industry has encountered phenomenal growth and transformation due to consumers who have become sophisticated in terms of needs and likeness.

Table 3 : Performance of supermarket

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std Dev
There is an improvement in market share	3.30%	8.70%	29.30%	28.30%	30.40%	3.74	1.09
There has been an improvement in the sales turnover	4.30%	10.90%	1.10%	45.70%	38.00%	4.02	1.11
There has been an improvement in profitability	0.00%	9.80%	4.30%	23.90%	62.00%	4.38	0.96
There has been an improvement in returns on investment	19.60%	1.10%	29.30%	8.70%	41.30%	3.51	1.52
There has been an improvement in number of products	0.00%	0.00%	33.70%	29.30%	37.00%	4.03	0.84
There has been an improvement in number of employees	7.60%	5.40%	23.90%	16.30%	46.70%	3.89	1.27
Average						**3.93**	**1.13**

The respondents were also asked to indicate the changes in the sale turnover for the various periods under this study (2013-2017). The results as shown in Figure 2 shows the trends for the changes in sales turnover in Ksh. Million for the study period 2013-2017. As shown in the table, there was an unsteady change in sales turnover for the entire period (2013-2017). The peak of the changes in sales turnover of the supermarkets in Nairobi was in the year 2015 when there was a change of between Ksh 26-35million. However, the year 2016 recorded a sharp drop in the sales turnover with an average change of below Ksh. 15 million. The implication of the findings is that the performance of the supermarkets in Nairobi City County in terms of sales turnover has been erratic for the past five years which has adversely affected their performance.

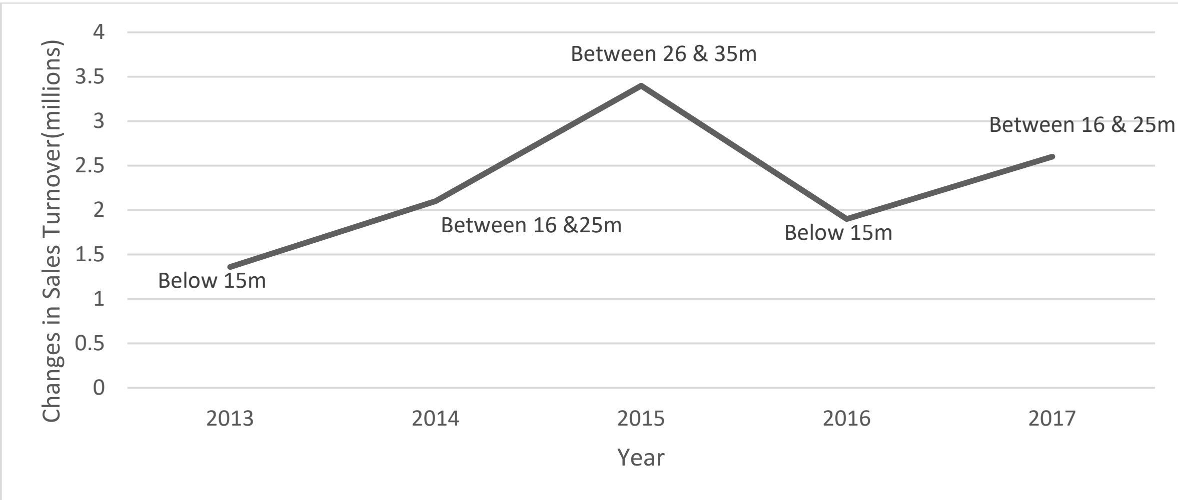

Figure 2: Trends for Changes in Sales Turnover

The respondents were further asked to indicate the changes in profit margin for the various periods under this study (2013-2017). The results as shown in Figure 3 show that in 2013, The respondents were further asked to indicate the changes in the profit margins for the study period (2013-2017). The results as shown in Figure 3 also indicated unsteady changes in profit margin in Ksh. Million for the study period 2013-2017. The implication of the findings is that the performance of the supermarkets in Nairobi City County in terms of profit margin for the period 2103-2107 was inconsistent unfavorably affecting their performance.

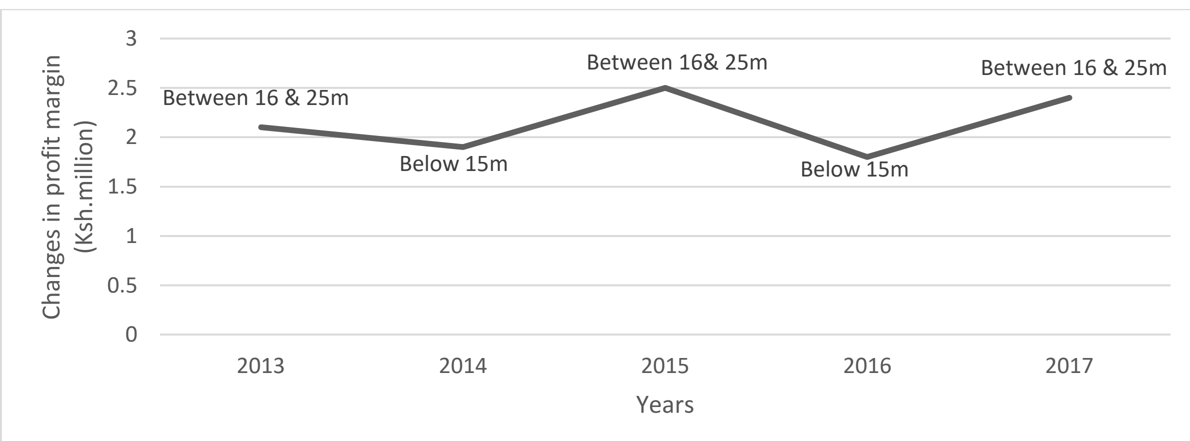

Figure 3: Trends for Changes in profit margin

Correlation Analysis

A correlation analysis was done by the use of Pearson correlation coefficient to establish the connection between the variables of the study. In order to make useful conclusions on the connection among the study variables, the study adopted a significance level of 5%. The results on this analysis are as presented in Table 4. The results further indicated a positive association between supplier management and performance of retail chain stores in Nairobi City County as shown by a person correlation coefficient of 0.594. The association between the two variables is also significant as shown by a p-value of 0.000<0.05. This implies that a positive change in supplier management will result to a significant improvement in the performance of the retail chain stores in Nairobi City County. This is consistent with the argument by Chen, Paulraj and Lado (2004) that supply management stimulates sustainable performance of an organisation by nurturing a close working relationships, encouraging open communication between the firm and supplier and developing long-term strategic relationships for mutual gains.

Table 4: Correlation Analysis

Correlations		**Supplier management**	**Performance**
Supplier management	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
Performance	Pearson Correlation	.798*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	92	92

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Regression Analysis

For the purpose of establishing the relationship between supplier management and performance of retail chain stores, a regression model was established. The model summary results as presented in Table 5 indicated that supplier management had a strong positive influence on the performance of retail chain stores in Nairobi City County. This is shown by a joint Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.798. This implies that a positive change in supplier management results to a strong improvement in the performance of retail chain stores in Nairobi City County.

From the results of the model summary, R-square was 0.636 implying supplier management is responsible for up to 63.6% of the variation in the performance of retail chain stores in Nairobi City County. This finding implies that changes in the performance of retail chain stores in Nairobi City County is not explained by supplier management only but there are other factors that account for the change which are responsible for 36.4%. These factors were not captured by the model specified in this study.

Table 5 : Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.798	0.636	0.62	0.32898
Predictors: (Constant), Supplier Management			

The significance of the regression model was confirmed by the F statistic at 5% (Sig < 0.000). The implication of the overall model significance is that supplier management is a suitable factor in predicting variation of performance of retail chain stores in Nairobi County. The results for model significance are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: ANOVA (Model Significance)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	16.479	1	4.12	38.064	.000
Residual	9.416	90	0.108		
Total	25.895	91			
Dependent Variable: Performance of Retail Chain Store					
Predictors: (Constant), Supplier Management					

The regression results as shown in Table 7 indicated that supplier management positively and significantly influenced performance of retail chain stores in Nairobi City County (Beta = 0.305, Sig= 0.001). This also implies that a unit improvement in supplier management results to 0.305 unit improvement in the performance of retail chain stores in Nairobi City County. This is consistent with the argument by Prajogo, Chowdhury, Yeung and Cheng (2012) that supplier assessment has a positive relationship with quality performance. On the same note, they argue that strategic long-term relationship with the suppliers enhances delivery, flexibility, and cost performance.

Table 7 : Regression Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.478	0.409		1.171	0.245
Supplier Management	0.305	0.09	0.265	3.384	0.001
Dependent Variable: Performance of Retail Chain Store					

Conclusions of the Study

Supplier management positively and significantly influenced performance of retail chain store in Nairobi City County. This therefore implies that an improvement in procurement planning practices results to significant improvement in performance of retail chain store in Nairobi City County, Kenya. Accordingly, evaluating supplier's efficiency in service delivery before short listing, appraising supplier's experience in offering certain services/products, assessing supplier's financial position before short listing, partnering with suppliers to streamline procurement process, having committees who engage in developing the suppliers and engaging in information sharing with supplier results to significant improvement in performance of retail chain store in Nairobi City County.

Recommendations of the Study

Further, this study recommends that retail chain store in Nairobi City County should evaluate supplier's efficiency in service delivery before short listing, appraise supplier's experience in offering certain services/products, assess supplier's financial position before short listing, partner with suppliers to streamline procurement process, have committees who engage in developing the suppliers and engaging in information sharing with supplier.

Conflict of Interest

No potential Conflict of Interest was recorded by the authors

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