

**THE IMPACT OF VENDOR RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT AND
ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE :A CASE STUDY OF DHL EXPRESS**

HARRIET MBABAZI

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**UGANDA CHRISTIAN
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DECLARATION

I Mbabazi Harriet, REG No: M22B12/044 declare that this research work is my original work and has not been presented to any other university or other institution for any award except for reference purposes acknowledgement has been done

Signature

Date ...10/10/2024

MBABAZI HARRIET

APPROVAL

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled the impact of vendor relationship management and organizational performance case study of DHL Express has been submitted by Mbabazi Harriet of registration number M22B12/044 for examination with my approval as a university supervisor.

Supervisor: 
Signature

Date 18 / 09 / 2024

Mrs. Tumuhamy Comfort

DEDICATION

I dedicate this report to the Almighty God who has been faithful, my parents, and friends who supported me and extended their help all through my academic journey; spiritually, financially, and emotionally to make me a success. May the great Almighty God bless you and continue to reward you abundantly.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was aimed at assessing the impact of vendor relationship management and organisational performance basing on the following objectives; to examine the challenges faced while managing vendor relationships by organisations, to analyse the strategies employed in order to overcome these challenges, and to assess vendor relationship management and its impact on organisational performance. Both qualitative and quantitative research designs were used. The sample size was randomly selected using the simple random sampling design. A sample size of 33 respondents was considered while secondary information was included too such as textbooks, pamphlets, research reports, journals, magazines, internet and newsletter were used in addition to various company annual reports, and primary data was collected using questionnaires provided to respondents. After data was collected, it was analysed in line with the objectives of the research, research questions and other information especially from the literature review. Frequency tables and graphs were worked out basing on the data entered into excel. In these frequency tables and graphs, analysis was done with a corresponding percentage. Findings revealed that DHL Express to a lesser extent experiences challenges to do with vendor relationship management to which they have comprehensively managed by adopting various strategies in order to overcome these such as vendor selection criteria, communication and collaboration and continued performance monitoring and evaluation so as to overcome challenges such as quality control issues with their vendors and contractual disputes with the same. A positive impact was identified on the performance of the organisation due to a properly managed and consistent relationship with their vendors through continued collaboration and communication while regularly monitoring of the vendors which has resulted into openness and involvement of their vendors in the supply chain motivating them to share their knowledge and insights regarding the improvement of their services and product in the market.

Most of the respondents also went ahead to show that the organisation has overall improved their performance at a great extent which has given them have an outstanding competitive edge in their market globally. However, while not every supply chain relationship and process is entirely perfect, it was recommended that the organisation increases their vendor relationship strategies such as enhancement of innovation with their vendors especially in a cutting edge technologically advancing market so as to maximise the streamlining of their activities and increase the innovation, productivity, and performance of the organisation overall.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

Vendor relationship management is a process that enables companies to control costs, mitigate risks as well as improve services which makes it a crucial aspect in procurement. In order to enhance vendor relationships, it is important for a company to be transparent with their vendors, conduct annual evaluations and understand their business and operations while developing a solid approach to vendor relationship management that can positively impact an organisation and future vendor partnerships in the long run. This chapter explains the background of the study, problem statement and research objectives, research questions, scope of the study and the significance of the study as was applied.

1.1 Background of the study:

Managing vendor relationships across different time zones is essential for ensuring seamless coordination, timely deliveries, and overall operational efficiency. However, this task is not without its challenges. The process has become more important than ever for clients to consider how they extract maximum value from outsourcing arrangement, particularly in the context of multi-sourcing environments. However, without effective vendor relationship management, organisations are at risk of services not delivering what the business requires and at a premium cost to the business. Vendor relationship management is “the discipline of managing vendors to extract maximum possible value from a contractual arrangement through governance and relationship building” according to Thomas Anderson, Deloitte Consulting (2012).

Vendor management involves complex activities from relationship management, contract management, governance, finance and commercial, multivendor integration, issue & disputes management, performance management to request management, vendor risk management and document management. Saas Management, Vendr Team (2023) made remarks that after the past 10 years of working in technology procurement, there has been a gradual shift in buying organisations and supply chains, from the term “vendor” to “supplier” instead as they are commonly interchangeable with a solid lean toward supplier as the more strategic of the

two. A vendor is the reseller of a product produced/developed and the supplier is the first link in the supply chain hence the vendor is last link in the chain.

According to Benjamin Babb: Pipefy (2023), managing vendors is a complex effort that entails a lot of challenges that may involve unstructured processes, vendor conformity and consistency and missing or incomplete information etc and the best practices to manage these is to focus on structure and consistency while entailing performance monitoring strategies.

Performance monitoring of vendors involves the setting of performance targets or set of deliverables that the supplier/vendor has to meet to enhance the achievement of the objective of procurement (Lambert & Schwieterman, 2012). Some of the vendor monitoring suggested by Thakkar et al. (2009) include fill rate or availability ratio which is the number of items ordered by customers and number of items delivered to customers; on-time deliveries and service reliability which deals with accuracy of work in order entry, operational performance which may relate to average order cycle time, and consistency of order cycle time.

According to Mukarumongi et al., (2018) study on supplier relationships on procurement performance, case study on supplier organisations in Rwanda, it revealed that vendor relationship management has a positive effect on procurement performance of the same as well as better financial capacity. With better vendor relationships, this directly influences their ability to perform with the right quantity, quality and also better pricing; which all enhance the performance of the organisation due to an enhanced financial capacity.

In Uganda, a few organisations in the manufacturing sector have embraced VRM. As such, many of these have suffered the brunt of unprecedented costs in operations and management functions (Ntayi and Eyaa, 2010). This illustrates the importance of VRM while also being determined by the level of reliability and trust with vendors (Benson, 2011). In this respect, as former Nakumatt Uganda had embraced practices so as to support demand for goods and their capacity of warehousing, vendor relationship management is very appropriate for both medium and large organisations with well-established network systems so as to better enhance performance and delivery of an organisation.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the impact of vendor relationship management and organisational performance at DHL Express.

1.3 Statement of the problem

According to DHL Group, supplier portal (2024), as global leader in logistics and courier services, the company is operating in a highly interconnected environment spanning over 220 countries and territories, central to its operations is the management of vendor relationships which entails coordinating with a diverse network of suppliers and partners across different nations and locations. The company is focused on harnessing the sustained potential for profitable long-term growth with their core logistics businesses hence stepping up the theme “strategy 2025”

However, there are a myriad of challenges that impact organisational efficiency, customer satisfaction and overall performance. According to a report by Oxford Economic, BC 1.0 (2023) the pace of business change demands that organisations be able to respond to new market demands with agility and innovation while partnering with their suppliers.

While DHL Express has developed strategies to address their challenges, there was a lack of empirical research examining the specific nature of these challenges and the effectiveness of corresponding strategies. Addressing this gap in knowledge was crucial for enhancing operational efficiency, minimising risks, and improving overall organisational performance within the context of global logistics operations.

1.4 Research objectives

1.4.1 Objectives of the Study

- a) To examine the challenges faced while managing vendor relationships at DHL Express.
- b) To analyse the strategies employed in order to overcome these challenges at DHL Express.
- d) To assess vendor relationship management and its impact on organisational performance at DHL Express.

1.4.2 Research Questions

1. What are the challenges faced in managing vendor relationships at DHL Express?
2. What are the key strategies employed to effectively communicate and coordinate with vendors at the DHL Express?

3. What is the impact of vendor relationship management and its contribution to the overall organizational performance of DHL Express?

1.5 Scope of Study

1.5.1 Geographical scope

This study was carried out at DHL Express located on Plot 54 Upper Terrace, Lugogo By-Pass, Kampala.

1.6 Content scope

This study looked to conduct vendor relationship management and organizational performance at DHL Express and provide new insights on the concept as it is carried out by the organisation.

1.6.1 Time scope

The researcher carried out the research for a period of 1 month while collecting the data and analysing it, and 3 weeks of report making and compiling all the data collected from sampled respondents.

1.7 Justification of the study

- I. The study was beneficial to the researcher so as to clearly receive a great insight on the impact of vendor relationship management on organisational performance and also relate findings to the ideal situation.

- II. To the organisation DHL Express and its vendors, it will help to maintain its competitive edge in the global logistics industry. By understanding the challenges and strategies involved in managing vendors across different time zones, DHL Express can hereby enhance its operational efficiency, reduce costs, and improve customer satisfaction.

- III. To the stakeholders, especially as seen operating in over 220 countries and territories presents unique challenges for DHL Express, particularly in terms of coordinating with vendors across various time zones. Identifying and addressing these challenges was crucial for ensuring smooth operations and timely deliveries.

- IV. While there is existing literature on vendor management and organizational performance, there was limited research specifically focusing on managing vendors across different time zones within the logistics industry. Therefore, the researcher sought to fill this knowledge gap by providing empirical insights into the challenges and strategies encountered by DHL Express.

- V. To the organisation, vendors and other various organisations operating in this field, the findings of this study can have practical implications for DHL Express and other organizations operating in similar contexts. By identifying best practices and effective strategies for managing vendor relationships, this research can also be used to inform decision-making processes and contribute to the development of better practices within the industry.

- VI. To scholars and academicians, this study contributes to the academic literature on vendor management, organizational performance, and cross-cultural communication. By providing empirical evidence and theoretical insights, this research adds to the body of knowledge in these fields and serves as a basis for future scholarly inquiry.

The rationale for conducting this study therefore, lied in the significance of effective vendor relationship management for DHL Express and similar organizations operating in the logistics industry. By understanding the challenges and strategies involved in managing vendor relationships across different time zones, DHL Express can improve its operational efficiency, minimize risks, and enhance overall performance. Additionally, this study contributes to the broader field of vendor management and organizational performance by providing valuable insights into cross-cultural communication, supply chain dynamics, and strategic partnerships within a global context.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher reviewed selected conceptual and empirical literature on study variables with an aim of connecting the existing research gaps. Under this, the researcher aimed at assessing vendor relationship management and its impact on organisational performance at DHL Express, established vendor relationship management strategies adopted by suppliers/firms in Uganda, globally and also the at the DHL Express and the challenges faced by DHL Express in managing vendor relationships across different time zones that hinder strategies developed overtime. This chapter therefore focused on providing an overview of existing research and scholarly works related to VRM, including its definition, key components/strategies, impact on organisations, challenges as well as emerging trends.

2.1 Definition of Key Variables

Independent variables are the factors being manipulated while dependent variables are the outcomes being measured as in the study. Accordingly, organisational performance is the dependent variable while vendor relationship management is the independent variable of this study. For the purposes of this study, vendor relationship management variables include vendor appraisal which is the evaluation process of finding out whether a vendor meets organisation's requirements reliably after a placement has been placed in before to the organisation in the list of pre-qualified suppliers.

Saleemi (2007) proposes eight perspectives of evaluating potential vendors/suppliers and that includes: facilities and operations, finance, human resource, performance, quality, environmental and ethical factors.

Secondly is the vendor development which is a strategy of working with particular providers on a balanced premise to upgrade their execution and capabilities with respect to the upside of the affiliation. These development activities are described as the most important effort that an organisation undertakes to develop their vendors for long term partnerships and relationship enhancement while gaining competitive advantage.

The dependent variable for this study is organisational performance and is determined by level of efficiency, timeline in service delivery, cost reduction and quality products.

The intervening variables that may affect the variables in yielding the desirable organisational performance are organisational policies relating to procurement practices, government regulatory requirements that govern the way organisations perform their business activities which includes taxation, licences and cultural norms. Other variables also include economic conditions which refer to the present state of the economy in the country/region. Economic conditions are considered to be sound when an economy is expanding and adverse when the economy is contracting thereby having an impact on organisational performance.

2.1.1 Vendor Relationship Management

Vendor relationship management (VRM) is a critical aspect of supply chain being that it is a systematic approach to managing interactions with vendors to optimise performance, reduce risks and also foster long-term partnerships. According to Chou et al. (2018), VRM encompasses activities such as vendor selection, contract negotiation, performance monitoring and relationship building.

The significance of VRM lies in its ability to enhance operational efficiency, improve product quality and drive innovation within organisations (Liu et al., 2020). Vendors are individuals as well business entities that are selling products to consumers and businesses. In order to maintain good relationships with customers, businesses or vendors are responsible for maintaining the flow of products and communicating with suppliers and distributors while they also are responsible for ensuring that their products adhere to quality standards before placing them on sale.

Entities that sell their products and services to business-to-customer (B2C) e-commerce business are classified as vendors and these provide manufactured, processed or re-packed products and services to end customers (different service packages and varying levels of quality), which affect customer perceptions and satisfactions with e-commerce platforms (Hamidi and Moradi, 2017; Kim and Peterson, 2017).

Vendor relationship management bridges the gap between suppliers, customers and the end-users. Numerous companies face difficulties within their network chains resulting in a loss

of business. It is hereby recommended that such firms find and implement vendor relationship management practices to ramp up their supply chain efficiency (Matunga et al., 2021). According to Hughes et al. (2016), entities with an interconnected supply chain network process made more money than others who paid less or contributed little consideration to the supply chain process.

Vendor relationship management is a process that engages in activities of setting up, developing, stabilising and dissolving relationships with both in and out suppliers while observing them to create and enhance value within relationships (Moeller, Fassnach t & Klose, 2006, p.636). as with many procurement activities, at the most basic level vendor relationship management can be used to reduce costs to an organisation.

The key to developing a vendor relationship management approach is a well understood supply base. Primarily, most organisations negotiate with vendors so as to maintain quality while sticking within that organisation's budget along with working with their management and budgeting offices to manage the supplies and prices that make sure that costs are below or at market value. Sometimes engaging with vendors is also influenced by secondary requirements such as access to technology or other capabilities.

Investing in a good relation with suppliers will assist in the sharing of growth, risks, profits and investments (Davila, Epstein & Shelton, 2012).

In today's market sustainable levels of competitive performance are often delivered through the ability to differentiate the products and services offered to customers. Fundamental to this strategy is the ability to access new innovation so the organisation can be first to market or offer a premium above the competition. From this perspective, vendor relationship management is as much about what can be achieved as it is about becoming the customer of choice to the supply market.

Having joint objectives with the vendors is likely to improve the performance of a company since they know the needs of a firm. Alignment of both parties' goals will also motivate the vendors to provide quality services since the success of the business will also mean their success hence opting for a vendor relationship management. This is to say, the immediate objective of vendor relationship management is to streamline and make more effective the

supply chain process between an organisation and their suppliers while meeting the competitive performance of an organisation.

2.1.2 Organisational Performance

An organisation's performance is the primary step that avails its weaknesses and strengths hence coming up with corrective measures to enhance the same. This can be measured in financial or the operational point of view. According to Inayatullah, Narain and Singh (2012), operational execution of an organisation incorporate productivity in the authoritative procedures measured as far as the cost of exchanges, quality, cost of the stock and services as well as time. Other indicators under the operational area are the capacity to get and utilise new technologies and the capability to react fast to the variations in schedules.

Quality is one performance measure which includes measurement by customer defects per vendor, field failure rates by purchased item and by vendor (Lysons et al., 2009). Another measure is responsiveness/timely deliveries which is measured by the cycle time reduction, responsiveness to schedule changes, service changes and achieving new product introduction (Lysons et al., 2009; Handfield et al., 2008).

Delivery of goods and services is another measure of performance in a supply chain and the organisation as a whole and since it directly deals with customers it is referred to as 'driver of customer satisfaction' (Gunasekaran, 2001). Some of the measures of delivery include: on-time delivery, delivery-to-request date; delivery-to-commit date; and order fill lead-time. Supply performance measurement must be linked to customer satisfaction (Lee and Billington, 1992). There is therefore need for measurement of integration of the customer specification in design to set the dimensions of quality, for cost control, and as feedback for the control of process. Performance metrics can include some of the following; flexibility, customer query time (time it takes for the organisation to respond to customer inquiries with the required information), reduction in warranty claims, and number of customer complaints and percentage of orders with complaints, customer satisfaction and order entry accuracy (Pohlen, 2003; Handfield et al., 2009; Lapide, 2013). The financial performance of an organisation can be assessed by the customer sales growth and profitability which parameters look at the sale and profits generated each year with sales expected to grow each year or remain constant at the worst (Makori, 2013).

The return on investments (ROI) is another measure used to gauge organisational performance. ROI is worked out on operating profits in excess of capital employed (Pohlen, 2003; Lapide, 2013).

Performance is also measured through inventory performance or fill rate which can be measured in terms of number of stock-keeping units, order cycle time, percentage of quality rejections, average safety inventory, percentage fraction of time out of stocks, percentage of seasonal inventory and inventory turn-over (Pohlen, 2003; Lapide, 2013).

Transportation performance is hereby measured through the number of vehicles operated, p, total transportation costs, percentage on timely delivery, percentage of accidents, average kilometres, vehicles running full or empty per day (Lyson et al., 2006)

Other performance metrics of an organisation may include price and cost with common price performance looking at the actual purchase price planned against the planned purchase price (CIPS, 2012).

According to MacPherson et al., (2004) organisations view their performance in terms of effectiveness in the achievement of its vision, mission, goals and objectives while some view their performance in terms of efficiency in deployment of the organisational resources, that is the human, financial and physical resources. In order for any organisation to be viable and competitive, it needs to use its resources optimally thus avoiding wastage.

2.2 Challenges faced in the successful implementation of Vendor Relationship

Management:

Despite its benefits, VRM implementation is not without challenges. Cultural differences, communication barriers and legal/regulatory complexities often pose significant obstacles to effective VRM (Li & Chen, 2019). Moreover, the dynamic nature of the business environment requires organisations to continuously adapt their VRM strategies to address emerging risks and opportunities (Yang et al.,2020).

(Majumder et al.; 2017; Cleary and McLarney, 2019) managing a diverse group of vendors poses more problematic challenges due to the complexity of the global e-commerce

environment, with vendors offering a wide range of products and services on e-commerce platforms in different cultural contexts and with different behavioural norms. Their commercial activities can also be wide-ranging and frequently updated such that data analytics in relation to e-vendors becomes relatively difficult.

(Jonathan Webb, 2017) on a new-research in “Procurement Leaders” finds that roughly half of supplier and vendor collaborations fail. Only 53% of supplier-vendor collaborations are successful. Worrying for those in the supply chain profession, the proportion of successful collaborations falls to 51% when a formal VRM program is in place. Within this sample, the most commonly identified reason for failure relates to a lack of commitment or trust. Unless these complex and disparate relationships are managed on either side of the businesses, collaborations run the risk of failure. Stakeholders that are not engaged may resist the initiative and work to sabotage it.

(Ken Kanara, ECA et al.; 2020) the problem with current company vendor relations starts at the beginning of the relationship. Companies go through long, expensive vetting processes for vendors, often spending months and significant resources to ensure that they select the best bidder. Then instead of welcoming them, they negotiate hard on pricing, delay payments and generally squeeze them in any possible way to get the best possible terms. Despite all the effort that went into the selection process, companies often view vendors as “easily replaceable” and keep an arm’s length relationship, says Ken.

Inter-firm rivalry such as lack of transparency and misalignment of motives and behaviours amongst allying vendor partnerships within the supply chain (Park and Ungson, 2001), Continued to point out the misalignment of interest between top management and other key supply players that the greatest barrier that has affected the effective implementation of vendor relationships is the unsupported top management whose alignment and commitment isn’t in line.

If vendor relations are to be implemented across borders, a revamp in attitude and thinking is necessary. Cooper Et al. 2005.

Other challenges include work and information flow. VRM redesigns work and information flow to eliminate redundancies and no-value added work.

However, a well-planned and executed vendor relationship management could deliver competitive advantage and reduced sourcing process expenses, reduced cycle times, faster delivery, high quality and more new product ideas in order to create a competitive advantage in the organisation.

2.3 Strategies employed in Vendor Relationship Management:

The literature identifies several key strategies for effective VRM, which includes vendor selection criteria, communication strategies, contract management practices and performance evaluation metrics (Ferrell & Gopalakrishnan, 2019). Each of these components plays a crucial role in establishing and maintaining successful vendor relationships, ultimately contributing to organisational success.

Although, the growth of information communication systems, total quality management and industrial restructuring shift buyer behaviour from transactional to more cooperative strategies (Sheth & Sharma, 1997). Tight collaboration with vendors produces more perks than opportunism for one party.

Firms depend on suppliers as well as vendors to lower costs, increase quality and build innovative processes faster than competitors (Webb, 2017). They also add value to a company by providing access to technology, markets and information (Chen, 2029). All of this has compelled most firms to handle vendors more strategically.

Moeller et al. (2006) delineate vendor relationship management as a process carried out with activities such as establishing, stabilising, developing and dissolving relationships with vendors (in and out) to generate and enhance value within these relationships. Concurrently, both sides can sustain their relationship (Johnson et al., 2004). Giannakis et al. (2012) also stated that both sides are committed to a long-term relationship in vendor relationships. As a result, both parties are interested in establishing **close collaboration** by sharing cost savings so as to maximise mutual benefits. Benah and Li (2020) define vendor relationship management as a long-term relationship between a firm and its vendors who are also the suppliers.

According to Tai- Woo Chang (2009), **supplier development** is a strategy that improves vendor's performance. To this end, firms reduce their supplier base and improve the remaining supplier's efficiencies. He defines four groups of development programs;

- a) The prime group prefers providing strong inducements and constructing long-term trust relationships;
- b) The collaboration group reinforces and improves cooperation to increase mutual benefits;
- c) The maintenance group maintains the status quo and pursues a mutual benefit and
- d) The improvement group focuses on the vendor via inspection and improvement activities.

Prajogo et al. (2012), an organisation's vendor-customer management strategy positively affects its VRM strategy and thus the operational performance. Equally, Mwangi (2017) contends some major measurements that serve as VRM components. These include vendor quality improvement, vendor lead time reduction, trust-based relationships with vendors and supplier partnerships or development. Moreover, by merging the similar characteristics of these various theoretical approaches, the author thinks that vendor relationship management is an interdependent relationship developed and nurtured through strategic collaboration so as to gain mutual benefits. Vendor relationship management thereby concentrates on how to create and maintain a long-term strategic relationship with vendors.

According to researcher, Duncan Jones (2021) vice president and principal analyst at Forrester Research; segmenting suppliers is a good first step for strengthening vendor relationship management. **Supplier segmentation** quickly reveals those who are most important strategically and are helping the organisation stand out in the market place. Jones also said the practice also sheds light on which suppliers/vendors are crucial in the short term but ultimately replaceable.

Businesses and supply chain leaders have prioritised treating suppliers and vendors as equal teammates and continually measure the relationship's strengths (Jones, 2021). "To measure the health of the health of the relationship and if there is a problem, you sit down and ask, what do we do to make it work better?"

(Miguel Cossio, 2021) says you have to define what will be done to define what will be done to make a supplier partner and like you better. For example, Unilever just relaunched a program called Partner with Purpose with which Conagra Brands has a similar program.

Treating vendors like partners can benefit the company and suppliers at the same time in other ways for example businesses are focusing on sustainability and suppliers and vendors could give a company a fresh take on how to achieve it. Kevin Rhone, director at Enterprise Strategy Group, a division of Tech Target states “companies are asking suppliers for innovative ideas to help address sustainability.”

For Toyota, establishing trust is not just a one-time effort but a continuous process. They don't view suppliers as mere vendors but as crucial partners. With this belief, their “Toyota Way” reflects the importance of respect and teamwork while materialising open communication, long-term contracts and also using the Kaizen concept of (Continuous improvement) which is not just restricted to Toyota's internal processes but also extended to their vendors and suppliers. (Article, 2023 Toyota's Supplier Relationship Management: Building Long-Term Partnerships)

At FedEx, vendor management is built into their four-step **strategic sourcing** process (assess, validate, source, manage), requirements are communicated to vendors through Aeroxchange, and scorecards are used to track supplier performance. The results of the scorecard are used to develop action plans which are reviewed with suppliers and vendors during semi-annual meetings along with global supplier symposium every other year for its top 50 vendors/suppliers. Pitney Bowes et al. (2007)

Regular monitoring of performance is hence a crucial strategy employed through practices using KPIs, feedback mechanisms and regular assessments too. This performance data is analysed to identify areas that need improvement and also recognise exemplary performance.

(DHL 2013; Pooler, Pooler & Farney 2004, p.47) follows a rigorous **vendor selection process**, considering factors such as the reliability, service quality and compliance with regulatory standards. Initially, vendors are evaluated based on their ability to meet the specific the organisation's requirements that also contribute to the company's strategic objectives. Working with few vendors and suppliers also helps in centralising procurement functions (Benton 2006, p.92). DHL has centralised its procurement functions in order to avoid duplication of roles in processes such as selection of vendors and vendor relationship management.

Continuous improvement is the strategic activity that causes a company to mitigate pressure from fierce competition, reduce costs and time and improve productivity. CI is used to pursue cultural changes for the company's innovation and improvement because it strongly reflects a cultural side of an organisation. Hereby vendors are assessed operating under this system and therefore improvement initiated where needed; Tia-Woo Chang (2009)

Relationship building as a key strategy of vendor relationship management facilitates collaboration amongst vendors with trust and transparency as the resultant effect. Regular communication channels using feedback loops and blockchain technology facilitate all these dialogues that address issues promptly which thereby strengthen partnerships and drive mutual success.

2.4 Vendor Relationship Management and Organisational Performance

Research suggests that VRM has a significant impact on organisational performance and competitiveness. Effective VRM practices lead to improved vendor performance, reduced supply chain risks and increased operational resilience (Zhang et al., 2021). Furthermore, VRM fosters collaboration and innovation, allowing organisations to respond more effectively to market dynamics and customer demands (Choi & Han, 2019).

According to certain studies, it has been shown that successful management of supplier relationships contributes to firm's performance (Tan et al., 1999). Dimensions such as supplier and vendor appraisal, development and involvement are shown to play a crucial role in high-value success of relationships, whereby both parties ought to hold a perception of gaining value from the relationship (long-term) and thereby a success when continued (Narayandas and Rangan, 2004).

Vendor relationship management has become widely recognised as an important contributor to organisational performance, helping firms meet the challenges of an increasingly competitive and dynamic environment (Monczka et al., 2000). These pressures have driven businesses toward forming closer relationships with a smaller number of suppliers and vendors who have become increasingly involved in many aspects of strategy making and day-to-day operations (Cousins, 1999).

Existing theories have demonstrated the essence of relationship quality in B2C e-commerce vendor management (Zhang et al., 2011). In view of this, vendor relationship management employs a systematic process for coordinating interactions between business entities in order to increase trust and interdependence and to enhance engagement (Bullen et al., 2017). However, managing a diverse group of vendors is an enormous challenge in terms of contract management and cost optimisation (e.g., determining the most appropriate strategies for vendors and controlling costs incurred) (Majumder et al., 2017; Cleary and McLarney, 2019).

According to an analysis prepared by Dun & Bradstreet (2023), FedEx operations and business activity indirectly contributed to net economic output worth an estimated \$22.6 billion across the global economy in former year 2022 nearly 12% increase over the company's contributions in 2021. While having a global supply chain that emphasises vendor relationship management with FedEx vendors contributing their own revenue, employment, taxes and capital investments to their national and local economies.

Organisations that recognise the value of partnering with vendors are more successful, not only that but also more innovative and with that delivering competitive advantage; findings of several major research studies conducted over the past few years by IBM's institute for Business Value.

While the IBM studies focused specifically on enterprise procurement practices, they highlight an important trend developing across business sectors and geographies: Leading companies are transforming their supplier relationships from the old transactional model, to a new ecosystem model. We call this new partnering strategy the business collective or Business Collective 1.0 (BC 1.0).

The business collective model shakes up the traditional vendor-customer paradigm. That status quo built on an "I win, you lose...take it or leave it" approach to purchasing where the service provider has the disadvantage.

According to a report by Oxford Economics et al. (2023), companies have become more collaborative with their vendors so as to be able to respond to new market demands with agility and innovation. In this climate, companies aren't just merely collaborating with

vendors as providers for their materials and goods but as strategic partners that help create quality products that are competitive differentiators.

David Rae, Procurement Leaders magazine (2023) procurement must look at suppliers and vendors for inspiration and new capability, stop prescribing specifications and start tapping into the expertise of vendors.

Vendor relationships are highly interactive and they require constant monitoring and inter-personal liaison by employees as well so as to be effective. The question of how firms manage these collaborative vendor relationships, through the use of performance measurement systems and the development of social networks, is an important avenue of research. Traits such as supplier development, innovation and involvement, are widely considered to be central to meaningful relationships and organisational performance (David, 2012).

Businesses are increasingly relying on their suppliers to reduce costs, improve quality and develop new processes and products faster than their rival's vendors can. In fact, some organisations have started to evaluate whether they must continue to assemble products themselves or whether they can outsource production entirely. Thomas Y. Choi et al. (2004) The bottom-line impacts of vendor relationship management practices have been confirmed by real world examples. A recent survey finds that organisations that are best at vendor relationship management hold a 40% to 65% advantage in their cash-to-cash cycle time over average organisations and the top organisations being more successful than their competitors (tan KC, et al., 2002). Information sharing hereby leads to high levels of supply chain integration by enabling organisations to make dependable delivery and introduce products to the market quickly (Croorn S, et al., 1998).

Wachira (2010) conducted and examined vendor relationship management largely and organisational performance in the beverage industry of Uganda. The researcher used a sample of 38 supply chain professionals in the alcoholic beverage industry. The conclusion of the study was that vendor relationship management largely depends on four main aspects which are communication (information sharing and technology interchange), trust (commitment, loyalty, openness, flexibility), risk assessment and management (innovations,

contract management, value and pricing structures) and strategic supplier relationships (who to choose as a vendor and for which products or service).

Kamau (2003) study on buyer-supplier relationships on large manufacturing organisations in Kampala-Uganda, concluded that development of supplier relationships has led to the improvement of organisations' performance in Uganda that have practiced for more than ten years. Thereby this study concludes that there is a strong relationship between organisation's performance and its relationships with their suppliers.

However, some companies have had to lose their competitive advantage by entering long-term contracts with vendors of commodities example of DHL whose suppliers of oil, prices have kept fluctuating (Vagstad 2000, pp.949). For instance, the company has not been able to benefit from price reductions in the market after entering a contract for the supply of particular commodities like oil and gas at a specific price.

Bally et al., (2008) explains that an organisation that practices vendor relationship management has an improved supply chain performance. Liker and choi (2004) noted that a commercial or humanitarian organisation that practices supplier relationship engagements has increased quality, improved efficiency and high performance. Organisations that wish to be competitive should build and keep up with long term associations with their central providers by dealing with vendor execution, sharing data and utilising data innovation in supply chain management.

However, with study gaps failing to show the comprehensive effect of vendor relationships management to organisational performance in logistics and supplier organisations, the core of this study was to find other variables that could possibly impact organisational performance.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

Research methodology is the organised way of acquiring information from the targeted population to comprehend a particular phenomenon and conclude from the data received. This section describes the research design, the purpose, population, sample and sampling techniques, data collection instruments and the data analysis as used by researcher.

3.1 Research Design

This is the overall method used by the researcher to incorporate the many aspects of the study coherently and logically hence referred to as the research design. This concept assists the researcher in efficiently addressing the research questions. It also serves as data gathering, measurement, and analysis (De Vaus, 2006). Similarly, (Kothari 2014) also viewed research design as the arrangement of the conditions for collecting and analysing data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in the procedure. There are two types of research design: qualitative and quantitative methods.

The quantitative method focuses on generating numerical information and the qualitative approach requires a subjective assessment of a particular sample's opinions, cognition, conduct and attitude. It is divided into four types: explanatory, descriptive, exploratory and evaluation research design.

The researcher adopted a cross-sectional design where the study used both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The cross-sectional research design is one with which data is collected from a population at a single point in time. Researchers collect information on variables of interest from participants at a particular moment, providing a snapshot of the population at that time. Cross-sectional studies often examine the prevalence of certain characteristics or behaviours within a population and to explore associations between variables (Seeram, 2019). The study was therefore conducted using a correlational research design which was used to determine the extent of relationship between two variables using statistical data as well as a regression design.

3.2 Area and Population of the study

A research population is a big group of people or things that focus on a scientific investigation (Hassan, 2016). On the other hand, the researcher is concerned with the entirety

or aggregate of the observation (Seeram, 2019). This study was hereby to be carried out at DHL Express Lugogo, Kampala with a total of 33 respondents used from the different departments who were believed to have enough information concerning vendor relationship management and organisational performance inclusive of not only the procurement and logistics department but the finance and accounts, marketing and stores departments too.

3.3 Sample size and sample technique

There are two fundamental types of sampling procedures or approaches in research. According to Mugo (2002), a sample is a group of respondents/people chosen from a big population for a survey. The probability and non-probability sampling methods are used for this sample, the probability sampling makes sure that every member in the population has an equal chance of being chosen. Non-probability selection does not guarantee that every member has that equal opportunity of being chosen.

Furthermore, sample size refers to the number of individual samples or observations that are used in a survey or experiment. Here a questionnaire is used as instrument for collecting primary data. It is however, impossible to survey the whole population of an area, the researcher must select a sample from the study population. Yamane (1973).

A purposive sampling technique was used by the researcher to identify and select the key respondents who are more knowledgeable about vendor relationship management information that was adopted at the organisation and these included supply chain managers, procurement department, accountants and administrators as well as supervisors.

3.4 Sources of data

The data sources are divided into two categories: primary and secondary data and below are descriptions in depth.

3.4.1 Primary data

This is the original data obtained for research purpose through experiments, focus groups, interviews, and questionnaires which are the major source of data (Saunders et al., 2012). Likewise, Koziol and Arthur (2012) define this as data gathered directly from the people or work being examined. The information is in raw form and collected first, and this data form is typically gathered from respondents through questionnaires, interviews, and suggestions.

This approach is advantageous since it is always reliable, objective and authentic as it is gathered together to identify a specific study problem. Primary data was obtained from employees at DHL Express using questionnaires and interviews as they were the key participants in this research and their response to questions was of great importance during the evaluation process of the findings.

3.4.2 Secondary data

Secondary data is information or data already collected by other researchers or institutions, usually for differing purposes (Blumberg et al., 2008). Secondary data enables the researcher to place the study in the context of existing knowledge as well as broadening the researcher's understanding to the research topic (Blumberg et al., 2008). Secondary sources of data were obtained from books, journals, the internet for the critical review of the related literature for the study.

3.5 Data collection methods

The data collection instrument allows the researcher to gather information that they want to collect about the object of the study. a questionnaire can be developed on the basis of the research objectives so as to ensure relevance to the research problem. The questionnaire was carefully designed with general informative questions that required respondents to answer without having to do much thinking. This was used to provide respondents with an easy start that provides practice in answering questions.

3.5.1 Interviews

This is a technique used to collect primary data from individuals involved in the research survey. Interview method relies on face-to-face interviews with the respondents who are to generate detailed and first-hand information. For this study, the researcher interacted with the selected respondents basing on a set of pre-determined questions that required response to the questions on a one-on-one basis. Interviews allowed the researcher to probe and comprehend answers while they arose from key informants for clear and better study findings.

3.5.2 Questionnaire

This is a tool that allows the collection of quantified data from a certain number of respondents. The researcher prepared a set of questions pertaining to the field of enquiry. The designed questions were both close and open-ended questions.

This tool allows respondents to feel free to give their information at their own time, sometimes without the influence of the researcher (Amin, 2005).

3.5.3 Observational study

This is conducted to understand natural behaviours, relationships or phenomena without imposing any external influence. Researchers aim to observe and document patterns, correlations or trends and they are often qualitative in nature and can be used for both exploratory and explanatory research purposes (Tegan George, 2022). Observational studies involve two main types which are the descriptive observational studies and analytical observational studies; descriptive observational studies focus on describing a particular phenomenon or behaviour without trying to establish causation and analytical observational studies aim to investigate potential cause-and-effect relationships between variables by observing their natural occurrence.

The researcher used this technique to gain valuable insights and answer the research questions based purely on what the researcher observes.

3.6 Data Analysis

Qualitative data and quantitative data are used for analysing data; Quantitative data can be coded, edited and tabulated with frequencies obtained from respondents' socio-demographic variables such as age, gender etc. This data can be presented on charts.

Qualitative data analysis includes analysing data during and after collection and this may involve identifying the themes of the study. All responses were coded according to each theme and analysed accordingly using Microsoft excel as a data analysis software at univariate, bivariate and multi variable levels.

3.7 Validity and reliability

The validity of the research can be defined as the extent to which the requirements of the scientific research method are met during the process of obtaining research findings. This study used primary data to assess the relationship between VRM and the organisation's performance. In addition, questionnaires were employed to collect the necessary information, achieving the study's goal. The results were thoroughly based on the researcher's actual findings.

3.8 Ethical considerations

The ethical issues or considerations are critical for any research endeavour. Through an introductory letter, the researcher will gain access to the organisation. Human subjects are used in this area. According to Saunders et al., (2007), researchers must be conscientious in their approach to data collection by allowing the respondents to participate in a survey of their own free will. Respondents who were hesitant to participate in research opinions during the partaking of the study were respected and removed from the study. Furthermore, the respondents' confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study.

3.9 Limitations of the study

There was enough time to carry out and finish this study as specified and offered by the university, however, the researcher faced a few challenges from the participants of the study during the time but this was solved through frequent followups and making timely editing of the work as desired by the supervisor so as to overcome these restrictions by allocating and scheduling efficiently the time given.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This study was carried out to establish the impact of vendor relationship management and organisational performance at DHL Express and the findings were as presented in the next text.

4.1 Findings on the general characteristics of the respondents

A total of 33 questionnaires were distributed to DHL Express Uganda. Out of the total sample size given of the questionnaires all respondents returned the questionnaires making a total of 33 respondents from the original sample size. This represents a response rate of 51%. The percentage was considered sufficient for this study. The employees who were not available for the survey were cited with busy schedules as the reason for lacking time to participate in the study.

The data analysed was mainly obtained from the researchers' main objectives as they guided her on which questions to ask in the questionnaire which was:

- a) To examine the challenges faced while managing vendor relationships at DHL Express
- b) To analyse the strategies employed in order to overcome these challenges at DHL Express
- c) To assess vendor relationship management and its impact on organisational performance at DHL Express

The beginning of the questionnaire contained general information regarding the organisation and the respondent. The areas cited in this section were; the position of the respondent in the organisation, the duration the respondent worked in that position and the gender of the respondent.

4.1.1 Gender composition from the data obtained

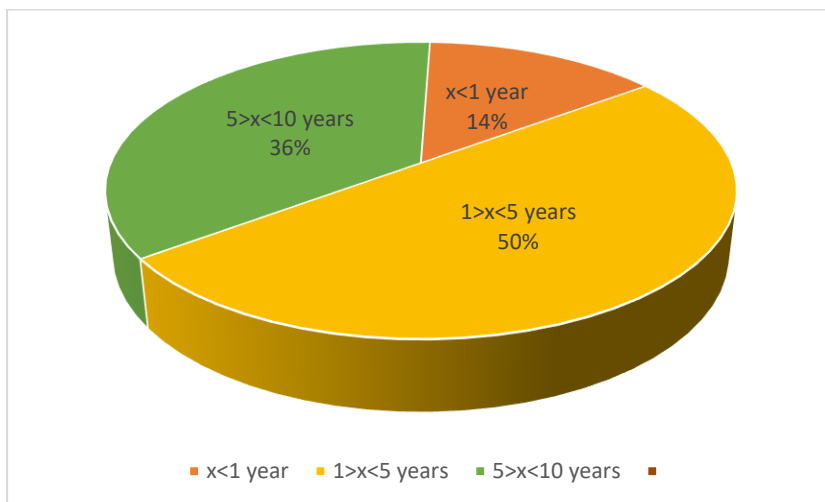
Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	16	48%

Female	17	52%
Total	33	100%

Source: Primary data

From the above table, it indicates females as the biggest correspondents with a rate of 52% that had the time to answer the questionnaire and return it whereas the males accounted for about 48% meaning that male correspondents were slightly below the female sample size that brought back the questionnaires.

4.1.2 Chart showing the time worked at the organisation



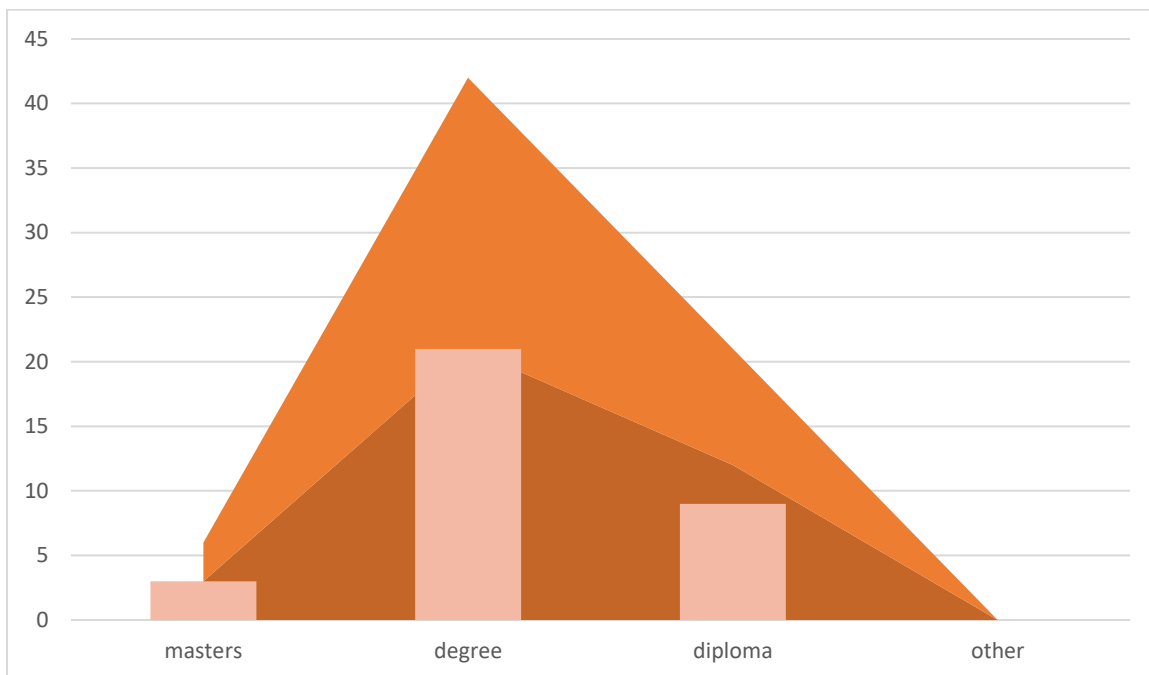
Source: primary data

From the above results, it indicates that the biggest population of the respondents worked with the organisation between 1 to 5 years (50%) which makes these results more reliable while those that followed are those that worked for the organisation between 5 to 10 years (36%) and finally those that spent at the organisation less than 1 year at (14%). Therefore, this signifies the work rate turnover at the organisation as likely average given that most employees have been with the organisation for more than 1 to 5 years.

4.1.3 Level of education

Graph showing the worker’s level of education

Source: primary data



From the above representation and level of qualification of the respondents who answered the questionnaires and had them brought back the biggest number of employees is educated at degree level who hold a percentage of 54 % therefore the organisation employs mostly university graduates in their area of expertise who at a large scale are well experienced and qualified with their work. Therefore, DHL Express takes into account who they hire in a particular area of expertise very seriously and also the top-level positions are occupied with people with an outstanding level of education and expertise.

4.2 Findings on the challenges faced while managing vendor relationships

The study sought to comprehend the challenges that are faced at DHL Express while managing vendor relationships. A good number of questionnaires were presented to the respondents who gave their responses according to the Likert scale. Table 4.1 shows the percentages of factors that were used by the researcher to show the results obtained in the findings collected and extracted from the first section of the questionnaire.

Where:

(SA) Strongly Agree, (A) Agree, (NS) Not sure, (D) Disagree, (SD) Strongly Disagree are as presented in the table below.

Challenges faced while managing vendor relationships	SA		A		NS		D		SD		Total
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Communication barriers with vendors	–	0	–	0	16	48%	17	52%	–		33
Issues of quality control with vendors	–	0	4	12%	14	42%	15	45%	–	0	33
Timely delivery while dealing with vendors	–	0	1	3%	14	42%	18	54%	–	0	33
Contractual disputes with vendors	–	0	3	9%	17	51%	–	0	13	39%	33
Cultural differences across different time zones	–	0	–	0	4	12%	18	54%	11	33%	33
Vendor instability such as financial, operational etc	–	0	1	3%	17	51%	14	42%	1	3%	33

From the findings, it was noted that 52% disagree with the challenges while 12% agree with the challenges that were availed which indicates that DHL Express has managed to engage with their vendors on various issues that arise while managing vendor relationships which hereby indicates that the organisation has strategically managed to minimise most challenges to do with their vendors. This therefore has a positive impact on the organisation as they have

a great control over their vendors while cultivating collaborative relationships with them and also help in their development so as to align to the organisation’s targets.

Source: primary data

From the table above, it clearly states out that DHL Express Uganda has various challenges adopting with vendor relationship management which is thereby at a solid state and extent.

4.3 Findings on the strategies employed in order to overcome these challenges

Table 3: Findings on strategies employed

S/N	Vendor relationship management strategies	SA		A		NS		D		SD	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%
	Vendor selection criteria										
1	Compatibility with the organisational values/goals	–	0	15	45%	4	12%	14	42%	–	0
2	The quality of products and services	12	36%	15	45%	4	12%	1	3%	1	3%
3	Reputation of the vendors and their brand	12	36%	20	60%	1	3%	–	0	–	0
4	Innovation capabilities	1	3%	15	45%	15	45%	1	3%	–	0
	Communication and collaboration										

5	Communicate with the vendors regularly ie daily	1	3%	17	51%	14	42%	1	3%	–	0
6	Communicate with vendors weekly	2	6%	18	54%	13	39%	–	0	–	0
7	Communicate with their vendors annually	21	63%	11	33%	1	3%	–	0	–	0
8	Communicate with their vendors only when needed	–	0	1	3%	17	51%	15	45%	–	0
	Communication channels										
9	Vendors are mainly interacted with by email	21	63%	1	3%	11	33%	–	0	–	0
10	Vendors are mainly interacted with by phone and video conferencing	19	57%	12	36%	2	6%	–	0	–	0
11	Vendors are contacted using vendor portals & software	14	42%	17	51%	2	6%	–	0	–	0
12	Vendors are preferably interacted with	2	6%	2	6%	16	48%	13	39%	–	0

	in-person meetings										
	Performance evaluation										
13	Timeliness of delivery by vendors	21	63%	1	3%	9	27%	1	3%	1	3%
14	Quality of products & services that they supply	21	63%	2	6%	10	30%	–	0	–0	
15	The fast responsiveness to issues that are identified	17	51%	16	48%	–	0	–	0	–	0
16	Adherence to contract terms as specified	15	45%	14	42%	4	12%	–	0	–	0
17	Innovation contributions that have been overall contributed by vendors	–	0	3	9%	19	57%	1	3%	–	0

From the above findings in the table above, 45% agreed with compatibility of organisational values and goals as vendor selection criteria and a strategy employed so as to overcome challenges on managing vendor relationships, 14% were neutral about the concept while 42% disagreed with the notion which does indicate that DHL Express is careful on value alignment with the vendors that they choose to work with so as to prevent arising issues that may come about due to indifferences. However, 36% and 45% agreed on the quality of goods and services as a vendor selection strategy used in order to overcome challenges with the remaining 3% disagreeing to this strategy, this hereby indicates that the company is especially

Careful about protecting their brand image so as to ensure that consumers at the receiving end are satisfied with the products and services that they provide which also another way they've managed to overcome their challenges with vendor relationships.

With communication and collaboration used as another strategy to overcome challenges, 51% and 3% agreed that they communicate with their vendors regularly while 42% were neutral about this strategy, this however indicates that the organisation has embraced this as another way to minimise arising issues with their vendors whereby vendors are followed up regularly so as to prevent the growth of the same while also meeting their needs through a collaborative approach of communication.

The findings also indicate with timeliness of delivery by vendors as a performance evaluation technique as a strategy that has helped manage these challenges with 63% and 3% agreeing to the motion while the 27% were neutral and 3% disagreed.

This implies that DHL Express monitors all their vendors in the market carefully so as to ensure that clients are satisfied with their products and services while keeping up with their reputation of fast delivery.

The vast majority which are 51% and 48% also agreed to timely responsiveness to issues that arise as another strategy to manage challenges with vendors which therefore reflects the proactive management of their vendors as the most enhanced technique that has helped the organisation grow a collaborative relationship with their vendors while also helping them to deal with these very concerns so as to ensure the continued deliverance of quality and improvement of their products while addressing the concerns of their clients for overall efficiency.

Therefore, the above table indicates that the strategies employed at DHL Express have largely had a lucrative impact in successfully managing the various challenges that arise from their vendor relationships though at different extents.

Table 4: Analysis on conflict resolutions with vendors

S/N	Conflict resolutions	SA		A		NS		D		SD	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%

1	Involvement of mediation by a third party	1	3%	3	9%	15	45%	14	42%	–	0
2	Having direct negotiations with vendors so as to solve disputes	1	3%	17	51%	14	42%	1	3%	–	0
3	Involvement of legal arbitration in certain circumstances	–	0	13	39%	10	30%	10	30%	–	0
4	Termination of contract where its viable	2	6%	15	45%	16	48%	–	0	–	0

Results from table 4 clearly show that most of the participants (45%) were undecided on whether there's involvement of mediation of a third party while resolving conflicts while 42% disagreed and about 12% strongly agreed and agreed.

Also study findings revealed that most respondents (54%) strongly agreed and agreed that there is direct negotiation with vendors so as to solve disputes, 42% were not sure while the remaining 3% disagreed with the statement on having direct negotiation with vendors so as to solve issues and disputes.

More so, most participants (39%) agreed that there is involvement of legal arbitration in certain circumstances, 30% were not sure while in contradiction 30% also disagreed with the statement that there is involvement of legal arbitration in certain circumstances.

Also, most participants (45%) agreed that there is termination of contracts where its viable, 6% strongly agreed and 48% were undecided about the statement that there is termination of contracts where its viable as a conflict resolutions mechanism.

4.3.1 Future strategies and areas of vendor relationship management DHL Express needs to improve

From the data collected, 6% of the respondents agreed on communication and performance evaluation as areas for improvement and strategic management of vendors which indicates that the organisation has strongly aligned strategies that have already improved both areas while 42% agreed on conflict resolution as an area of improvement along with 45% for innovation and collaboration with vendors. This hereby implies that DHL Express has various issues that arise with their vendors while also not effectively enhancing the innovation and innovation with their vendors which could be as a resultant cause of the conflicts that arise.

However, DHL Express has a contingency risk plan and strategies put in place to manage these issues that arise with their vendors while they occur so as to improve the impact on organisational performance. The organisation has strategies in place such as diversification of vendors in different regions so as to increase efficiency of overall output while also training their vendors on operational management alongside cultivating new innovative measures so as to manage these relationships effectively.

4.4 Findings on vendor relationship management and its impact on organisational performance

Overall impact on organisational performance	SA		A		NS		D		SD		Total
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
There is improved product & service quality delivered	23	69%	3	9%	7	21%	–	0	–	0	33
Cost savings have increased from collaboration with vendors	16	49%	17	51%	–	0	–	0	–	0	33
Enhanced innovation & collaboration with vendors	15	45%	15	45%	3	10%	–	0	–	0	33

Improved & increased operational efficiency	17	51%	13	39%	3	10%	–	0	–	0	33
Competitive advantage	27	80%	3	10%	3	10%	–	0	–	0	33

From the above findings in the table, 69% and 9% agreed that there has been an improved product and service delivery at DHL Express while the 21% were neutral about the point as an overall impact on organisational performance. This indicates that the involvement of the same has had a great quality and service excellence at the organisation through their collaboration with high-quality vendors ensuring that the organisation maintains their high standards too in services while their implementation of regular monitoring and performance reviews make sure of that through consistently following up so that vendors adhere to the quality requirements while reducing the errors and defects with the same vendors.

It also goes on to back up DHL’s ability to meet customer expectations and deadlines too through consistent service quality hence customer’s satisfaction, loyalty which has led to repeat business and positive referrals and continued brand enhancement. From the findings of the study, cost savings have increased from collaboration with vendors with 49% and 51% in agreed to this that their strategic partnerships with vendors have helped them negotiate better prices and terms and also minimise the waste while reducing the cost of procurement and inventory management at the company. They also stated that the practice has contributed to better profit margins, efficient operations and high-quality services which thereby reduced costs for them associated with rework, delays and customer complaints.

Top management also mentions that ‘the ability to offer innovative and reliable services has attracted new customers and scalable markets globally.’ Moreover, 45% agree, 45% strongly agree while 10% were neutral that vendor relationship management enhanced collaboration and innovation with vendors where vendors have offered their expertise and knowledge contributing to DHL’s development and also actively engaged employees with their external partners therefore overall productivity and morale. Regular interactions with vendors have also opened vast opportunities for staff to gain new insights on research and development.

‘Collaboration with vendors has also provided insights and solutions that DHL could not have developed in-house while keeping the company competitive,’ Marketing department. This is because strong vendor relationships enable the company to adapt quickly to market changes

and also meet customer demands. 51% and 39% agree that there is improved and increased operational efficiency while 10% are not well accustomed to this, overall, most of the employees agree that this vendor relationship management has streamlined the supply chain as reliable vendors have ensured timely delivery of goods and services, reduced delays and also disruptions and an efficient supply chain management that has led to smoother operations with better service delivery. The same also has ensured compliance with legal and ethical standards that protect DHL from potential legal issues and reputational damage hence a built trust with their customers and other stakeholders.

80% and 10% agreed that the vendor relationship management integration in their company has brought about a competitive advantage whereby the collaborative initiatives have positioned DHL Express in the market at a quality position with their deliverance of reliable and innovative service and product offerings with a strong network of vendors enhancing their capability to compete in the global market while entering new ones annually.

With a robust vendor relationship management in place at DHL Express, it has built the company's reputation and appeal to customers with an improved performance and competitive advantage with a recent report on 'Global Connectedness 2024' wherein is ranked as 62nd in the 2023 index as commissioned by the German logistics company and prepared by the New York University Stern School of Business.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION OF FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces you to the summary of the researcher's findings, recommendations to the organisation and a conclusion derived from the data analysed from the whole study in relation to the objectives that were used during the course of the research.

5.1 Discussion of the findings

The study found out that DHL Express has more likened challenges vendor instabilities such as operational and financial issues but at a smaller extent while also having manageable challenges to do with contractual disputes while most of these are as a result of supply chain disruptions which is in line with Hughes et al. (2016) that reported that inefficiency and ineffectiveness in the supply chain system are the leading causes of deficiency in achieving its set goals. According to Knowledge Base of 2021 the main challenges facing effective vendor relationship management teams today include managing risk, fostering corporate social responsibility, ensuring quality, meeting costs and meeting compliance requirements. With most of the organisation's challenges being proactively managed through strategic means, the organisation has at a great extent implemented measures that have curbed these down in the long run such as involving their best expertise in the vendor selection criteria, implemented information and communication technology with their vendors, and a critical performance evaluation at all times that has helped downgrade/scale down most of these challenges. Respondents hereby affirmed that the organisation uses a comprehensive approach for managing interactions with their vendors and this increased realisation of improved effectiveness on the supply chain processes between the organisation and the vendors.

The study found out that DHL Express identifies a significant role between vendor relationship management and minimisation of organisational challenges through practicing strategies such as quality performance by vendors in which the organisation's success can be seen through quality capability that is the process where vendor provides their standards of services and products that are very likely to attain overall profitability and performance which also brings about benefits such as cost minimisation, reputational growth, increase

customer loyalty and also help revamp their known industry leadership in logistics and delivery. This goes in line with study by Poku (2022) the success of organisations can be seen through quality capability that is the process whereby the firm or the supplier provides a standard of goods and services to compete in the market. The study also found out a significant overall relationship between vendor relationship management practices on organisational performance and challenge minimisation by timely delivery of services resulting into competitive advantage whereby this has been taken a hold of as a performance incentive that has helped their vendors to increase their performance in the long run hence the overall organisations' reputation with customers.

The study also found out that the fast responsiveness to issues by vendors that are identified related to performance evaluation as a strategy, resulted into better quality delivery by the organisation as vendors who are selected are evaluated on their flexibility to cope with changes while at the same time continuing with productivity in the marketplace.

The study also aimed assess vendor relationship management and its impact on organisational performance and the study found out that there is a positive relationship identified especially by majority of respondents (80%) identifying a competitive advantage whereby these also revealed that they conduct regular appraisals to assess the performance of vendors to ensure that there is effective performance of the organisation. They also indicated that regular conduction of these has helped them significantly recognise better performance of DHL Express in terms of quality and service delivery. The key dimensions found to yield best results are communication and collaboration with vendors, constant auditing and evaluation of vendor's performance and vendor training and development measures taken. These techniques in turn have helped them reduce the production cost of delivering these services, improved product quality, reducing time taken to deliver services and also improve on the operations flexibility of the company.

The researcher sought to evaluate the impact of vendor relationship management and organisational performance at DHL Express. It was established that vendor involvement and management of the same determines the performance of not only the vendors but also the organisation itself. Involving vendors in new product and service development initiatives while consistently improving efforts to manage their performance enables them to share knowledge and increase learning opportunities so that better solutions are made less complex and company problems are solved all together that impact its performance.

5.1.1 To examine the challenges faced while managing vendor relationships

The data analysed showed that DHL Express faces various challenges while managing vendor relationships which is agreement with the literature review that was conducted. Issues such as **quality control with vendors and conflict resolutions** challenges as the main key drivers though at a small extent as the data statistics show that it has however been managed at a greater extent **face to face negotiations with vendors** so as to minimise conflicts and reduce risks involved with quality control through continued/regular follow-ups and communication with their vendors as well as utilisation of innovation and collaboration. Hereby, **innovation and collaboration** has been adopted as an approach towards problem-solving while focusing on mutual interests and win-win solutions and also the action plans that are put in place such as **arbitration and termination of contracts** so as to minimise these challenges.

DHL Express also carries out **regular monitoring and feedback mechanisms** on a regular basis as observed in the data so as to avoid most of these challenges which has helped them to address issues promptly so as to prevent escalation and also minimise their impact on overall operations in the company.

With 3% challenges arising from timely delivery by vendors, it has gone ahead to show that DHL Express has utilised **Technology for transparency** and also to greatly overcome this challenge hence its small impact at the organisation in which leveraging technology has helped have a hands-on real time data and insights on how their vendors comply to terms and also follow up on their performance.

Also adopting **collaborative platforms** such as the 'DHL Portal' has helped the organisation to facilitate communication, document sharing, automated alerts on performance and also structure workflows for handling most of their operations hence the minimal challenges at the company.

5.1.2 To analyse the strategies employed in order to over come these challenges

From the findings, it was drawn to conclusion that the strategies employed in the organisation have resulted into the greater positive outcomes in the organisation for example the literature review suggested a vendor selection criteria for selecting their vendors in which from the data 45% agreed on **compatibility of the vendors with organisational values and goals**, 12% not certain and the rest at 42% disagreed, 36% strongly agreed on the **quality of the**

products and services, 45% agreed on the same while 6% disagreed and strongly disagreed. Most respondents 36% and 60% strongly agreed and agreed with a highly response on the **reputation of the vendors and their brand** at an overall 96% and the rest at 4%.

While maintaining open and transparent **communication channels** to facilitate information sharing has greatly enhanced the solving of these challenges with regular communication with their vendors of which 63% and 33% strongly agreed and disagreed with 3% being uncertain while channels such as their portals and software have been deployed for the effectiveness of their overall performance. These in turn have improved efficiency in the supply chain, improved highly the financial performance and increased innovation of their services as the company has continuously engaged their vendors towards creativity and innovation. This has hereby in return increased the competitive advantage of the organisation over their competitors in the global market.

5.1.3 To assess vendor relationship management and its impact on organisational performance

From the findings and data collected through various interactions with the employees of the organisation, it was concluded that effective vendor relationship management has helped to identify and mitigate various risks that are associated with vendor performance and supply chain disruptions at the organisation whereby diversifying the vendor base has also reduced over dependency on single suppliers especially in the central region which has enhanced their resilience.

Their well-managed vendor relationships have also ensured for a quicker more effective crisis response while minimising the impact on their operations. It was also noted that vendors prioritise DHL's needs during emergencies as their relationship is strong and mutually beneficial.

Therefore, from conclusions in the study, 69% strongly agreed that there has been improved product and service quality delivered, 9% agreed while 2% were neutral about the statement. Others also greatly /strongly agreed at a percentage of 80%, 10% agreed and 10% neutral as to the competitive advantage that DHL Express has gained from their vendor relationship management practices. This has therefore placed DHL's market position at a recognisable extent while reliable, high-quality and innovative services have been offered hence their capability to compete in the global market.

5.2 Summary of findings

Concerning the challenges faced, a considerable amount of 52% disagreed that communication barriers with vendors was less of a hindrance as they endeavour to play a significant role in ensuring that they are regularly communicated with for arising issues in the supply chain. A significant number (54%) also concluded that they have not many challenges when it comes to timely delivery when dealing with the vendors which hereby indicates how much they have put in place performance metrics that have induced most of their assigned vendors to keep in line with the quality that is expected while delivering their services and products. This has gone on to underscore the organisation for strategically managing most of these challenges due to the great control they have over these vendors as well as collaborative relationships that have been cultivated in the long run that induce for these results which has overall helped DHL Express develop at a greater extent than other competitors in the market and meet their targets.

Regarding the strategies employed, a substantial portion (63%) indicated that timeliness of delivery by vendors has been emphasised to overcome most of their challenges which has hereby promoted more innovations to bring that forth while the quality performance of vendors has also been boosted in this case significantly. The same outstanding number of 63% acknowledged that quality delivery of products and services by vendors as a strategy has contributed as a highlighted factor in overcoming their challenges in that vendors are involved in the design efforts in all programs for the benefit of the organisation and also vendor involvement in innovation has allowed the company to make better use of their vendors' capabilities and technology to deliver competent services and products hence overcoming most of the challenges. Supplier involvement in product development allows firms to deliver competitive products (Hanfield, 2001)

With vendor relationship management and its impact on organisational performance, an outstanding percentage (80%) supported that there has been a recognised competitive advantage at DHL over their competitors due to their enhanced collaborative relationships with vendors especially due to the fact that there is a team approach embraced as a culture as a way to vendor relationship management and also their consistent training of vendors to improve their quality thus improved efficiency and competitive advantage. This aligns with a study carried out by Bakshi (2018) that provided that vendor collaboration introduces competition into the supply base, training and education of the same and direct investment in

the suppliers by the firm provides a significant relationship and a competitive advantage. This also has hereby resulted into and built sustainability in the supply chain through trust, communication, information sharing and adoption of information technology which enhances organisation performance in terms of quality delivery of products/services.

5.3 Conclusions

From the data analysis based on the objectives, DHL Express to a lesser extent experiences challenges to do with vendor relationship management to which they have comprehensively managed by adopting various strategies in order to overcome these such as vendor selection criteria, communication and collaboration and continued performance monitoring and evaluation so as to overcome challenges such as quality control issues with their vendors and contractual disputes with the same.

The researcher sought to evaluate the impact of vendor relationship management and organisational performance at the organisation and established a conclusion that involving vendors through continued collaboration and communication while regularly monitoring of the vendors has resulted into openness and involvement of vendors in the supply chain motivating them to share their knowledge and insights regarding the improvement of their services and product in the market. most of the respondents also went ahead to show that the organisation has overall improved their performance at a great extent which has made them have an outstanding competitive edge in their market globally.

However, this conclusion was inconclusive as some respondents were just answering the questionnaire and therefore results may not accurately depict the actual data.

5.4 Recommendations

DHL Express needs to extensively increase their vendor relationship strategies such as enhancement of innovation with their vendors especially in a cutting edge technologically advancing market so as to maximise the streamlining of their activities and increase the innovation and productivity of the organisation overall.

Facilitating stronger collaboration systems and channels that enable smooth forward and backward flow of information through developing wider electronic systems that integrate every player in their supply chain which hereby reduces and curbs down the dangers to do with miscommunication and proactiveness towards certain issues in their operations.

The organisation can also continually carry out vendor development so as to encourage good governance among these vendors while also elevating their appraisal techniques by setting up policies and guidelines up to date that should be followed when conducting vendor appraisal for better services to be delivered.

When measuring performance, firms should always be aware of all the performance measures and understanding what factors influence them to be able to deal with each one of them as it demands. In this case, I recommend that DHL Express should take into consideration what criteria is related to performance and capitalise on that just like employee capabilities will lead to a perfect or better production of quality services.

Finally, the top management of DHL Express should develop their research and development initiatives to do with their cooperate business so as to continually revise their business plan for greater awareness on their market through knowing their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis). This shall hereby give them an enhanced visibility in their whole supply chain while continuously increasing their competitive edge over their rivals.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1:

Questionnaire

Introduction

Dear Respondent, I am by names **Mbabazi Harriet**; a student of Uganda Christian University- Mukono pursuing Bachelors in Procurement and Logistics Management (BPLM). I am undertaking research to generate data and information on a topic “The impact of vendor relationship management and organisational performance at DHL Express”.

You have been selected to participate in this study because the contribution you make to your organization is key to the kind of information required. The information you provide is solely for academic purposes and will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality.

For the sake of confidentiality, you may not include your names on the questionnaire.

Thank you.

Instructions

Kindly fill out this questionnaire appropriately based on an option that is applicable to you.

Part A: General Information

1. Gender of respondents

a) Male

b) Female

2. In which of the following departments of DHL Express do you work in? Tick where it's appropriate.

a) Top Management

b) Procurement and contracts management Department

c) logistics department

d) stores section

e) operations section

f) finance and accounting department

g) marketing department

h) Others. Please specify

3. Which of these management levels do you belong to?

a) lower management

b) middle management

c) top management

4. For how long have you worked with the organization?

i. Less than 1 year

ii. Between 1 to 5 years

iii. 5 >x<10 years

iv. Other..... (Specify)

6. What is your highest level of academic qualification?

a) Master's degree

b) Bachelor's degree

c) Diploma

d) Others..... (Please Specify)

Part B: Challenges faced by DHL Express in effective vendor relationship management

i) In your experience, what are the major challenges faced while managing vendor relationships at your company? Please tick in the box the extent to which you agree with the following observations;

(SA) Strongly disagree, (A) Agree, (NS) Not sure, (D) Disagree and (SD) Strongly disagree

S/N	Challenges faced	SA	A	NS	D	SD
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1	Communication barriers with vendors					
2	Issues of quality control with vendors					
3	Timely delivery while dealing with vendors					
4	Contractual disputes with vendors					
5	Cultural differences across different time zones					
6	Vendor instability such as financial, operational, etc					

7. If there are other challenges apart from those mentioned please specify.

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.....

ii) Can you provide specific examples or incidents illustrating these challenges?

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.....

Part C: Vendor relationship management strategies adopted to overcome these challenges at DHL Express

Listed below are the probable strategies that your company practices in the management of vendors. To what extent has your company employed these strategies in order to overcome the challenges faced. Please rank this information by ticking in the box that corresponds to your opinion/view according to the following scale

(SA) Strongly Disagree, (D) Disagree, (NS) Not Sure, (A) Agree, (SA) Strongly Agree

Serial No.	Vendor Relationship Management strategies adopted	SA	A	NS	D	SD
	Vendor selection criteria (What criteria does DHL Express use to select vendors?)					
1	Compatibility with the organisational values/goals					
2	The quality of products and services					
3	Reputation of the vendors and their brand					
4	Innovation capabilities					
	Others (please specify):					
	Communication and collaboration (How frequently does DHL Express communicate with vendors?)					
7	DHL communicates with their vendors daily					
8	DHL Express communicates with their vendors on a weekly basis					
9	DHL Express communicates with their vendors monthly					
10	DHL Express communicates with their vendors annually					
11	DHL Express communicates with their vendors only when needed					
	b) Communication channels					

	(Which communication channels are primarily used to interact with vendors?)					
12	Vendors are mainly interacted with by email					
13	Vendors are mainly interacted with by phone and video conferencing					
14	Vendors are mainly contacted using vendor portals/software					
15	Vendors are preferably interacted with in-person meetings					
16	Others (Please specify)					
	Performance evaluation (What criteria are included in vendor performance evaluations?)					
17	Timeliness of delivery by vendors					
18	Quality of products and services that they supply					
19	The fast responsiveness to issues/concerns that are identified					
20	Adherence to contract terms/agreements as specified					
21	Innovation contributions that have been overall contributed by vendors					
	Conflict resolution (How does DHL Express handle conflicts/disputes with vendors?)					

22	Involvement of mediation by a third party					
23	Having direct negotiations with vendors so as to solve disputes					
24	Involvement of legal arbitration in certain circumstances					
25	Termination of contract where its viable					

b) Others (Please specify)

.....

26. Future Strategies:

What are the areas of vendor relationship management you believe DHL Express needs to improve? (Kindly tick where applies)

a) Communication

b) Performance evaluation

c) Conflict resolution

d) Innovation collaboration

e) Others (please specify):

.....

Are there any specific vendor management strategies or practices DHL Express plans to implement in the future?

a) Yes b) No

c) If yes, please describe briefly

.....

Part D: Vendor relationship management and its impact on organisational performance at DHL Express

a) In accordance to your opinion, what impact does effective vendor relationship management have on organisational performance at DHL Express?

Please tick in the box that corresponds to your opinion/view according to the rank of (Strongly Agree, Agree, Not sure, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

S/N	Overall impact	SA	A	NS	D	SD
27	There is improved product and service quality delivered					
28	Cost savings have increased from collaboration with vendors					
29	Enhanced innovation and collaboration with vendors					
30	Improved and increased operational efficiency					
31	Competitive advantage					

b) Others (Please specify)

.....

c) How do you measure organisational performance at DHL Express in relation to vendor management? (e.g., KPIs, metrics)

.....

d) Have you observed any specific improvements in organisational performance at DHL Express as result of effective vendor relationship management practices? If yes, please provide examples.

.....
.....

d) Based on your experiences, what recommendations do you have for improving vendor relationship management practices within DHL Express?

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Additional Comments

Please use up this space to provide any additional comments, insights or observations related to vendor relationship management and its impact on organisational performance at DHL Express.

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Thank you for your cooperation
