The Influence of Supply Chain Management on Business Performance and Business Competitiveness in Botswana: Case of Small Enterprises Trading in Food

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Abstract:- **Food sustains human life in any environment. Small Enterprises (SE) are the backbone of contemporary economies and they contribute immensely on jobs creation. Botswana is not unique in this regard, with an increasing number of small enterprises engaged in food trading. The food sector is ripe for development, particularly in Botswana's two main towns, Gaborone and Francistown. Tight business competition, an inability to meet ever-increasing customer service expectations, cost control, particularly in the transportation sector, risk identification and mitigation, supply chain visibility, developing and preserving supplier and partner relationships, and staying current with technological advancements are the major challenges that SEs are currently facing. With the addition of Supply Chain Management (SCM), it is anticipated that company operations will become more flexible and resilient, allowing them to adjust quickly, efficiently, and effectively to all types of market changes, hence increasing business competitiveness. The study used a random sample of 137 SE entrepreneurs in the food sector from Gaborone and Francistown. The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of SCM on business performance (BP) and business competitiveness (BC). The data were analysed using SMART PLS 3, which utilised measurement and structural equation modelling to demonstrate data validity, reliability, and construct relationships. The findings indicate that there is a direct positive correlation between SCM and both BP and BC. However, the data indicated a negligible mediation effect of BP on the relationship between SCM and BC.**

Keywords:- Supply Chain Management, Business Performance, Business Competitiveness, Small Enterprises, Informal Sector.

I. INTRODUCTION

According to Mlanya, (2015), the number of food SEs or street food sellers has surged in major cities worldwide, particularly in developing countries such as Asia, Latin America, and Africa. The growth was prompted by the shortage of gainful employment and hardship in rural areas, which drove individuals to seek better life in cities. Carey, (2015) concurred that food SEs had increased in Asia, attributing the growth in Asian cities to the 1998 Asian financial crisis. SEs have been observed increasing in Sub-Saharan African states, including Botswana (Nakisani and Ongori 2013; Joseph 2013); South Africa (Mbonyane & Ladzani, 2011); Zambia (Willemse, 2011; Ndhlovu, 2011) and Zimbabwe (Nkwe, 2012; Nyamwanza & Mavhiki, 2014). According to a study conducted by Nkwe (2012) in Gaborone, SEs were the sole alternative form of income available to those who were unable to find wage employment. Some previously employed individuals claimed that they became SEs as a result of low income, underpayment, fear of harassment by past employers, or the overall desire of owners to become independent entrepreneurs. Despite the negative connotations associated with SEs, it is important mentioning that significant changes have occurred in the demographic profiles of urban street vendors, including the participation of all age groups and genders (Newell & Goldsmith, 2001). If these SEs are to remain a viable and sustainable sector, they must be more responsive to supply chain management and customer service concerns. Additionally, it will need to take greater initiative to consistently deliver high-quality services and transition from a product-centric to a service-centric culture orientation. Understanding and adhering to effective supply chain management flows may hold the key to a greater understanding of how to influence service quality, performance, and ultimately corporate competitiveness (Agus, 2015). The food business's enormous potential is growing in lockstep with public demand. Today's food has a very complicated function, not just in terms of providing fundamental necessities, but also because food may be used to introduce an individual's culture communities (Untari, 2020). The diversity of human dietary requirements is increasing, not only to suit biological requirements, but also because eating also reflects an individual's economic standing. From upstream to downstream, supply chain management involves the management of activities, resources, and relationships between suppliers and consumers. If effectively implemented, this theory will be able to further boost business competitiveness (Imbert, 2021). In light of this, it is critical to investigate further the elements that contribute to the effectiveness of Supply Chain

Management in terms of boosting the competitiveness of SE enterprises in the food sector in Gaborone and Francistown.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Botswana is seeing an increase of food SEs. They are widely acknowledged to have made significant contributions to the growth and development of numerous nations, including Uganda, where 94 percent of the population works in unregulated and untaxed jobs (Pariona, 2021). Despite the abundance of literature on food SEs or street selling, there are few studies examining the applicability or contribution of SCM to this sector. SCM is well-known for its enormous benefits to the formal sector and the nation at large, as demonstrated in Switzerland and Norway (Imbert, 2021). This lack of knowledge of SCM's contribution to SEs may be one of the reasons SEs have been unable to have a meaningful

impact on countries such as Botswana. As such, this study tries to establish the impact of SCM on the business performance and competitiveness of food SEs. Additionally, the study aims to establish a link between firm performance and competitiveness within the same industry.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review subtopic focuses on the conceptual framework underpinning the study, an overview of SEs and finally exploring the significance of SCM on SEs as guided by various authors and sources.

A. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses
The research conceptual framework shows the pattern of relationships between variables. Based on the relationship between variables, a hypothesis can be formed.
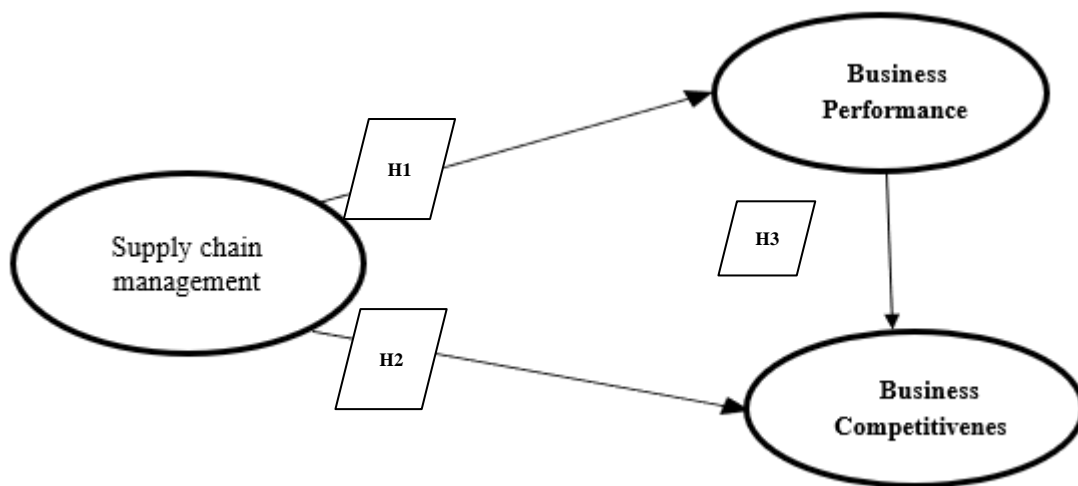

Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework
Source: Derived from (Untari, 2020)

H1: Supply Chain Management has an influence on business performance.
H2: Supply Chain Management has an influence on business competitiveness.
H3: Business performance has an influence on business competitiveness.

B. Small Enterprises (SEs)
SEs are also known as the black economy, informal sector, grey economy, or shadow economy, which refers to that segment of a country's economy that is not considered as a legitimate source of revenue. Individuals who work in the SE sector do not report their earnings and so do not pay taxes on them. Workers in the SEs typically operate at a low level of establishment with hardly any division between labour and on a small scale. Labour relations are primarily based on casual employment, family ties, or personal and social relationships, rather than contract terms with formal guarantees. SEs do not have a universal definition and thus vary by country. Typically, SEs are family-owned, employ low levels of skill with less than 10 employees, and are highly labour intensive (Harvie, 2003). SEs are businesses involved

in the production, provision of services, and trade on a small scale (Mosoti & Kamau, 2014). In the Botswana perspective, Majama and Magang, (2017) explored that a small entreprise is one with less than 25 employees and with annual turnover exceeding 60000 Pula. SEs are part of the informal sector, with an estimated 50 000 operators in Botswana (Gwebu, 2005). Mouton, (2012) contended that rural-urban migrants who are unable to obtain formal employment become dissatisfied with the job search process and opt to earn a living in the informal sector.

This resulted in a significant increase in the informal sector as a source of income for many Batswana (Chicho & Ongori, 2013). Informal businesses typically include domestic workers, cobblers, street barbers, and street vendors, to name a few (Untari, 2020). Additionally, Nyakiri, (2013) noted that SEs include shoe repair, food vending, hairdressing, commercial payphones, and street vendors (Richardson, Howarth, and Finnegan, 2004). SEs have long been recognized as engines of economic growth and have been included in many developing countries' development agendas and strategies (Pansiri and Temtime, 2008). They

also contribute to economic diversification, employment generation, value creation, and alleviating poverty (Pansiri and Temtime, 2008). (Chicho & Ongori, 2013). They sell a variety of goods, including food, clothing, farm produce, newspapers, electronics, and airtime, and offer services such as plaiting, car washing, and car guarding; the majority are concentrated in and around shopping centers (Chicho & Ongori, 2013). However, it is reasonable to imagine that although the formal sector could create jobs for everyone, certain people may still choose to be self-employed, given that self-employment offers the person great control over their own work schedule. Unable to find work in cities, the individual establishes a small business with financial assistance from a parent, friend, family, or moneylender in order to escape from open unemployment. It's worth noting that, for a desperate individual seeking to eke out a life, opening a vendor business is one of the simplest solutions, as it requires no expertise or resources. Not only has reality demonstrated that small businesses are here to stay, but it has also become clear that, as a result of global economic stagnation, an increasing number of people are finding themselves outside the sphere of formal sector employment. Historically, there has been a love-hate interaction between the SE sector and large enterprises, local governments, and the government. The government normally receives developmental revenue in the form of taxes from large firms. Neither is the SE sector included in the gross national product of governments. On the other hand, maybe as a result of governments' desire for small traders to vanish, leaving behind modern, gleaming cities, traders are not controlled or required to pay taxes. There are numerous perspectives from which to observe the SE sector. It can be regarded positively as a source of work and revenue for thousands of people who would otherwise be hungry. It can be romanticized as a fertile environment for entrepreneurialism that would thrive if not for a web of superfluous regulation and bureaucracy. This is the moment at which SCM involvement becomes essential to ensure that the SE sector continues to grow and making a significant contribution to the national gross domestic product (Rostini, Souisa, Masmarulan, & Yasin, 2021). SCM fundamentally assists SEs in managing information, money, and product flows, which are much needed components for effectiveness of these small organisations.

C. Significance of SCM on SEs

To remain competitive, SEs must offer great products at the lowest available prices. Effective supply chain management is critical to minimizing product costs. Each process in the product life cycle incurs expenses, and it is the role of SCM to keep these costs low so that the enterprise can continue to pass these savings on to the consumers (Um, 2017).

➤ *Reduced Costs*

Supply chain management entails determining which activities add expense without adding value to the final product. Supply chain management enables a business to develop close ties with its suppliers and consumers, assuring order fulfillment on time. A business that is known for its promptness and responsiveness will gain more consumers and flourish as a result of higher production and service sales.

Effective supply chain management helps SEs to be certain of their potential returns and to remain operational with the confidence that their firm will remain competitive (Umrani , Kura , & Ahmed, 2018).

➤ *Increased Efficiency*

Roberts (2021) asserts that wasted resources are a frequent source of increasing service costs with many SEs. Often, this is the result of poor planning. A business that implements supply chain management is able to maximize its operational efficiency because only value-adding activities are promoted. This guarantees that the organization's operations run smoothly, and that output meets the organization's requirements.

➤ *Increased Output*

A company that employs supply chain management can foster close-knit relationships with its suppliers and customers, ensuring the timely fulfilment of orders. A company known for its timeliness and responsiveness will attract more customers and will grow as a result of increased output and sales (Rostini et al., 2021).

➤ *Increased Profits*

Businesses exist to generate revenue. One of the most efficient strategies to increase a business's earnings is to keep costs as low as possible. Supply chain management implemented by a SE results in cost savings owing to the elimination of inefficient operations. Due to the fact that these are running expenditures for the business, any savings on these costs equate to improved earnings for the business (Roberts, 2021).

IV. RESEARCH METHODS

The study involved a sample 160 small enterprise entrepreneurs in the food sector who were randomly obtained from 2 major cities in Botswana which are Gaborone, and Francistown. Self-administered questionnaire was the data collection instrument used in the study. Data analysis was done using SMART PLS 3 to perform structural equation modelling and assist in revealing hypothetical relationships proposed in the theoretical framework.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Demographic Analysis

One hundred sixty questionnaires were provided to the study's randomly selected sample. 137 questionnaires were returned from the 160 distributed. As a result, the response rate was 86%. Males made up 25% (n=34), while females made up 75% (n = 103). These findings corroborate prior research indicating that women constitute the largest segment of SEs trading in food (Gobagoba and Littrell, 2003; Jimu, 2004 & Joseph 2011). The study found that the majority of these SE food vendors were based in Gaborone, accounting for 60.6 percent of the total, with the remainder coming from Francistown. The majority of respondents (62.7 percent, n = 86) were members of the younger generation between the ages of 21 and 40. Graduates were also found to be active in street food vending. However, they accounted for only 12%

of respondents, and their motivation for engaging in such commerce was a lack of work possibilities following graduation. The majority of respondents have completed elementary education, with 94.5 percent (n = 130) completing secondary education. Chukuezi (2010) concurs, stating that the majority of SE food operators in Nigeria are females with tertiary degrees. 78.8 percent of street food sellers were not properly registered and transacted without licenses, according to the findings. Only 21.2 percent of respondents were city council members.

B. Reliability and Validity (Measurement Model)
The Cronbach's Alpha and Composite reliability (CR) coefficients were employed to assess construct reliability. All of the CRs exceeded the acceptable value of 7.00. Convergent validity was determined to be satisfactory when the average variance extracted (AVE) was above 0.500. Table 1 contains the reliability and validity results, as well as factor loadings. The Fornel-Larcker criterion was used to determine discriminant validity; the table indicates that the square-root of the AVE for the construct was greater than the inter-construct correlation. Discriminant validity was also determined using the heterotrait-monotrait correlation coefficients (HTMT) (Hensler et al., 2015), with values less than the 0.90 threshold. As a result, the discriminant validity of the test is established (see Table 2).

Table 1: **Loadings, Reliability and Validity**

		Loadings	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Business Competitiveness	BC1	0.957	0.985	0.987	0.918
	BC2	0.957			
	BC3	0.960			
	BC4	0.971			
	BC5	0.972			
	BC6	0.947			
	BC7	0.942			
Business Performance	BP1	0.984	0.996	0.996	0.952
	BP2	0.982			
	BP3	0.973			
	BP4	0.975			
	BP5	0.988			
	BP6	0.985			
	BP7	0.964			
	BP8	0.963			
	BP9	0.976			
	BP10	0.972			
	BP11	0.979			
	BP12	0.961			
	BP13	0.973			
	BP14	0.984			
Supply Chain Management (Cash Flow, Information Flow and Money Flow)	CF1	0.879	0.970	0.972	0.651
	CF2	0.790			
	CF3	0.722			
	CF4	0.778			
	CF5	0.861			
	CF6	0.898			
	IF1	0.788			
	IF2	0.777			
	IF3	0.732			
	IF4	0.829			
	IF5	0.868			
	MF1	0.809			
	MF2	0.749			
	MF3	0.797			
	MF4	0.860			
	MF5	0.852			
	MF6	0.754			
	MF7	0.793			
	MF8	0.765			

Source: Data Analysis

Table 2: Fornel-Larcker Criterion

	Business Competitiveness	Business Performance	SCM
Business Competitiveness	*0.958*		
Business Performance	0.647	*0.976*	
SCM	0.746	0.752	*0.807*

Note: The variables in bold italic represent the AVE's square root.
Source: Data Analysis

Table 3: HTMT Ratio

	Business Competitiveness	Business Performance	SCM
Business Competitiveness			
Business Performance	0.651		
SCM	0.763	0.742	

Source: Data Analysis

C. Hypotheses (Structural Model)

The structural model reflects the paths hypothesized in the research framework. The R^2 and Q^2 values, as well as the relevance of paths, are used to evaluate a structural model. The model's goodness is established by the strength of each structural path, which is quantified by the R^2 value for the dependent variable (Bernal-Conesa, Nieto, & Briones-Pealver, 2017). The R^2 should be greater than 0.1. (Falk & Miller, 1992). The results in Table 3 indicate that all R^2 values are more than 0.1, indicating that predictive capability has been created. Additionally, Q^2 proves the predictive validity of endogenous components. A Q^2 value greater than 0 indicates that the model is predictively relevant. The findings indicate that there is relevance in the constructs' prediction (see table 4). Additionally, the model fit was evaluated using SRMR. SRMR was 0.045, which is less than the threshold value of 0.10, suggesting an acceptable level of model fit (Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Guderg, 2018). In addition to assessing the quality of fit, hypotheses meant to establish the significance of the correlations were evaluated. H1 determines whether SCM has a significant impact on business performance (BP). SCM indeed had a significant effect on CP (β=0.752, t=11.750, p=0.000) t-value above 1.96 and p-value below 0.050. As a result, H1 was supported. Supply chain agility can be a critical requirement for improving business performance in fast-changing environments, particularly in circumstances with a high degree of customization (Cetindamar & Kilitcioglu, 2013). H2 assesses whether SCM has a significant impact on business competitiveness (BC). SCM had a significant influence on BC as indicated by the results (β=0.597, t=3.853, p=0.000). As a result, H2 was accepted. The rising emphasis on SCM is because it is viewed as a powerful driver and a critical strategic tool for small businesses seeking competitive success (Tan et al., 2002; Gundlach et al., 2012). As a result, scholars increasingly consider SCM as having the potential to contribute to the enhancement of positive business performance (Kang & Na, 2020). Thus, it is consistent with the idea that improved SCM results in increased business competitiveness. According to Ali et al., (2019). The critical resources for competitiveness can be classified into three categories: human, financial, and technological resources, as well as innovation and design-based resources.

Table 4: Paths Coefficients

	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (IO/STDEVI)	P Values	2.5%	97.5%
SCM -> Business Performance	0.752	0.064	11.750	0.000	0.612	0.873
SCM -> Business Competitiveness	0.597	0.155	3.853	0.000	0.159	0.762
Business Performance -> Business Competitiveness	0.199	0.167	1.189	0.235	-0.015	0.631
	R^2	Q^2				
Business Competitiveness	0.574	0.520				
Business Performance	0.565	0.534				

Source: Data Analysis

➤ *Mediation Analysis*

Mediation analysis was performed to assess the mediation role of BP. H3 evaluates whether BP has a significant mediating influence on BC. The results revealed that BP has an (p>0.05) insignificant mediating impact on BC (β=0.199, t=1.190, p=0.235). Hence H3 is not supported. The model did not support the mediation role of BP on BC, implying that there is no significant link between these two variables, actually the mediation effect weakens the stronger relationship between the independent variable (SCM) and the dependent variable (BC). However, a t=1.190 doesn't show complete insignificance, it reveals that partially there are some very few variables in BP that mediates positively.

Table 5: Mediation Analysis

	Total Effect	T	Sig	Direct Effect	Sig		β	T	P Values
SCM-BC	0.199	1.190	0.235	0.597	0.000	SCM -> BP -> BC	0.149	1.020	0.308

Source: Data Analysis

VI. IMPLICATIONS

Various theoretical and practical implications drift from this study. From a theoretical standpoint, this study presents an overall model for assessing the impact of SCM on business performance and competitiveness. There has been a dearth of research on the relationship between SCM and business performance and competitiveness (De Bruyckere, Verplancke, & Everaert, 2017). The research examined the novel association between BP and BC mediating effect, which was shown to be weak, and without much support from literature. This demands additional investigation of the mediating effect of BP on BC (Thomola, Rankhumise, & Van Niekerk , 2011). This study educates SEs on the importance of incorporating supply chain management into their operations, regardless of how small the firm may be. This study may also be valuable to anyone interested in starting their own entrepreneurial endeavour trading in food or any other commodity.

VII. CONCLUSION

Supply chain management is a very important tool in helping small to medium enterprises in Botswana to improve business performance and business competitiveness in the food industry. Failure to utilise supply chain management practices may result in these small enterprises failing to thrive in this competitive business sector. It is also important for stakeholders within the small enterprise food business to really understand business performance from all perspectives other than the profitability index only. All small enterprise should understand that they have the capability and potential great potential to grow as long as they take note of supply chain management practices in business operation.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors certify that they are no conflicting interests to disclose with this publication.

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