

Analysis of Issues Relating to Challenges of Managing Supplier Performance

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Statement Definition

The general and broad objective of this research is to identify and establish the relevance of good supply chain management with respect to effective supplier performance and how it is being implemented in ABL in order to gain long term sustainability and success. *To understand the general knowledge of supplier selection, evaluation, assessment and monitoring criteria and techniques at ABL; to evaluate the benefits resulting from effective supplier performance management programs at ABL; to identify problems and challenges encountered in managing suppliers at ABL; and to make recommendations to improve upon efficiency and effectiveness of supplier performance management programs at ABL.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The role of purchasing and for that matter supply chain has gained tremendous importance and recognition in most manufacturing organizations in recent times. This paradigm gives birth to an increasing role for supply chain professionals and the need to add value across all activities along the linkage. Top management has recognized the contributions of purchasing as a key process that contributes to the competitive advantage of firms Lewis (1995) and Krause (1997). In recent vastly competitive environment, an effective supplier performance process is very important to the success of all manufacturing organizations. Most manufacturers look for collaborative efforts with their sources of inputs in order to promote supply chain performance and enhanced competitiveness. The purchasing and supply chain functions are increasingly recognized as strategic issues in organizations. A number of empirical evidence emphasized the importance of buyer supplier relationships and collaborative efforts between the two leading to improved performance and corporate sustainability Tracey and Tan (2001). An aggressive and high performing supply management process is a critical element of organizational success and a key constituent of satisfying customers. Lewis (1995) stated acquisition of goods and services with emphasis on quality, delivery and value creation will go a long way to improve organizations success and competitiveness. Manufacturers continuously and constantly seek suppliers who are high performers and can create value towards long term sustainability. Effective supplier performance does not only look at the end result but a complete facilitation of activities starting from selection, evaluation, assessment and overall performance monitoring. Measuring supplier performance and developing a supplier management strategy are of great importance to organization's success like ABL. Accra Brewery limited has been one of the leaders in the brewery industry in Ghana and for some time now has been experiencing some challenges with its supply chain system and therefore the study intends to evaluate how effective supplier performance contributes to the overall success of the company's operations.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research methodology deployed by the researcher. This begins with an explanation of the overall research approach and goes on to describe the areas researched and data collection methods that were employed. Specifically, this segment describes the research design, population size, sampling procedure, instrument used, data collection and analysis procedure and the geographical area where the study was conducted.

A. Scope of Study

The objective of the study is to investigate the impact suppliers' performance has on corporate success with special reference to the operations of Accra Brewery Limited. To achieve these objectives, the researcher focused on ABL and its operations with regards to supply chain management.

B. Research Setting

The study was conducted on Accra Brewery Company Limited (ABL) at Accra in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The company has a total number of 303 employees. The company operate from the south industrial area of Accra and is close to Graphic Communications Group.

C. Research Approach and Design

The nature of the study required questions and answers and therefore the researcher considered the most appropriate research design. Two approaches identified by Zikmund and Babin (2010), namely positivist and phenomenological. The positivist approach consists of facts and quantitative analysis to test formulated research questions while phenomenological approach consists the design that focuses on meanings and qualitative analysis to develop ideas from information gathered. Qualitative research according to Strauss and Corbin (2000) is the collecting, analysing and interpreting of data by observing what people say or do whilst quantitative research involves the use of structured questionnaires. Pluralistic research in the view of Strauss and Corbin (2000) is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research where the advantages of both can benefit the study. The researcher used the pluralistic approach, which ensured that, both qualitative and quantitative pieces of information picked up by the questionnaire are quantified and analyzed to realize the desired objective on the study.

D. Study Population and Sample

The study targeted Accra Brewery Limited one of the reputable brewery companies in Ghana with the population size of about 303 employees. Data for the study therefore came from the supply chain department, selected user departments and some suppliers of the company. The study sample consisted of all key personnel whose role, job and decision affects the objectives of this study.

E. Sample Size

Sample size represent a group of people selected for the purpose of determining the outcome of a research. Since everyone cannot be selected for a research work, it therefore makes it appropriate to determine correct sample size in order to get a fair view of the people represented in the research work Henderson (2007). For the purpose of this research, purposive sampling technique was used to collect required data for the work.. According to Thompson et al (2010), purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which an experienced individual selects the sample based on his or her judgment about some appropriate characteristics required of the sample member. Sample size of 53 was selected from supply chain department, production department, technical division and some suppliers of ABL.

- i. ***Sampling Procedure:*** Information on supplier performance management at ABL, like other companies is a specialized area and therefore reserved for officials with the right knowledge and experience. This presupposes that not every employee of Accra Brewery Limited could co-operate with the study and therefore there was the need to approach certain key officials who have been entrusted with that responsibility. Based on this, the researcher employed purposive sampling techniques or non-probability sampling method in selecting the sample based on personal judgment about some appropriate characteristics of the sample members. According to Thompson et al (2010) purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which an experienced individual selects the sample based on his or her judgment about some appropriate characteristics required of the sample member. The researcher will select samples that satisfy their specific purposes even if they are not fully representative. The aforementioned sampling procedure enabled the researcher to pick up qualitative and quantitative data which were methodically processed to achieve significant data and information for analysis.

F. Research Instrument

The questionnaire technique was employed as the research instrument for the study because officials of Accra Brewery Limited are well educated people who have no problems honouring the dictate of the questionnaire. Moreover the questionnaire technique enabled respondents the necessary flexibility required to answer the questions at their convenient period. Essentially the questionnaire sought to understand the supplier selection techniques being employed by Accra Brewery Limited (ABL) as well as the challenges faced by ABL in managing suppliers' performance. The study also investigated the measures put in place to harness efficiency and effectiveness of sources management programs in ABL.

G. Data Collection Procedure

A time frame not exceeding two weeks was given to prospective respondents to honour the questionnaires. At intervals, the researcher kept reminding the interviewees of their responsibility to the study. The researcher personally went round to pick up the answered scripts. Care was given to ensure that all areas have been filled except where they do not apply to the respondent. Respondents who also experienced limitation in answering certain questions were

guided by the researcher. Data collected was focused on the main areas that the researcher intends to look at which addresses the main research questions in the study. This means both primary and secondary sources were used in data collection.

- i. **Primary Data:** As mentioned above, primary data for the study was obtained from key personnel of ABL whose duties impinge on supplier performance on corporate. According to Gelb and Gelb (1999), primary research involves collecting firsthand information for assessing the impact of supplier performance on corporate success through qualitative or quantitative or pluralistic nature. Qualitative research is the collecting analysis and interpreting of data by observing what people say or do. Quantitative research involves the use of structured questions where response options have been predetermined. Pluralistic research is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research where the advantages of both can benefit the study. The researcher used the pluralistic approach, which ensured that qualitative information picked up by the questionnaire was quantified and analyzed to realize the desired impact on the study.
- ii. **Secondary Data:** Secondary data according Henderson (2007) pertains to information that has already been published, such as company records, government reports, newspapers and journals on the supplier performance on corporate and related literature. In the views of Thompson et al (2010) secondary data is the facts and information based on research of primary data which includes published and unpublished work. Secondary data is also composed of written materials such as researches, articles, bulletins and books which are readily accessible to enhance a research. Secondary data for this study specifically emanated from company documents, newspaper articles, journals and other publications on supplier management all constitute secondary data. Due to the fact that secondary research published without the specific needs of the decision being taken into consideration, Winsome and Johnson (2000) point out that caution must be exercised when using such information. The information provided through secondary research can be biased, partial and of poor quality. Rarely is secondary information sufficient in itself to provide accurate information from which a decision can be made and therefore care was exercised in reviewing the secondary data to advance the course of the study.

H. Data Analysis

After the data was collected, Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was employed in analyzing and interpreting the data. Kumar (2005) argues that despite the advances in spreadsheet applications, commercialized Statistical Software Packages remain extremely popular among researchers. They continue to become easier to use and more compatible with other data interface tools including word processors. Statistical packages, like any specialized tools are more tailored to the types of analyses performed by statistical analysts. One of the most popular general statistical packages is SPSS. According to Zikmund and Babin (2010), SPSS is very user friendly and gives the user the option of using drop-down menus to conduct analysis rather than writing computer code. In the past, data entry was an issue as specific software required different types of data input. Today, however, Kumar (2005) is of the conviction that all the major statistical software packages including SPSS can work from data entered into spreadsheet. By clicking on "charts" in the SPSS tool menu, one can see the variety of charts that can be created. The key place to click to generate statistical results in tabular form is analyzed. Here, one can see many types of analysis than can be created. The SPSS user can ask for any number of statistics and percentages to be included with any particular level of output by clicking on the corresponding options. Pie charts, graph, bar graphs, frequency distribution tables have all been neatly featured in chapter four with their interpretations.

I. Ethical Consideration

The confidentiality of respondents is maintained throughout this study and beyond. The views and opinions of all respondents are respected, taken in good faith and adequately safeguarded from getting into the public domain without their consent. Additionally, no form of in-human treatment or harassment was meted out to any respondent for the purpose of gaining any undue advantage to complete this work. Respondents were given a free will to terminate at any point in time before the completion of the study not to continue or take part. The researcher adequately briefs all respondents on the objectives and sought their consent prior to data collection. Every literature used in this study was duly, sufficiently and appropriately cited to avoid plagiarism. The research strictly abides by Coventry University's guide on ethics and ensures that questionnaire and interview questions are duly approved before they are administered. Above all, all the data collected were purely treated as confidential and used strictly for the purpose for which they were collected.

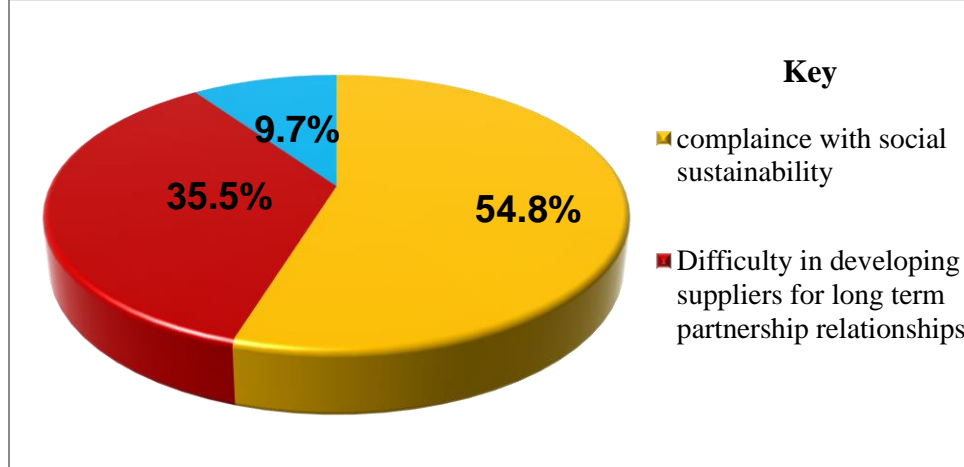
III. ANALYSIS OF ISSUES RELATING TO CHALLENGES OF MANAGING SUPPLIER PERFORMANCE

This segment of the report catalogues only views of ABL respondents on challenges encountered in managing supplier performance.

A. Views on Challenges faced by ABL in managing its supplier performance

Findings on challenges encountered have been featured in Figure 4.7

Pie-chart showing challenges ABL faces in managing its supplier's performance Source:



Field Data (2012)

In Figure above, 17 out of the 31 ABL respondents representing 54.8 percent mentioned a key challenge facing ABL in managing its supplier's performance as the need to observe the social sustainability concept which dictates that some supply jobs should be given to local SMEs.

Eleven (i.e. 35.5%) respondents pointed out that difficulty in developing suppliers for long term partnership relations is another challenge facing ABL in managing its suppliers' performance.

Three (i.e. 9.7%) respondents mentioned the instability in the Ghanaian cedis which often impacts negatively on the cost of purchases.

The finding on unstable local currency was identified by Chopra and Meindl (2007) as one great set back to the management of supplier performance. They explained that such macro-economic indicators often erode gains made in strategic supplier management efforts. Krayewsku and Ritzman (2000) also support the view that it is not easy meeting the social sustainability requirement which makes it mandatory for reputable institutions to help local SMEs with supply contracts. Kotabe and Murray (2001) also stress the importance of strengthening internal structures such as strategic supplier development programs since such initiatives results in big boost to beneficial companies.

B. Views on Some Potentials Constraints to Managing Supplier Performance

Findings on views of potential difficulties in managing supplier performance have been presented in table

Frequency table showing views on Supplier Performance Management constraints

Statement of challenges of supplier performance management	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Don't Know (%)
Severe financial and operational consequence can result from the failure to strategically optimize the procurement and supply chain function	80.6	-	19.4

Remaining competitive by directing supply management activities not only on cost savings but also contributing to top-line growth and innovation	74.2	9.7	16.1
Suppliers delivery raw materials on time and in good condition	-	54.8	45.2
Remaining efficient by maximizing productivity through controlling and eliminating the cost of poor quality	90.3	-	9.7

Source: Field Data (2012)

In table, 25 out of the 31 respondents from ABL constituting 80.6 percent agree with the statement that challenges to managing supplier performance could emanate from severe financial and operational failure to strategically optimize the procurement and supply chain function. Six (i.e. 19.4%) respondent did not have any idea on this issue.

Twenty-three (i.e. 74.2%) respondents agreed with the suggestion that a further challenge to managing supplier performance lies in striving to remain competitive by directing supply management activities not only on cost savings but also contributing to top-line growth and innovation.

Seventeen (i.e. 54.8%) respondents disagreed with the statement that another challenge could be ensuring that suppliers deliver raw materials on time and in good condition.

Fourteen (i.e. 45.2%) respondents did not seem to know what to say on the issue of programming suppliers to tend in right quality of products and on good time as a challenge.

Twenty-eight (i.e. 90.3%) respondents agreed with the statement that a further challenge to supplier performance management emanate from endeavouring to control or eliminate the cost of poor quality products in a most efficient manner.

Maloni and Benton (2000) corroborate most of the findings above by stressing that companies could face severe financial and operational consequence from their failure to strategically optimize the procurement and supply chain function. Ross (2011) argues that remaining competitive becomes very difficult in some case especially where management must focus not only on cost savings but also contributes to top-line growth and innovation.

C. Factors affecting Effective Supplier Performance Management

Findings on factors which affect supply management have been packaged in table 4.8

Frequency table showing the level of agreement of respondents on factors that influence effective supplier performance

Types of factors	Very important	Important	Least important
Using computerized techniques such as enterprise resource planning (ERP) and Electronic Data Interchange (EDI)	71.0	22.6	6.4
Employing management methods such as business process management	9.7	51.6	38.7
Learn process management such as Just-In-Time principles	12.9	29	58.1
Activating highly supply, accessible manufacturing and distribution functions across a network of supply and delivery partners	54.8	32.3	12.9
Supplier performance management should endeavour to eradicate all forms of waste where supply chain entities touch	51.6	38.7	9.7

Source: Field Data (2012)

In Table, 22 out of the 31 ABL respondent constituting 71 percent described as very important the need to use computerized technique such as Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) for effective supplier performance management activities.

Seven (i.e. 22.6%) respondents also spoke of this factor as important while 2 (i.e. 6.4%) respondents felt this factor is of least importance.

Sixteen (i.e. 51.6%) respondents mentioned as important the strategy of employing management methods such as business process management (BPM) as means of effectively managing supplier performance.

Twelve (i.e. 38.7%) respondents felt this strategy is of least importance while the remaining three (i.e. 9.7%) respondents rather consider the idea of employing BPM methods in managing suppliers as very important.

Eighteen (i.e. 58.1%) respondents described as least important the strategy of adopting lean process management techniques such as Just-In-Time principles to manage suppliers performance.

Nine (i.e. 29%) respondents felt it is important to use learn process management techniques such as JIT principles in managing suppliers performance.

Four (i.e. 12.9%) respondents rather described this techniques as very important and therefore worth implementing.

Seventeen (i.e. 54%) respondents noted that it is very important to manage suppliers performance by activating highly supply, accessible manufacturing and distribution functions across a network of supply and delivery partners.

Ten (i.e.32.3%) respondents described the strategy as important while the remaining Four (i.e. 12.9%) respondents felt it is of least importance to adopt this technique in managing suppliers performance.

Sixteen (i.e. 51.6%) respondents are of the opinion that it is very important to manage suppliers performance in a way as to eradicate all forms of waste where supply chain entities touch or operate.

Twelve (i.e. 38.7%) respondents described as important while the remaining three (i.e. 9.7%) respondents rather felt it is of least important to eradicate all forms of waste in supply chain activities prior to effectively managing suppliers performance.

Important writers such as Tracey and Tan (2001) as well as Wells (2009) all confirm the findings that it is very important to activate highly supply, accessible manufacturing and distribution function across a network of supply and delivery partners as a strategy for effectively managing supplier performance. Alexios-Patapios (2011) also note that effective managing of supplier performance should endeavour to do away with all forms of waste where supply chain activities permeate. According to Weber et al (2000) the use of computer software such as Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) has the propensity of ensuring that suppliers perform within expectation.

IV. CONCLUSION

Challenges faced by ABL in managing supplier's performance

The study is in the position to conclude that key challenges facing ABL in managing supplier performance include the difficulty in managing the social sustainability concept which makes it obligatory for the company to hand down supply jobs to local SMEs most of which do not exert the capacity and capability to discharge such business contracts judiciously. ABL faces further supplier performance management challenges in that the company does not have any structured supplier development program in place. The unstable nature of the local currency, the Ghanaian cedi, poses a big challenge to efforts at managing the suppliers' performance at ABL. Based on the above, ABL must therefore develop structures that focus on supplier development in other to gain sustainable competitive advantage. The need to nature and maintain partnership will offer ABL great returns in the long term.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the problems and challenges uncovered in the study the following recommendations are mandatory.

Building the Capacity of Local Suppliers to enhance their Performance

The study noted that although the social sustainability concept dictates that ABL engages local SMEs suppliers in their supply chain activities a good number of them lack the capacity and competence to effectively execute their obligations to meet desires of the company. It is hereby recommended that conscious effort is made by the management of ABL to expose these SMEs to some kind of capacity building workshops so as to soar up their ability to properly help achieve corporate goals of the company. Suppliers who benefits should also help contribute towards the upkeep of such training and skills development sessions.

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