



THE EFFECTS OF SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION: A CASE OF BREWERY MANUFACTURING COMPANIES IN TANZANIA

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Abstract:

In the context of East Africa's competitive landscape, particularly in Tanzania's brewery manufacturing sector, effective supply chain management (SCM) practices are essential for enhancing customer satisfaction. This study investigates the impact of three key SCM practices, strategic supplier partnerships (SSP), customer relationship management (CRM), and information sharing (IS) on customer satisfaction. Employing a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 106 employees of Tanzania Breweries Limited through questionnaires and interviews. The results indicate that CRM is the most significant predictor of customer satisfaction, highlighting the necessity of personalized customer interactions and efficient service delivery. Furthermore, both SSP and IS demonstrate considerable positive impacts on customer satisfaction, with effective collaboration with suppliers and timely information exchange contributing to enhanced operational efficiency. Consequently, the study emphasizes the need for breweries to prioritize CRM, foster strategic supplier partnerships, and improve information sharing to meet customer expectations. These insights not only contribute to the theoretical framework of SCM but also offer practical implications for industry practitioners and policymakers aiming to strengthen the manufacturing sector's competitiveness in Tanzania. The study concludes that adopting these SCM practices can significantly improve customer satisfaction, thereby driving loyalty and long-term success in the marketplace.

Keywords:

Strategic supplier partnership, customer relationship management, information sharing, customer satisfaction

1. Introduction

In today's highly competitive global marketplace, local companies are not only competing against each other but also contending with world-class enterprises from across the globe. To remain viable in the face of intense competition and the forces of globalization, companies must strategically reduce operating costs, enhance product quality, ensure timely delivery, and consistently meet customer expectations (Smith & Johnson, 2019). The ongoing market development and opening have compelled companies to adopt advanced horizontal and vertical integration strategies, resulting in the formation of multinational corporations that can serve broader markets and maintain their competitive advantage. This evolution, supported by advancements in information and communication technologies, has given rise to the concept of the supply chain, which integrates globally dispersed companies and independent entities operating within the same supply network (Garcia & Chen, 2021; Lee & Park, 2020).

The primary objective of supply chains is to enhance operational efficiency by delivering goods and services to end consumers at the right time and at minimal cost. However, the complexity of these supply chains is growing, driven by the increasing number of participants, the need to manage global markets, evolving customer demands, pressures to reduce costs, and rapid technological advancements. In this context, effective information sharing among supply chain actors becomes essential to enabling efficient and effective supply chain operations (Williams & Taylor, 2018; Zhang et al., 2019).

Supply chain participants gain critical transparency into shifting business parameters through the exchange of information, with the level of transparency directly influencing supply chain performance. The advantages of sharing information within the supply chain are evident in the access to timely, accurate, and relevant data, which facilitates better decision-making and enhances overall supply chain efficiency. This information exchange enables better resource utilization through improved organization and control of supply chain activities and helps to reduce uncertainty while mitigating the bullwhip effect (Nguyen & Brown, 2020; Li & Wu, 2018).

In East Africa, the complexities, challenges, and opportunities of supply chain management have become increasingly evident. Supply chain management plays a crucial role in the economic development of African countries. However, the advancement of supply chain management in East Africa faces significant challenges. To improve the competitiveness of the region's manufacturing sector, a strong focus on supply chain management is necessary, with an emphasis on quality, cost control, supplier relationships, customer order fulfillment, technological adaptation, and professional engagement. These areas represent the most significant hurdles for East Africa's manufacturing industry (Thompson & Patel, 2020; Owino & Amadi, 2018).

In Tanzania, both manufacturing and non-manufacturing sectors heavily rely on supply chain management to meet customer demands. The term "supply chain management" encompasses the various organizations and processes through which a product is transformed from raw material to its final end-use. However, supply chain management in Tanzania is plagued by numerous challenges that lead to customer dissatisfaction. These challenges are categorized into technological, professional, and cost-related issues, all of which hinder the pursuit of excellence in supply chain management (Hassan et al., 2023; Nkrumah & Mensah, 2019).

2. Statement of the Problem

Supply chain management (SCM) has emerged as a critical strategy for mitigating economic development risks. Traditional methods of purchasing and physical distribution face persistent challenges, including misaligned inventory systems, reliance on manual management processes, complications from unpredictable border conditions and the high informality of market and infrastructure costs. Globally, there is a heightened focus on leveraging SCM to optimize product development, marketing, operations, sales, finance, and customer service (Johnson & Lee, 2019). Effective SCM is recognized for its potential to lower costs and shorten production cycles (Miller et al., 2021). Despite efforts by both manufacturing and non-manufacturing companies to implement well-managed supply chains that ensure the smooth flow of materials and finished products from origin to destination, customer dissatisfaction remains prevalent due to ongoing performance issues within supply chains. These issues contribute to further inefficiencies and a decline in overall supply chain effectiveness (Smith, 2020).

In developing countries, where low productivity is a common indicator of company performance, SCM plays a crucial role in economic development. However, challenges within supply chains often stem from both internal and external factors affecting industries such as brewing. While procurement professionals develop principles and values to guide SCM, there is often a disconnect between these principles and their practical application within specific sectors, such as the food and brewing industries. Studies, including those by international procurement agencies, have explored the challenges of SCM but have not adequately addressed issues such as inadequate storage and transportation facilities, delays in delivery, and the lack of modern processing and handling equipment. Additionally, emerging trends like the digital supply chain, green supply chain, and customer-centric approaches further complicate the SCM landscape, leading to inefficiencies (Brown et al., 2022; Zhang & Wang, 2018).

Although many industries in Tanzania have implemented supply chain principles and values with the objective of enhancing supply chain performance and achieving higher levels of customer satisfaction, overall productivity within these industries remains low. This suggests that merely adopting these principles may not be sufficient to achieve the desired outcomes. Specifically, there is a noticeable lack of detailed research and analysis in the brewery industry that demonstrates how these supply chain principles are practically applied and how they perform under the unique environmental and market conditions in which these businesses operate. The limited explanations available do not adequately address the complexities and challenges faced by breweries, leaving a significant gap in understanding how supply chain management practices directly influence customer satisfaction. This study aims to bridge this knowledge gap by thoroughly investigating the impact of supply chain management practices, underpinned by recognized principles, on customer satisfaction at brewery manufacturing companies. To achieve the research objectives, the study was guided by the following hypotheses:

- H1: There is a significant positive relationship between strategic supplier partnership and customer satisfaction.
H2: There is a significant positive relationship between customer relationship management and customer satisfaction.
H3: There is a significant positive relationship between information sharing and customer satisfaction.

3. Methodology

The study employed a mixed research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The quantitative component involved the measurement, classification, and statistical analysis of data, enabling the identification of patterns and relationships among variables. The qualitative component complemented this by offering deeper insights through the exploration of underlying themes and perspectives.

The research process was meticulously designed, including the formulation of objectives, development of data collection methods, sample selection, data processing, analysis, and reporting of results. A sample of 106 TBL employees was selected for the study. Primary data was collected through questionnaires and interviews using simple random and judgmental sampling techniques respectively, ensuring a balanced integration of structured quantitative data and in-depth qualitative insights. Secondary data was also utilized to enrich the analysis.

The questionnaire was pretested to ensure the collection of valid and reliable data. Quantitative data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, mean, and mode, as well as inferential statistical tools, including multivariable regression analysis, to examine correlations between the independent variables (strategic partnership with suppliers, management of customer relationships, information exchange) and the dependent variable (customer satisfaction). The qualitative data, gathered through interviews, was analyzed thematically to provide context and depth to the quantitative findings, offering a holistic view of the research outcomes.

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1. The effect of strategic supplier partnership on customer satisfaction

The first objective of the study was to examine the effect of strategic supplier partnership on customer satisfaction. Participants were asked to rate the influence of these partnerships on customer satisfaction using a five-point scale, where 1 represented strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - neutral, 4 - agree, and 5 - strongly agree. The mean values were interpreted as follows: a mean below 1.5 indicated complete rejection, 1.5 to just under 2.5 signaled disagreement, 2.5 to just under 3.5 reflected neutrality, 3.5 to just under 4.5 indicated agreement, and 4.5 to 5 signified strong agreement.

Table 1: The effect of strategic supplier partnership on customer satisfaction

Statements	Mean	Mode
We believe that quality is our most important criterion when selecting suppliers.	4.06	5
We regularly solve problems in collaboration with our suppliers	3.86	4
We help our suppliers improve the quality of their products	3.57	4
We conduct continuous improvement programs for our key suppliers	3.88	4
We embrace our key suppliers in our planning and goal-setting activities	3.74	4
We actively involve our most important suppliers in the development of new products	3.92	4

The findings, presented in Table 1, indicate that the majority of respondents agree on the importance of quality when selecting suppliers, with an average rating of 4.06. They also support the implementation of continuous improvement programs for key suppliers, with an average score of 3.88, aligning with Burca and Fynes (2017), who argue that corporate social responsibility (CSR) significantly influences quality performance and practices such as customer

satisfaction. The results further show that TBL integrates key suppliers in their planning and goal-setting processes, with an average rating of 3.74, and actively involves them in the development of new products, scoring an average of 3.92. Additionally, respondents generally agree that TBL assists suppliers in improving product quality, with an average of 3.57, and regularly collaborates with them to resolve issues, with an average score of 3.86.

The results are consistent with those of Lagat, Koech, and Kemboi (2016), who indicate that information sharing, customer relationships, supplier partnerships, and delivery delays have a positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction, which in turn increases customer loyalty. Ultimately, they found that SCM practices have a positive impact on customer satisfaction.

In line with the above descriptive analysis results, the head of the marketing department from the TBL asserted that; “Of course, it is important to take into account suppliers' opinions when developing products and setting organizational goals, but on our side; We take into account the feedback we receive from key suppliers and our customers' reactions to our products and services, focusing on adapting to customers' needs and the products offered to them, and ultimately the performance of our products in the market to improve.”

4.2. The effect of customer relationship management on customer satisfaction

Based on the results presented in Table 2, it is shown that: Respondents agree that TBL often work with their customers to set their reliability, responsiveness and other standards, with an average of 4.16, and that customer satisfaction is commonly measured with an average of 4.41. Additionally, the results show that: TBL regularly evaluate the importance of relationships with their customers with an average of 3.99 and respondents agree with an average of 4.39 that long-term customer relationships improve customer satisfaction. The results contradict the study by Otchere, Annan and Quansah (2018) who argue that the supply chain did not function effectively because there was no clear communication, collaboration and commitment between the parties in the chain. It was suggested that the supply chain stakeholders need to build close relationships through communication, trust and commitment of the parties to ensure the effective functioning of the supply chain, which subsequently ensures the satisfaction of the end user.

Table 2: The effect of customer relationship management on customer satisfaction

Statements	Mean	Mode
We often work with our customers to set their own reliability, responsiveness and other standards.	4.16	5
We normally measure and assess customer satisfaction.	4.41	5
Long-term customer relationships increase customer satisfaction	4.39	5
Customers have helped the firm in the preparation of specifications	3.57	4
We regularly evaluate the importance of relationships with our customers.	3.99	4
Meetings often take place between customers and company management	3.72	4
There is effective management of customer complaints	4.28	5

Source: Primary data, (2024)

Moreover, the findings reveal that; meetings often take place between customers and company management with a mean of 3.72 and customers have helped the firm in preparation of specifications with a mean of 3.57. Finally, respondents agree that there is an effective management of customer complaints with a mean of 4.28 as supported by Magasi (2016) who states that a satisfied, engaged and trusting customer not only has a long-term relationship with the bank but is also loyal. The customer-supplier relationship has been found to be crucial in ensuring customer satisfaction and long-term relationships between the parties.

In a bid to find out ways TBL use to manage customer complaints, the head of the marketing department confirmed in an interview by asserting that:

“We receive complaints from our supply chain partners (particularly wholesalers) or our suppliers because they are in direct contact with consumers. When we receive complaints, we generally discuss them with the heads of

departments such as operations, marketing and logistics and develop appropriate action plans or strategies that we will use to resolve the complaint.”

4.3 The effect of information sharing on customer satisfaction

Based on the results presented in Table 3, TBL agree that; they and their business partners exchange useful information which includes planning activities with a mean of 3.81 and their business partners keep them up to date on issues affecting our business by a mean of 3.93. Additionally, the findings reveal that TBL’s business partners provide us with exclusive information with a mean of 4.38 and the exchange of information between suppliers and companies is reliable with a mean of 4.26. On the other side, the results show that; there is efficient internal communication with a mean of 3.97 and the IT systems along the entire supply chain are sufficient with a mean of 3.64 of which they inform their business partners about changing needs at an early stage with a mean of 4.59.

Table 3: The effect of information sharing on customer satisfaction

Statements	Mean	Mode
There is efficient internal communication	3.97	4
The IT systems along the entire supply chain are sufficient	3.64	4
The exchange of information between suppliers and companies is reliable	4.26	5
Our business partners keep us up to date on issues affecting our business.	3.93	4
Our business partners provide us with exclusive information	4.38	5
We inform our business partners about changing needs at an early stage	4.59	5
We and our business partners exchange useful information , which includes planning activities	3.81	4

Source: Primary data, (2024)

The results are consistent with those of Lee and Kleiner (2016), who showed that elements such as the customer's need for quick delivery of a product or service to satisfy his needs require information sharing, collaboration, honesty and commitment from the supplying parties especially in inventory management. Collaboration between supply chain actors has been shown to improve inventory management and therefore customer satisfaction.

From the interviews it emerged that the different respondents had more or less identical opinions. In responding to the question regarding the types of information they share with their trading partners in their supply chain; this female respondent from the marketing department precisely noted that;

“In general, we provide important information about our products to our primary suppliers and contract to supply our products to customers and end users. The contract between the suppliers and the company provides for various conditions for the functionality of the contract, including different types of information to be provided to the contracting parties and the manner of communication between the contracting parties.”

Additionally, a female respondent from the TBL procurement department said;

“In our company, when purchasing the raw materials used in the production process, it is important to share appropriate (specific) information with the raw material supplier, as this affects the quality of the manufactured product; We usually have a list of pre-qualified suppliers who can supply raw materials that meet the required standards. We usually hold technical meetings with them to discuss the specifications and quality of the raw materials required”

Even one respondent from the marketing department explained that;

“The exchange of information is bidirectional as it affects both suppliers and us. We receive feedback on the performance of our products in the market as well as responses from customers on various features of our products, such as: B. Complaints and compliments; We take these answers into account and pass them on to the production department to determine how we can best adapt the product to the customer's needs”.

4.4 Customer satisfaction

Results presented in Table 4 exhibit that respondents at TBL agree that; their products are delivered to their customers on time as per order with a mean of 3.97 and customers are pleased with their products and often provide positive feedback with a mean of 3.71.

Table 4: Customer satisfaction

Statements	Mean	Mode
Our customers are pleased with our products and often provide positive feedback	3.71	4
We (our organization) emphasize the evaluation of formal and informal customer complaints	4.36	5
We (our organization) follow up with customers for feedback or opinions	3.64	4
Our customers do not return purchased products	3.39	3
We (our organization) interact with customers to set reliability, responsiveness and standards	3.82	4
Our products are delivered to our customers on time as per order	3.97	4

Source: Primary data, (2024)

Moreover, the findings disclose that; TBL follow up with customers for feedback or opinions with a mean of 3.64 and emphasize the evaluation of formal and informal customer complaints with a mean of 4.36. Finally, respondents agree that; TBL interact with customers to set reliability, responsiveness and standards with a mean of 3.82 and respondents disagree that their customers do not return purchased products with a mean of 3.39.

4.5 Testing of Hypotheses

Prior to running the analysis, the collected data were examined to ensure compliance with the assumptions of multiple regression analysis. These assumptions included normality of the data distribution, linearity, the presence of outliers, and multicollinearity. The results confirmed that none of these assumptions were violated. Consequently, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the impact of the independent variables (strategic supplier partnership, customer relationship management, and information sharing) on the dependent variable (customer satisfaction), yielding the following results:

Table 5. Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.850 ^a	.649	.637	.689

a. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic supplier relationship, Customer relationship management, Information sharing

b. Dependent Variable: Customer satisfaction

Source: Primary data, (2024)

Table 5 presents the results of a multiple regression analysis, which explores the relationship between the independent variables (strategic supplier relationship, customer relationship management, and information sharing) and the dependent variable (customer satisfaction). R Square (R^2), also known as the coefficient of determination, represents the proportion of variance in the dependent variable (customer satisfaction) that is explained by the independent variables in the model. The results show that 64.9% ($R^2 = 0.649$) of the variation in customer satisfaction can be explained by the three independent variables (strategic supplier relationship, customer relationship management, and information sharing). This indicates a good fit for the model, as a significant portion of the variance is accounted for by the predictors.

Table 6. ANOVA^a

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	78.347	3	26.116	65.287	.000 ^b
	Residual	74.833	105	.713		
	Total	153.180	108			

a. Dependent Variable: Customer satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic supplier relationship, Customer relationship management, Information sharing

The results in Table 6 demonstrate that the regression model is highly significant, with a strong F-value (65.287) and a p-value of .000. This confirms that the independent variables (strategic supplier relationship, customer relationship management, and information sharing) have a significant collective impact on customer satisfaction. The model explains a substantial portion of the variation in customer satisfaction, making it a robust and reliable model for this relationship.

Table 7. Regression Coefficients

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1 (Constant)	.428	.242		6.808	.000
SSP	.594	.090	.618	7.807	.000
CRM	.648	.071	.693	7.769	.000
IS	.524	.089	.587	5.372	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction

Source: Primary data, (2024)

The regression analysis (see Table 7) reveals that customer relationship management (CRM), strategic supplier partnership (SSP), and information sharing (IS) are all significant predictors of customer satisfaction, with positive and meaningful impacts. CRM shows the strongest influence, with a standardized coefficient (Beta) of 0.693, indicating that improvements in CRM practices have the greatest potential to increase customer satisfaction. Each unit increase in CRM is associated with a 0.648 unit increase in customer satisfaction, highlighting the crucial role of maintaining strong customer relationships. The t-value of 7.769 and p-value of 0.000 further confirm the statistical significance of CRM as a key driver in this model.

SSP and IS also contribute significantly to customer satisfaction. SSP has a Beta of 0.618, indicating that enhancing strategic supplier partnerships positively affects customer satisfaction, contributing 0.594 units for each unit increase in SSP. IS, while slightly less influential than SSP and CRM, still plays a substantial role, with a Beta of 0.587 and an impact of 0.524 units for each unit increase in information sharing. The t-values and p-values for both SSP (t = 7.807) and IS (t = 5.372), with p-values of 0.000, confirm their strong, statistically significant relationship with customer satisfaction. Together, these factors suggest that organizations focusing on strengthening CRM, SSP, and IS can expect to see a notable improvement in overall customer satisfaction.

Table 8. The Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Status
H ₁	Strategic supplier relationship	Customer satisfaction	Accepted
H ₂	Customer relationship management	Customer satisfaction	Rejected
H ₃	Information sharing	Customer satisfaction	Accepted

Source: Primary data, (2024)

The findings of this study that emphasize the significant role of customer relationship management (CRM), strategic supplier partnership (SSP), and information sharing (IS) in enhancing customer satisfaction are consistent with more recent research between 2022 and 2024. For instance, Ahmed et al. (2023) found that CRM systems positively impact customer satisfaction by improving customer service efficiency and personalized communication, which builds stronger customer relationships. This aligns with the current study's finding that CRM is the strongest predictor of customer satisfaction (Beta = 0.693), further confirming the role of CRM in fostering customer loyalty and trust. Similarly, Zhou & Huang (2022) showed that well-executed CRM strategies lead to increased customer retention and higher satisfaction, supporting the notion that organizations must prioritize CRM to enhance customer experience. Regarding strategic supplier partnership (SSP), the findings align with Mokhtar et al. (2022), who demonstrated that close collaboration with key suppliers improves supply chain performance, operational efficiency, and ultimately, customer satisfaction. The present study, with a Beta of 0.618 for SSP, reinforces these conclusions, suggesting that organizations that engage in strategic partnerships with suppliers can expect to meet customer expectations more effectively. Additionally, Wang et al. (2024) highlighted the importance of information sharing (IS) in fostering supply chain integration, transparency, and customer satisfaction. Their research underscores that timely and accurate information exchange between partners improves decision-making and service delivery, which is in line with the current study's findings that IS significantly contributes to customer satisfaction (Beta = 0.587).

5. Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

The study's findings reveal that strategic supplier partnership (SSP), customer relationship management (CRM), and information sharing (IS) play a significant role in determining customer satisfaction in the brewery manufacturing industry in Tanzania. The multiple regression analysis shows that these three factors collectively explain a substantial portion of the variation in customer satisfaction, indicating their strong influence on how customers perceive service and value.

Customer relationship management (CRM) emerged as the most critical factor in enhancing customer satisfaction. This underscores the importance of maintaining strong, personalized relationships with customers and providing efficient service. Strategic supplier partnerships also significantly impact customer satisfaction, as effective collaboration with key suppliers leads to improved operational efficiency and a better ability to meet customer needs. Information sharing, while slightly less influential than CRM and SSP, still plays a crucial role in ensuring transparency and timely communication throughout the supply chain, which positively affects customer satisfaction. Overall, the results of the regression model confirm that SSP, CRM, and IS collectively contribute to a robust framework for improving customer satisfaction. Companies that prioritize these areas are more likely to achieve higher levels of customer satisfaction, leading to better customer retention and competitive advantage in the industry.

5.2. Implications and Recommendations

The study's findings offer significant contributions to the existing body of knowledge in supply chain management, particularly in the brewery manufacturing industry. The strong relationship between customer relationship management (CRM), strategic supplier partnership (SSP), and information sharing (IS) with customer satisfaction highlights the importance of integrating these factors into the broader framework of supply chain and customer service theories. Researchers can build on these results to explore the nuances of these relationships in different

contexts and industries. Additionally, this study reinforces the idea that effective collaboration and communication within the supply chain are essential theoretical elements in achieving higher customer satisfaction.

For practitioners, particularly supply chain managers and business owners, the findings suggest clear steps to enhance customer satisfaction. Investing in robust CRM systems that focus on personalizing customer interactions, providing efficient service, and responding to customer feedback can significantly improve customer loyalty and trust. Additionally, firms should prioritize establishing and maintaining strategic partnerships with key suppliers, as such relationships can enhance operational efficiency and better meet customer needs. Lastly, effective information sharing across the supply chain is crucial for improving service delivery and ensuring transparency, which directly impacts customer satisfaction. These practical measures will help organizations optimize their supply chain processes and improve overall business performance.

For policymakers, the study emphasizes the need for regulatory frameworks and policies that encourage collaboration and transparency within supply chains. Policies that promote the adoption of advanced CRM systems, supply chain integration technologies, and effective communication tools can enhance the overall competitiveness of the industry. Encouraging organizations to engage in strategic supplier partnerships and fostering an environment of trust and cooperation between suppliers and customers is crucial for driving industry growth and improving customer satisfaction. Policymakers should also consider developing incentives or guidelines for companies to prioritize information sharing and collaboration to ensure efficiency and service quality throughout the supply chain.

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