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Supply Chain Management Practices and Organizational Performance: The Moderating Role of Competitive Edge

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ABSTRACT

Organizational performance is a cornerstone of any thriving institution, serving as a critical measure of how effectively an organization meets its goals and fulfills its mission. Higher performance which is the desire of many organizations is characterized by their strategic vision, cohesive culture, and resilient processes, which collectively drive sustainable success. Non-achievement of organizational goals by textile firms can manifest as a result of discrepancies between the organization's strategic objectives and the supply chain's operational goals. The research therefore sought to assess the role supply chain management practices on organizational performance, moderated by the competitive edge of textile firms in Kenya. The study specifically sought to determine the effect of green procurement, reverse logistics, and outsourcing on organizational performance moderated by competitive edge. The study was guided by Just in Time Theory, Theory of Constraints, and the Resource Based View Theory. Explanatory research design was used and a sample of 216 heads of logistics and procurement departments was used, for a total of 52 textile firms in Kenya. The findings showed that green procurement ($\beta_1=0.282$, $p<0.05$), reverse logistics ($\beta_2=0.287$, $p<0.05$) and outsourcing ($\beta_3=0.331$, $p<0.05$) had a positive and significant effect on organizational performance. Competitive edge enhances the relationship between green procurement ($\beta=-0.069$; $p<0.05$), reverse logistics ($\beta=-0.137$; $p<0.05$), outsourcing ($\beta=-0.122$; $p<0.05$) and organizational performance. Boosting competitive edge makes the supply chain efforts more effective in improving firm performance. Organizations should leverage on competitive edge to enhance the impacts of green procurement, reverse logistics, and outsourcing on performance.

INTRODUCTION

Organizational performance is an important measure of an organization's success. It is defined as an entity's capacity to achieve its objectives and maximize outcomes. It measures of how well an organization is doing in terms of its financial, operational, and human capital performance (Bagheri, 2016). The importance of organizational performance has increased rapidly. The achievement of organizational performance means that an organization has been able to meet or exceed its goals and objectives. By tracking organizational performance, organizations can identify areas where they are doing well and areas where they need to improve. To survive and thrive in this environment, companies need to be able to perform at a high level.

Sustainability which is a crucial outcome of organizational performance in the textile industry is a function of significant amounts of water, air, chemicals, and energy, leading to environmental challenges at nearly every stage of production, right from the raw materials to the finished products (Toprak & Anis, 2017). Sustainable performance has become a crucial aspect of supply chain design. A supply chain process that is environmentally and socially responsible is sustainable. Firms that have already oriented their supply chains towards optimal supply chains reap the benefits that translate into favorable performance. Organizational performance is affected

by various drivers, facilitators, and barriers to sustainable supply chain performance, which varies by industry.

Supply chain management involves overseeing the movement of goods and services, and covering all steps from raw materials to finished products (Koberg & Longoni, 2019). Supply chain activities' success can significantly impact a company's profitability and overall competitiveness in the market (Al Zadajali & Ullah, 2024). This process aims to enhance customer value and gain a competitive edge in the market. Supply chain management (SCM) seeks to establish and maintain efficient, cost-effective supply chains that encompass manufacturing, product development, and the necessary information systems (Prayetno & Ali, 2020). Generally, SCM aims to streamline or connect production, shipping, and distribution processes. Effective supply chain management helps businesses cut unnecessary costs and expedite product delivery by maintaining strict control over internal inventories, production, distribution, sales, and supplier inventories (Lin, 2019).

Supply chain management practices are among the most important sources of competitive advantage for businesses in a competitive marketplace (Sulphrey & Alkahtani, 2017), hence likely to boost organizational performance. Incorporating innovative supply chain practices into a company's overall strategy is vital for keeping service quality high and being able to respond

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quickly to changes, which are crucial for a business's success. For instance, the pressure on textile companies to comply with environmental standards has intensified. Consequently, companies find it necessary to publicly disclose their compliance with economic, social, and environmental criteria (SULE & NATHANIEL, 2021). Companies with supply chain management can secure a competitive advantage by offering identical products at prices lower than the industry average to capture a larger market share or at industry-average prices to realize higher profits.

According to Qin and Li (2023), Market-oriented eco-friendly practices promote the transformation and upgrading of traditional industries, adopt new production methods, technologies, and management concepts, and minimize the impact on the environment and the consumption of resources. Eco-friendly procurement focuses on acquiring goods and services with minimal environmental impact (Urbański & Ul Haque, 2020). Increasing demand for recyclable products, energy-efficient systems, and clean technologies drives adoption of environmentally responsible business practices. In green procurement, companies prioritize the environmental impacts of purchases over cost considerations. Policies guide businesses in acquiring materials, supplies, and services based on environmental and human health impacts (Asif & Albherat, 2024). Eco-friendly purchases minimize environmental impact and prioritize sustainable material sourcing and manufacturing practices (Sugandini *et al.*, 2020). Green procurement considers immediate and long-term effects across lifecycle stages. Purchasing sustainable goods and sourcing from eco-friendly suppliers enhances resource efficiency (Khan *et al.*, 2023). Reverse logistics on the other hand, manages return of goods from customers to sellers or manufacturers (Krstev & Krstev, 2022). Customer returns initiate reverse logistics processes, including returns or recycling. It can also include the final disposal of the product by the consumer, such as recycling, refurbishing, or resale (Wang *et al.*, 2020). Organizations utilize reverse logistics to recapture product value or dispose of it. Globally, returns are valued at nearly a trillion dollars annually, a figure that has grown with the rise of e-commerce (Hasan *et al.*, 2022). Outsourcing involves transferring the management of certain organizational functions to a third-party provider, which were previously handled in-house (Akbari, 2018). Organizations outsource services to improve efficiency and reduce overhead costs, focusing on core business activities (Gambal *et al.*, 2022).

Outsourcing benefits include cost reduction, access to specialized expertise, increased productivity, a better corporate image, improved management focus on employee welfare, and the introduction of new systems and procedures. A company's decision to outsource should involve consultations with top management, staff, and service providers. Achieving performance involves selecting competitive practices and the firm's range of activities to establish a cost-effective and sustainable position against industry competition. Strategic choices

for growth can be broadly categorized into intensive, defensive, joint ventures, and a combination of practices. Conditional of the competitive situation, firms choose supply chain management practices that are able to give them organizational performance (Yildiz Çankaya & Sezen, 2019). Therefore, companies aiming to stay competitive should engage in appropriate supply chain management practices. The research therefore sought to determine the moderating role of competitive edge on the relationship between supply chain management practices (green procurement, reverse logistics, outsourcing) and organizational performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Green Procurement and Organizational Performance

Supply chains involve multiple areas and actors with varying interests, posing a challenge to align expectations and provide appropriate service and quality to customers. Supply Chain M practices involve activities that promote effective supply chain management by integrating internal functions and linking them with external operations of suppliers, customers, and other stakeholders (Blass & Corbett, 2018). Environmental conservation involves protecting, preserving, managing, or restoring natural environments and the ecological communities that inhabit them.

Conservation aims to protect vital resources and combat irresponsible business practices (Ferreira & Lacerda, 2016). Environmental sustainability is defined as maintaining factors and practices that contribute to the long-term quality of the environment. It encompasses ecosystem integrity, carrying capacity, and biodiversity, requiring the maintenance of natural capital as both an economic input source and a waste sink. Gazzola and Querci (2017) revealed a positive relationship between environmental performance and financial success, showing that companies who focus on green initiatives often see improved financial outcomes. This suggests that environmental responsibility can drive profitability, making sustainable practices beneficial not only for the planet but also for the bottom line.

According to Worae and Ngwakwe (2017), sustainability management generally boosts corporate competitiveness. However, they also warned that some sustainability practices might have negative effects if not properly implemented. This underscores the need for careful planning and execution of sustainability strategies to ensure they enhance, rather than harm, financial performance. Latan *et al.* (2018) confirmed that environmental sustainability correlates positively with financial performance, supporting the notion that sustainable investments are financially sound. Schrecker (2016) found that environmental initiatives can increase sales, while Lopez-Maldonado and Berkes (2017) showed that proactive environmental strategies attract more financial resources. Together, these studies illustrate the financial advantages of sustainability, from boosting sales and competitiveness to securing additional financial backing.

Ho₁

Green procurement has no significant effect on organizational performance

Reverse Logistics and Organizational Performance

Reverse logistics is the planning, execution, and effective control of the flow of raw materials, work-in-process inventory, finished goods, and relevant information from the point of consumption back to their respective points of origin. Reverse logistic practices offer several advantages to an organization by ensuring compliance with legislation, offering market advantage, minimizing production cost & cost of product failure, improving green or environmental considerations, and enhancing customer satisfaction, according to Jain and Khan. These benefits show the multidimensional value of reverse logistics to business and underscore its strategic vitality for present market competition.

Yogi and Kotzab (2019) in their paper, mentioned vital metrics such as order fulfillment, lead time, inventory carrying costs, stock turnover ratio, volume flexibility, cylinder utilization ratio, and the working stock ratio. Most of these indicators can give a complete framework to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of these operations. Understanding and tracking these indicators is capable of enabling optimization for an organization in terms of its reverse logistics processes to improve organizational performance.

Shaik and Abdul-Kader (2018) examined performance indicators of reverse logistics and how they affect the PLC. As part of their other facilitating strategies on reverse logistics, they outlined the integration of new technologies, consumer satisfaction enhancement, strategic partnerships formation, promotion of eco-compatibility, environment performance improvement, value recovery, knowledge management, and balanced scorecard for measuring reverse logistics performance. This can be a systematic way through which measurement and consequential enhancement of these processes' effectiveness may be affected.

Guta (2016), linked reverse logistics very closely with competitive advantage. He focused on the usual practices of return of defective products, screening, refurbishing, reusing, recycling, and remanufacturing. Not only were essential tones of environment sustainability set, but substantial cost savings and efficiency-enhancing opportunities were involved. Another critical factor for the robust execution of reverse logistics operations to be maintained was building strong relationships with stakeholders at the hub of success; collaboration, and communication.

This formed the conclusion by Ebenezer and Zhuo (2019) that the adoption of reverse logistics among large firms was limited due to a lack of awareness and knowledge. Several manufacturing firms dumped materials in landfills without collecting energy flashed out in the gases produced from landfill sites. This knowledge gap and practice increase the need for education, thus creating

awareness of the gains associated with and potential of reverse logistics. According to Wangui and Smucker (2018), product reuse had a statistically significant positive effect on operational efficiency since such products were cheaper than newly manufactured material, hence the cost advantage. This is one of the bright sides of reverse logistics, economic benefits, and, in particular cost savings through the utilization of available resources.

Panya and Marende (2021) stated that whereas remanufacturing improved organizational performance, recycling and reutilization hurt it. From this, it is clear that RL practices do not have similar effects on performance, and organizations are at liberty to make their choices of practices strategically. Reverse Logistics and Competitive Advantage by Guta (2016) established a close relationship between reverse logistics and competitive advantage with similar practices in return for defective products, screening, refurbishing, reusing, recycling, and remanufacturing. These practices would increase the sustainability and competitive placing of any given organization. Ebenezer and Zhuo (2019) established that large firms rarely adopted reverse logistics; the case recurs due to a lack of awareness and knowledge of such practices, hence presenting a massive chance for learning and development in the sector.

Ho₂

Reverse Logistics has no significant effect on organizational performance

Outsourcing and Organizational Performance

Outsourcing is a business practice that involves hiring a third party to conduct various activities, manage operations, or render services for a firm. From a supply chain management perspective, it means utilizing third-party logistics firms to upgrade, smoothen, and maximize the efficiency of supply chain operations. This strategic move allows companies to leverage external expertise and infrastructure, leading to improved operational efficiency and focus on core competencies. It is in this regard that e-commerce enterprises benefit from offloading storage and complex fulfillment duties to third-party logistics providers, therefore saving costs while boosting supply chain efficiency.

According to Agburu *et al.* (2017), Rwandan organizations outsource to leverage specialized skills and resources, revealed by unanimous approval from respondents at 100 percent, and also for cost reduction in recruiting. This helps the companies keep their critical competencies within their core business areas. At the same time, recruitment and training are done by experts, in turn, assuring better quality workforce with reduced operational costs. The study underscores that outsourcing relieves employers of the burden of recruitment and training, including cost and time loss, while making sure to secure the best and most suitable employee.

According to Uwamahoro Kayumba (2019), outsourcing at Ugandan Telecommunication Limited drastically

improved cost efficiency and slightly improved profitability at Rwanda Telecommunication Limited. This proves that outsourcing may bring high-cost savings and ultimately enhance the financial position of an organization. Outsourcing different factors of production may lead to better performance and competitive advantage in the marketplace for various organizations.

According to Chawla (2020), outsourcing services lower human resource costs, accessible HR professionals and senior management, and help employers in employer branding. Not only is it advantageous in cutting costs for the organization, but it also provides HR departments with a more significant role strategically, fluctuating them from administrative tasks. In such a situation, the HR professionals would be able to work on high-impact activities like talent development and employee engagement that would build the human capital for the organization.

The findings indicate that while the internal aspects of service related to operations and the provisions made by the recruiters are rated highly, the external factors of the recruitment process are rated to be less effective. This thus implies that even as outsourcing some HR functions may be beneficial, balance has to be maintained to reap the efficacy. Companies must be very objective in determining which aspect of their operations to outsource and which ones to keep in-house for operational outputs.

Ho₃

Outsourcing has no significant effect on organizational performance

Moderating Role of Competitive Edge

A competitive advantage is the execution of a value-generating strategy that rivals are not simultaneously using, which is essential for an organization's long-term success. Competitiveness can be assessed based on the firm, country, and industry levels of exploration. This multi-faceted approach holds regard for how various aspects impact competitive scenarios (Aghion, 2016), and the ability of any organization to outperform its rivals in attaining goals over a prolonged period. At the organizational level, competitiveness is seen as a company's ability to create superior products compared to its rivals, thereby attracting and retaining customers effectively.

Flexibility, capability, speed, agility, and adaptability are among the significant competitiveness factors available to firms so that they respond quickly to changes in the market and demands from clients and customers, all aimed at maintaining their performance and growth. The consideration of competitiveness from a competency approach calls for internal elements of strategy, structure, competencies, innovation capabilities, and resource allocation as ways in which entities can achieve competitive success. Attention to these very internal elements enables firms to develop a robust framework that supports continuous improvement and innovation.

Understanding competitiveness calls for evaluating the performance of the key processes for technology, operations management, and human resources. These factors provide an ideal way of determining how well an organization can perform in competing in the market. Assessments for competitive advantage go with customer satisfaction, cost efficiency, or value addition. The competitive advantage now focuses on the creation and integration of knowledge as the basis upon which to prepare intellectual capital that is relevant in sustaining competitiveness. That significantly emphasizes the management of knowledge and innovation as facilitators or drivers for success.

A competitive advantage strategy is made up of approaches the business uses and executes to attract customers, withstanding competition and enhancing its market presence. Market strategies are a significant way of building a solid market presence, as they help businesses achieve long-term profitability. Therefore, firms should change strategies now and then to outperform others due to factors that are associated with changing market conditions (Mintzberg *et al.*, 2020). This helps companies sustain their competitive advantage amidst rapidly changing business environments.

Ho₄

Competitive edge does not moderate the relationship between supply chain practices and organizational performance

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The moderating effect of competitive edge on the link between supply chain management practices and organizational performance was sought, guided by an explanatory research design for textile firms in Kenya. This study involved 52 textile firms in Kenya as the units of analysis and departmental heads from three central supply chain departments (logistics, procurement, and stores sections) as the observation unit. This gave a sample size of 216 respondents from a target population of 468 by using the Taro Yamane formula.

A simple random sampling technique was subsequently used to select employees from each firm to participate in the study. Questionnaires were utilized to collect primary data essential for this research. These questionnaires consisted of closed-ended questions on a 5-point Likert scale. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistical techniques were employed for data analysis. The hierarchical regression models described below guided the analyses for testing both the direct and conditional effects:

$$\begin{aligned}
 Y &= \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \epsilon \\
 Y &= \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 M + \epsilon \\
 Y &= \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 M + \beta_5 X_1 M + \epsilon \\
 Y &= \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 M + \beta_5 X_1 M + \beta_6 X_2 M + \epsilon \\
 Y &= \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 M + \beta_5 X_1 M + \beta_6 X_2 M + \beta_7 X_3 M + \epsilon
 \end{aligned}$$

Where:

Y represents organizational performance
 β_0 represents constant Term;
 $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$ represent Beta coefficients;
 X_1 represent green procurement
 X_2 represent Reverse Logistics
 X_3 represent outsourcing
 ϵ represent error term
M represent Competitive edge

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Correlation Results

The correlation analysis was conducted to determine the association between the predictor variables and the dependent variable. This statistical technique helps to identify the strength and direction of relationships between variables, providing insight into how changes in one variable might influence another. Table 1 below indicates that green procurement has a strong and positive ($r=0.649, p<0.05$) significant association with organizational performance. This finding suggests that as firms adopt more environmentally friendly procurement practices, their overall performance improves. It highlights the importance of integrating sustainable practices within the supply chain to achieve

better organizational outcomes. Furthermore, the study findings reveal that reverse logistics is positively and strongly ($r=0.642, p<0.05$) correlated with organizational performance. This indicates that efficient management of returns and recycling processes can significantly enhance a firm's performance. Companies that excel in reverse logistics not only reduce waste and costs but also improve their operational efficiency and customer satisfaction. Outsourcing indicated a positive and strong correlation ($r=0.681, p<0.01$) with organizational performance. This suggests that when firms delegate certain functions to external specialists, they can achieve higher efficiency and effectiveness. Outsourcing allows companies to focus on their core competencies while benefiting from the expertise and economies of scale provided by third-party service providers. Finally, competitive advantage was positively and strongly correlated with organizational performance ($r=0.610, p<0.05$). This relationship underscores the importance of maintaining a unique position in the market. Companies that develop and sustain a competitive edge through innovation, quality, and customer service are more likely to perform well and achieve long-term success.

Table 1: Correlation Results

	OG	GP	RL	OT	CE
OG	1				
GP	.649**	1			
RL	.642**	.534**	1		
OT	.681**	.633**	.596**	1	
CE	.610**	.588**	.536**	.561**	1

GE: Green Procurement, RL: Reverse Logistics, OT: Outsourcing, CE: Competitive Edge, OP: Organizational Performance

REGRESSION RESULTS

A hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to test the research hypotheses at a significance level of 0.05, as shown in Table 2, using the output from the final regression model (Model 5). The first hypothesis (Ho1) stated that green procurement has no significant effect on organizational performance. This hypothesis was rejected, as results indicated that green procurement significantly and positively affects organizational performance ($\beta_1=0.452, p<0.05$). The findings indicated that green procurement improvement enhances organizational performance. From a practical point of view, these findings imply that any company should adopt green procurement practices in its operations if better performance is to be attained. This finding is supported by a study conducted by Gazzola and Querci (2017) and Worae and Ngwakwe (2017) which indicated that the green procurement practice improved the firm's overall performance. Ho₂: Reverse logistics does not significantly affect organizational performance. This hypothesis was also rejected because the analysis proved that reverse logistics influences organizational performance positively and

significantly. However, β_2 is 0.722 at $p < 0.05$. This means that increasing the effectiveness of reverse logistics would lead to enhanced organizational outcomes. Business practitioners should, therefore, invest in the optimization of the company's reverse logistics processes to improve performance. Guta (2016) and Ebenezer and Zhuo (2019) also established that reverse logistics positively influenced company performance. The third hypothesis, Ho₃, was that outsourcing has no significant effect on organizational performance. This hypothesis was also rejected with the findings indicating that outsourcing significantly and positively affects organizational performance where $\beta_3 = 0.700$ and $p < 0.05$. This therefore would mean that outsourcing can be a strategic tool in improving organizational performance because companies should consider outsourcing as an option to optimize their operations and, hence, organizational performance. In that regard, Chawla (2020) and Uwamahoro Kayumba (2019) confirm that outsourcing may permit improved firm performance. The fourth hypothesis, Ho₄, was set to establish if competitive edge moderates the relationship between green procurement, reverse logistics, outsourcing, and

organizational performance. The results indicated that competitive edge positively and significantly moderates the relationship between green procurement and the organizational performance of textile firms in Kenya ($\Delta R^2=0.025$, $\beta=-0.069$; $p<0.05$). This rejection of Ho4 implies that having a competitive edge strengthens the impact of green procurement on performance. In practice, for maximum benefit realization in green procurement, firms ought to seek to derive a competitive advantage. In the view of Mukira (2018), the competitive advantage will enhance the effectiveness of such green practices.

The moderating role of competitive edge in the link between reverse logistics and organizational performance was also found to be positive and significant: $\Delta R^2 = 0.020$,

$\beta = -0.137$, $p < 0.05$. This means that a competitive edge strengthens the relationship between reverse logistics and better performance at firms. Firms should, therefore, cash in their competitive edge by refining reverse logistics processes. Competitive advantage could amplify the benefits of reverse logistics.

The analysis finally showed that the relationship between outsourcing and organizational performance is positively and significantly moderated by competitive edge $\Delta R^2=0.020$, $\beta=-0.122$; $p<0.05$. This means that this rejects Ho4, indicating that the competitive edge strengthens the positive effect of outsourcing on performance; firms should leverage their competitive strengths to improve gains from outsourcing. Competitive advantage can strengthen the positive impact of outsourcing.

Table 2: Hierarchical Regression Results

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Constant	.488(.199)	-.060(.267)	-1.323(.437)	-3.05(.680)	-3.69(.711)
GP	.282(.061) **	.223(.063) **	.593(.119) **	.498(.120) **	.452(.119) **
RL	.287(.058) **	.246(.058) **	.238(.056) **	.889(.207) **	.722(.214) **
OT	.331(.066) **	.291(.066) **	.321(.065) **	.285(.064) **	.700(.168) **
CE		.284(.095) **	.668(.141) **	1.197(.213) **	1.396(.222) **
GP*CE			-.115(.032) **	-.084(.033) **	-.069(.033) **
RL*CE				-.185(.057) **	-.137(.059) **
OT*CE					-.122(.046) **
R-Square	0.596	0.614	0.639	0.659	0.671
Δ in R ²		0.018	0.025	0.020	0.012
F statistic	92.956	74.907	66.325	59.875	54.011
F-Sig	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

GE: Green Procurement, RL: Reverse Logistics, OT: Outsourcing, CE: Competitive Edge, OP: Organizational Performance

CONCLUSION

The inclusion of green procurement practices enhances the overall performance of any organization. Corporations ought to harness green procurement strategies along their supply chains if at all they would like to improve their performance and sustainability scores. Organizations ought to invest, optimize, and thereby make their reverse logistics systems the reason for leading excellence and making it emerge as the leader among other similar competitors. The operational performance and cost efficiency of any organization can be improved significantly through strategic outsourcing. A firm should outsource non-core activities, including professional providers, to work on their core competencies and raise overall performance. A competitive edge has an enhancing moderation in the relationship between green procurement and organizational performance. With a competitive edge, benefits accrued to the implementation of practices in green procurement will be further improved. Organizations should develop a competitive edge to maximize their benefits from green procurement in the attainment of superior performance. Therefore, companies with a competitive edge can more effectively

utilize reverse logistics and outsourcing to enhance their performance. Firms should consequently build and maintain a competitive edge to optimize the benefits of outsourcing on operational outcomes.

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