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**RESEACH ON THE IMPACT OF BUYER SUPPLIER RELATIONSHIPS IN
ACHIEVING GOAL OF COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE.**

CASE OF TM PICK 'N PAY MUTARE

BY PROWESS SIMANGO (B191104A) CONVECTIONAL

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of requirement of the Bachelor of Commerce (Honours) in Purchasing and Supply at Bindura University of Science Education.

APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that they have supervised the student Prowess Simango (B191104A) dissertation entitled: The impact of buyer-supplier relationship in achieving goal of competitive advantage submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Bachelor of Commerce Honors Degree in Purchasing and Supply at Bindura University of Science Education.

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**DISSERTATION TITTLE: THE IMPACT OF BUYER SUPPLIER RELATIONSHIPS
IN ACHIEVING GOAL OF COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE**

**DEGREE TITLE: BACHELOR OF COMMERCE HONORS DEGREE IN
PURCHASING AND SUPPLY.**

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DEDICATIONS

I dedicate this project with an everlasting love to my parents who made it possible for me to be at Bindura University of Science Education and also for making it possible for me to reach this level of education through their perseverance, faith and commitment towards my studies.

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ABSTRACT

This study, which used the TM Pick "n Pay Mutare branch supermarket as a case study, examined how relationships between buyers and suppliers affect a company's ability to compete. The study set out to answer three questions: what impact collaborative partnerships have on a company's ability to compete; how to maintain long-term successful relationships between buyers and suppliers; and what difficulties buyers face that result in failed business-to-business relationships. Thirty-one participants were polled as part of the research design, who were purposefully selected from the retailer management, staff, and supplier agents. Face-to-face interviews and questionnaires that were distributed using the "drop and pick" method were used to collect the data. The objectives were analysed using percentages and frequencies, and the results are shown in tables, graphs, and charts. The results of the study show that effective resource utilization, improved procurement performance, forecast accuracy, and mutual benefits are the results of collaborations that are achieved through trust, commitment, information sharing, and goal-sharing planning; the challenges that the buyer and supplier face arise in the absence of these factors. The researcher has advised retail businesses and other organizations to embrace buyer-supplier connections in order to benefit from them; they should also make sure that buyers and suppliers communicate well in order to address relationship management difficulties. This research was a descriptive based survey in form of a case and the methodology was both qualitative and quantitative research approach. The Microsoft word excel, assisted in analysing data and bringing meanings to the findings.

DECLARATION

The researcher certifies and states that, unless otherwise noted, the entire body of this research is their own original work and that all references used have been properly cited. The research has never been submitted before, in whole or in part, for any degree or examination at any university. It is being submitted as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree in Purchasing and Supply at the University Of Bindura University Of Science Education.

List of tables

Table		Page
Table 2.0	Levels of buyer-supplier relationships	10
Table 2.1	Benefits of buyer-supplier collaborative partnerships	10
Table 3.0	Population and sample frame	30
Table 4.1	Response rate	34
Table 4.2	Duration served	35

List of figure

Figure		Page
Figure 4.3	Products of collaboration to a company	35
Figure 4.4	Strategies to maintain long-term successful relationships	38
Figure 4.5	Challenges in buyer-supplier relationships	40
Figure 4.6	Relationship termination	43

Table of Contents

APPROVAL FORM	i
RELEASE FORM.....	ii
DEDICATIONS	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
DECLARATION	vi
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background of the study	1
1.1.1 Justification of the study.....	4
1.2 Problem statement	4
1.3 Objectives of the study	4
1.4 Research questions	4
1.5 Assumptions.....	5
1.6 Significance of the study	5
1.6.1 To the retail sector.....	5
1.6.2 To the university	5
1.6.3 To the student.....	5
1.7 Delimitations.....	5
1.8 Limitations.....	6
1.9 Definition of key terms	6
1.10 chapter Summary.....	6
CHAPTER TWO	7
LITERATURE REVIEW	7
2.0 Introduction	7
2.1 Empirical literature review.....	7
2.1.1 Justification of the study.....	8
2.2. Defining and explaining buyer-supplier relationship.....	8
2.2.1 Levels of buyer-supplier relationships	9
2.3 Defining and explaining competitive advantage	10
2.3.1 Theoretical Frameworks	10

An overview summary of the resource- advantage (R-A) theory, according to Hunt (2000) and Morgan and Hunt (1996)	10
2.3.2 Agency Theory	11
2.3.3 Social Exchange Theory	11
2.4 The impact of supplier on the buyer.....	12
2.5 Role of Collaboration on retailer competitiveness	13
2.5.1 Temporal bonds	14
2.5.2 Social bond	14
2.5.3 Structural bond	15
2.5.4 Benefits of buyer-supplier collaborative partnerships	15
2.6 Variables for good long-term relationships	16
2.6.1 Trust	16
2.6.2 Commitment	18
2.6.3 Communication.....	19
2.6.4 Cooperation	20
2.6.5 Mutual goals	21
2.7 Challenges of buyer-supplier relationship management.....	21
2.8 Chapter summary.....	22
CHAPTER THREE	23
RESEACH METHODOLOGY	23
3.0 Introduction	23
3.1Research Approach	23
3.1.2 The quantitative approach.....	24
3.2 Research Design	25
3.2.1Justification of the research design	26
3.4 Exploratory research.....	27
3.5 Target Population Sample.....	27
3.6 Population and sample frame.....	27
3.7 Sampling frame	28
3.7.1 Sampling techniques	28
3.7.2 Stratified sampling	29
3.8 Data collection	29
3.8.1Secondary data	29
3.8.2 Primary data.....	29
3.8.3 Interviews.....	29
3.9 Research instruments	30

3.9.1 Questionnaires	30
3.10 Validity and reliability sampling	30
3.10.1 Validity	30
3.10.2 Reliability.....	31
3.11 Data Presentation and Analysis	31
3.11.1 Chapter Summary	31
CHAPTER FOUR	32
DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	32
4.0 Introduction	32
4.3 The role of collaboration on retailer competitive advantage.....	33
Products of collaboration to a company.....	34
4.4 The strategies to maintain long term relationship management.....	36
Source: primary data 2022.....	36
4.5 The challenges which lead to buyer-supplier relationship failure.....	38
Challenges of buyer-supplier relationship	38
Relationship termination	41
4.7 Chapter Summary	42
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION	43
AND RECOMMENDATIONS	43
5.1 introduction	43
5.2 Summary of research	43
5.3 Conclusions	44
The role of collaboration on company competitiveness	44
Strategies to maintain long term successful relationships	44
Challenges facing retailers in buyer-supplier relationships	45
5.4 Recommendations	45
5.5 Areas for future study.....	47
REFERENCE LIST	48

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

Procurement processes are becoming increasingly important in establishing a competitive organization. (Simchi-Levy, D.; Kaminski & Simchi-Levy, 2000) states that the concept of purchase and delivery is used synonymously with logistics, which includes customers, suppliers, purchases, and operations. However, the literature is beginning to document procurement as managing relationships along the supply chain. These relationships are considered to be of great importance, and the measurement of these relationships and how they can be a source of competitive advantage has established significant reactivity in the literature. (Carr & Pearson, 1999; O'Toole & Donaldson, 2000; Corsten & Felde, 2004).

Organisational-specific forces similar to technological change, competitive forces, globalization and demanding customers are pushing organisations under pressure to increase value, distribution act, and receptiveness while minimising expenses. This has caused in changes in the nature of rivalry from company to supply chain versus supply chain for market sovereignty. Therefore, vibrant companies, those familiarising to the changing setting, are gradually more discovering ways to control their supply chains, and in particular, to carefully evaluate the accountability of suppliers in their actions. Supervisors constantly pursue opportunities and challenges by developing their relationships with supply chains partners to acquire information that can aid them in their decision making. Subsequently the progression of technology information systems has facilitated upkeep of reciprocally valuable relationships with major suppliers and customers in companies' supply chains bring about in enhanced performance of the whole channel as well as its competitiveness.

The research emphasises on examining the effects of buyer-supplier relationships management on company's competitiveness. This chapter highlights the background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives and research questions, assumptions, significance of the study, limitations, delimitations and definition of key terms.

1.1 Background of the study

The Mutare Pick n Pay branch was opened in December 2015 with the vision of striving to discourse socio-economic challenges through the supply of high-quality, cheap and affordable food for all customers, while providing significant employment and economic opportunities

across its value chain. TM Pick n Pays' firms are looking for innovative methods of improving competitive advantage, as the competitiveness in retail sector is continuously increasing, Barrat, (2004). Procurement is becoming a strategic function and key factor in competitive positioning. In order to supply high-quality , affordable food products to its consumers , TM Pick n Pay , has adopted the concept of business to business marketing rather than just contractual agreements with its suppliers , according to Whipple et al ,(2010), collaborative relationships provide greater advantages than transactional relationships. Rivalry has further heat up the branch as illegal vendors with less priced goods increase on streets. The Zimbabwean economy which TM Pick n Pay is operating in, is characterized by low consumer disposable income and liquidity crisis. Challenges associated with getting the right product and service to the right place at lowest cost continue to intensify , shortages of \$US has also caused suppliers to struggle in raising foreign currency to import raw materials leading to low supply against high demand of consumer products. The surrounding challenges require the supermarket to employ strategies that can increase customer satisfaction, competitiveness and profitability. It is more idealistic to engage and maintain long term relationships between the buyer and its suppliers so as to gain mutual benefits on both parties. Collaboration limits transaction costs as specific assets increase with contract frequency and higher levels of depending on each other (Gadde and Hakansson 2001; Braxton, 2008). TM Pick n Pay and its suppliers, Lobels, Dendairy, Delta, and Brand Africa are engaged into collaborative relationships. Buyer supplier relationship serves an important source of company competitive advantage because customers have a wide choice to complete their purchase orders, be it other supermarkets, wholesalers or street vendors, according to (Kaufman, Wood and They el, 2000).

The unfavourable economic situations enables more need for consumers to maximize value of their low incomes through purchase of less priced products. TM Pick n Pay engages in strategies which leads to the accessibility of variety, quality and affordable products in order to satisfy and increase its market share. The research is based on assessing the effectiveness of buyer-supplier relationship marketing to competitive pricing of food products.

The competitiveness and financial performance of a firm is highly depended on the firm's ability to handle its supply side, Nagurney, (2010). Firms have now realised that they do not have increase efficiencies only within their organisation but their whole supply chain has to be competitive. Competitive advantage is emphasized by Barney, (1991) as value –creating strategy which is not being implemented by any current or potential competitors. Meaning that TM Pick n Pay has to engage in value – creating strategies that informal sector which has

characterized the economy, is not able to implement and one of the strategies is collaborative relationships. Cash shortages, unemployment and company closures has cause an increase in low consumer spending. The increases in formal retail sector also give rise to price sensitivity of consumers. To create competitive advantage develop good customer care culture and implement new ideas different from their competitors. Morgan and Hunt (2004) cited that the importance of long-term and value- adding relationships, have a superior impact on performance and competitiveness outcome.

TM Pick n Pay undertakes promotional campaigns aimed at creating value for money for its customers, the biggest of all being, the big bonanza, and co-operation between itself and its suppliers is more essential to ensure enough stocks in its shelves and prices to be won. As important as it is for company to develop relationships with its customers, so it is for it to foster relationships with its suppliers to ensure quality goods and services, timely and assured deliveries and information flow to assist both organisations in planning . Procurement plays a vital role in organization performance, it influences firm's quality performance, product innovation, customer responsiveness and firms' financial performance Kaufman, Wood and Theyel, (2000). Developing buyer-supplier relationships include a lifecycle of relationship, client involvement, confidentiality, relationship quality, trust and commitment , it is important for TM Pick n Pay to maintain long term relationships for mutual benefits , however challenged are faced in building and maintaining such relations, cultural differences and language barriers between TM Pick n Pay and its foreign partners , Brands Africa may also increase instability in development of collaborative business Athur, (2007).

According to Kannan and Tan, (2005), from the buyers perspective , the benefits of close relationship with suppliers at an operational level are improved of quality of products and services , reduced cost and reduced lead time , he also states that at the strategic level , the benefits are realized in the form of competitiveness, increased market share and innovation. Hanfield, (2001) states that relationships can either take the form of buyer captive or supplier captive. Buyer captive results in situations where the buyer has one supplier or manufacturer to complete the order with and supplier captive is a situation where the supplier has fewer chances of changing the buyer, thus when it has few clients to deliver to. In both cases, relationships have to be mutually beneficial for both firms to reduce costs and share profits. Global markets and new technologies demand buyers to foster new relationships throughout. Buyer –supplier relationship marketing is not only economic exchanges between the buyer and seller but also social exchanges of trust and commitment of both parties Groonroos, (1997).

1.1.1 Justification of the study

The goal of the study was to compile data on the impact of buyer-supplier relationship in achieving goal of competitive advantage. The importance of this chapter is of developing the background to the whole research. Key details of the study are brought forward, which tries to explain why the researcher did a study on this topic. The chapter goes to look at the delinquency provoking the researcher, the exact objectives, delimitations and assumptions reflected as well. As a result, the research ought to be useful to the student, retailers and to the university.

1.2 Problem statement

TM Pick n Pay is operating under a stiff competition and in an unfavourable economic conditions yet its vision is to deliver value for money to its customers. To deliver quality, affordable products and services, the supermarket has moved from traditional way of marketing to collaborative partnerships with its major suppliers. The study aims to find the impact of this adopted strategy by TM Pick n Pay, and how it has enhanced the supermarket performance and competitiveness, it also aims to emphasise on the challenges it is facing in maintaining buyer-supplier relationships.

1.3 Objectives of the study

1. To determine the role of collaborative partnerships on enhancing company competitive advantage.
2. To establish strategies to maintain long-term buyer supplier relationships.
3. To determine challenges facing buyers that leads to buyer-supplier relationship failures.

1.4 Research questions

1. What is the role of buyer-supplier collaboration on retailer's competitive advantage?
2. How the goal of competitive advantage can be achieved through the role of buyer-supplier relationship?
3. What strategies should a buyer employ to maintain long-term relationships with suppliers?
4. What buyer-supplier relationship management practices does TM Pick n Pay use?
5. What challenges do buyers face that lead to buyer-supplier relationship management failure?
6. How can firms in the retail sector deal with the challenges of buyer-supplier relationship management?

1.5 Assumptions

The research comes up with the following assumptions;

1. Both questioners and interviews would co-operate and respond truthfully.
2. The sample used would be a fair representation of the total population
3. A minimum response of 80% will be achieved to make the analysis possible and credible.
4. Costs of administering the research will be within the researcher's limits and that the top management will fully support the research project and implement the study recommendations.

1.6 Significance of the study

1.6.1 To the retail sector

1. The research has helped to identify the positive effects of collaborations to the organization
2. The researcher believes to study will help the retailers in implementing business to business marketing and gain the benefits associated with it

1.6.2 To the university

1. The research will be used by the Bindura University Library, if it is approved and will provide reference material for both lecturers and students when doing studies related to buyer-supplier relationships.

1.6.3 To the student

1. The research will help in the fulfilment of the requirements of attaining a Bachelor of Commerce Degree in Purchasing and Supply.
2. The research will help in applying and analysing the knowledge acquired from relationship management course.
3. It will also help the student in adding more experience skills and knowledge in carrying out other studies in future.

1.7 Delimitations

1. A sample would be made from all the required groups to participate in the study and these are managers, employees and supplier representatives.
2. The researcher used the company documents from 2013 to the date of research in order to compare and contrast information gathered for valid and reliable results.

3. The researcher used the most, medium and least supplying suppliers who have collaborated with the supermarket in order to obtain fair representation of suppliers.

1.8 Limitations

1. There was limited time to spend with the employees and management as they had other core activities to attend to. However the researcher set up an appointment with management before the visit and gives employees fill in questionnaires at a convenient time within two days.
2. Sample size may not be the true representatives of the target population. To ensure reliability of the research findings, researcher has used approved methods in drawing a sample size.
3. Access to critical information may be a challenge as the organisations under the study may not be able to disclose such information due to company's privacy, however the researcher ensured confidentiality in order to access the information.

1.9 Definition of key terms

1. Competition- it is a rivalry of business offering the same products in the same market Braxton, (2008).
2. Procurement - Whipple et al, (2010) cited that it is the business management function that ensures identification, sourcing and accessing the external resources that an organisation needs to achieve its goals and objectives.
3. Collaboration –According to Griffith and Myers, (2005) collaboration is an act of working jointly to bring resources into a required relationship to achieve operations of the parties involved in a mutually benefiting way.
4. TM Pick 'n Pay- it is a new branded supermarket formed after joint venture of South African giant supermarkets.
5. Big Bonanza – it is an annual promotional campaign undertaken by TM Pick 'n Pay.

1.10 chapter Summary

The chapter has covered the background of the study which clearly stated the problems that drove the researcher to carry out the study. The chapter also outlined the objectives of the study, the research questions and the assumptions relating to the study. Definition of key terms, limitations and delimitations were also cited in the chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review the theories and research findings from previous studies available in the literature related to the topic of buyer-supplier relationship management in order to provide a theoretical and empirical basis for the study. The conceptual framework on which the research is based and developed.

2.1 Empirical literature review

The goal of an empirical literature review, according to Galvan (1999), is to review the most important aspects of the body of information currently available on a particular research study issue. Its main objective is to update the reader on the state of the field's research literature and to lay the groundwork for further objectives, including establishing a new area of study. Studies that have been published are listed under the literature review evidence. Among them are primarily case studies.

Maloni and Benton (2000) cite that supply chain management (SCM) is a strategy that integrates marketing, distribution, manufacturing, planning, and purchasing functions to manage individual conflicts. It focuses on how companies use processes, technology, suppliers' capabilities to improve their competitive advantage, and the coordination of production, logistics, and materials management functions data in a Maloni and Benton organization. (2000). Supply chain management has been widely recognized as a key contributor to strategic success, helping companies meet the challenges of an increasingly competitive and dynamic environment. Chen, (2004). These pressures have prompted companies to establish closer relationships with a small number of suppliers, who are increasingly involved in many aspects of strategy development and day-to-day operations. Hanfield, (2001). Such relationships are highly interactive and require constant supervision and interpersonal connections between employees of both parties to be effective.

SCM has made positive contributions to core financial metrics, productivity metrics, quality-related metrics, and core business performance metrics among other Lysons and Farrington performance metrics, (2006). These inputs become more important in the development of the buyer-supplier relationship. According to Gunasekaran et al. (2001) SCM is an important

strategic element to increase organizational efficiency and achieve better goals such as increased competitiveness and better customer service and increased profits. Lysons and Farrington, (2006) indicate that the main goals of SCM are to reduce non-value-added activities and associated capital and operational costs, increase customer responsiveness and flexibility in operations. Supply chain and improve performance and cost competitiveness.

2.1.1 Justification of the study

The buyer-supplier relationship in the supply chain is one of the most important elements of supply chain integration Nagurney, A. (2010); Building and managing effective relationships at every link in the supply chain is becoming a requirement for business success. Maloni and Benton (2000) found that a strong buyer-supplier relationship has a significant positive effect on manufacturer performance, supplier performance, and overall chain performance supply. Maloni and Benton (2000) have shown that purchasing is the key to a company's competitive advantage and that increasing profits, market share and technological innovation can be achieved through strategic purchasing, appropriate financial and commercial performance. Gunasekaran et al. (2001) report that effective supply chain management has been identified as of significant importance in achieving and maintaining competitive advantage for companies.

2.2. Defining and explaining buyer-supplier relationship

A buyer is simply the person who receives the commodities or services produced by all supply chain processes and activities, according to Lysons and Farrington's (2006) definition. A retailer is someone who buys goods to resell them for a profit. A supplier is an entity or a person who offers a tangible good or a service, according to Lysons and Farrington (2006). Relationships could be considered a particular class of intangible, unpriced factor that enhances a company's competitiveness Brencic (2001). When people, organizations, and groups within and outside of a corporation interact, Lyons and Farrington's (2006) definition of a relationship is an interconnection or affiliation. The link between a retailer and a supplier is known as the retailer-supplier relationship, with the intention of ensuring shared advantages and the added value of both Griffith and Myers' competitive advantages (2005). A significant factor relating to the connections between buyers and suppliers, according to Nagurney (2010), is that many buyers are creating single source suppliers due to the need to improve quality, lower inventory, create just-in-time systems, and shorten time to market. Cost savings are the ultimate objective of developing these competencies. Brencic (2001) further argued that a firm's retailer-supplier

connections are its most significant sources of competitive advantage and have a direct and indirect impact on the company's worldwide positioning and performance.

According to Nagurney (2010), buyer-supplier relationships have become the foundation of modern economic activity. It is a critical source of organizational competitiveness, performance, and long-term business success (Veludo et al., 2004). It is when a retailer develops a relationship with its suppliers that is more than just a transaction for mutual benefit. According to Gadde and Hakansson (2001), a firm's competitiveness and profitability are highly dependent on its ability to manage the supply side. Furthermore, Griffith and Myers (2005) stated that managing buyer-supplier relationships is a key driver of both customer and shareholder value. However, Autry and Golicic (2010) pointed out that the relationship between buyer supplier relationship management and company competitive advantage is not straightforward. Nagurney (2002, 2010) then emphasized the need for companies to move from transactional marketing towards relational marketing.

2.2.1 Levels of buyer-supplier relationships

A brief description of the types and methods of buyer-supplier relationships according to Emmet and Crocker, (2006) are shown in table 2.0 below.

Table 2.0

Supply base	Relationship	Methods
Multiple sourcing	Arm's length	Competitive tendering and post buying
Fewer suppliers	Co operative	Negotiations and preferred suppliers with framework agreements
Possible single sourcing	Collaborative	Partnership and joint working and difficulty to break or change
Single sourcing	Friendship	Joint working towards continuous improvement

Source: Emmet and Crocker, The relationship driven supply chain (2006)

2.3 Defining and explaining competitive advantage

According to Peteraf and Barney (2003), competitive advantage is the extent to which a company can create a defensible advantage over its competitors. It is a critical component that consists of the capabilities that allow an organization to differentiate itself from its competitor as the result of managerial decision-making. Competitiveness experts include price or cost, quality, service, and adaptability as crucial skills. Crocker and Emmet (2006). Competitive price, premium pricing, value to the consumer, dependable delivery, and product innovation are the dimensions for competitive advantage. Barney and Peteraf (2003). The perspectives that link relationships to competitiveness were clarified by the resource-advantage hypothesis.

2.3.1 Theoretical Frameworks

An overview summary of the resource- advantage (R-A) theory, according to Hunt (2000) and Morgan and Hunt (1996)

A process theory of competitive firm behaviour, advantage theory emphasizes the significance of market segment and resources. Market segments are sets of customers with similar interests and preferences for a firm's products within each group but vastly varied preferences across the categories. According to the R-A theory, resources are physical and intangible things that a company owns and that allow it to generate goods and services quickly and effectively to meet the needs of different market groups. The quest for a greater competitive advantage in resources that will enable a corporation to meet the expectations of its market segments and produce a superior financial outcome is a constant activity in the business world. A company's comparative advantage in resources allows it to take a competitive advantage in a particular market segment and produce superior results. Competitors try to take advantage of or negate the firm's advantage by managing its existing resources, acquiring additional ones, replicating the resource, discovering the same resource or finding a better resource.

According to the R-A hypothesis, a corporation has a competitive advantage in terms of market share when it has the resources necessary to create and provide consumers with goods that are seen to be of higher value at a lower price. The R-A hypothesis also suggests that consumer preferences and tastes vary widely within a given product category and that these preferences and tastes fluctuate dramatically over time. Superior profitability is a company's main goal, which it pursues in the face of difficult and expensive stakeholder information gathering circumstances. The core tenets of the resource theory state that a firm's resources include financial, relational, organizational, relational, physical, legal, human, and legal resources.

In light of the R-A theory, the retailer must take into account the value of its relationships with suppliers and even customers in order to improve its financial situation and obtain a competitive edge. Maintaining long-term partnerships will result in long-term benefits that provide the company a competitive advantage over rival businesses because competition is an ongoing process. A retailer should build trust and cooperation with its suppliers to assure originality and less expensive products in order to acquire high customer satisfaction and a competitive edge. Competitors try to negate a firm's competitiveness by mimicking resources, among other methods. In order for a business to provide its clients with more value at reduced prices, it must promote efficient procurement performance by managing relationships with suppliers. According to Griffith and Myers (2005), management of buyer-supplier relationships is the main source of shareholder and customer value, while Ganesan (1994) indicated that procurement effectiveness is the key to a firm's competitive advantage.

2.3.2 Agency Theory

When one portion, the principal, relies on another part, the agent, to do something for the main, agency theory applies. An agency viewpoint can shed light on interorganizational relationships (Lassar and Kerr 1996; Rossetti and Choi 2008; Eisenhardt 1989). Agency theory deals with principal-agent interactions that exist inside or between organizations and in which the principal delegated work to the agent. In this study, the principal represents the purchasing firm (TM Pick n Pay), while the agent represents its suppliers. The contract between the principal and agent is explored in agency theory with a focus on two issues: the agency problem and the risk sharing problem. The agency problem is divided into two components: aim conflict and verification. Eisenhardt (1989). Risk sharing refers to the difference in risk attitudes between the primary and agent. Agency theory frequently takes the principal's position (Aulakh and Gencturk 2000; Rijdsdijk and Van den Ende 2011), however several new research take both the principal's and agent's perspectives (Dou et al.2009; Van der Valk and Van Iwaarden 2011)

2.3.3 Social Exchange Theory

The social exchange theory is predicated on the idea that exchange and interactions are likely to occur in any sort of business transaction (Blakenburg & Johanson, 1992). This might be described as a connected network of exchange interactions working toward a common objective (Prenekert & Hallen, 2006). This pertains to the system theory, according to which every organization is impacted by both internal and external variables. Where the efficiency of the individual organization's activities determines its level of success.

This relates to supplier relationships since it emphasizes how crucial it is to build and maintain business networks. The notion is predicated on the idea that all supplier-buyer relationships will be advantageous to the firm and will all be of a positive character. The supplier-buyer connections should be given top priority when developing any strategy, according to the hypothesis study.

2.4 The impact of supplier on the buyer

According to BAC (2000), the best supplier relationship varies depending on the product. The relationship is determined by the importance of the business and the intricacy of the supplier market. It is more vital for a retailer to select the best relationship for each individual supplier based on the business condition and timing BAC (2000). The extent of a buyer's dependency on the supplier determines the supplier's power over the buyer, and the dependence derives from the need to maintain the relationship in order to achieve the desired goals. Myers and Griffiths (2005). The effective use of power, whether coercive or no coercive, can achieve coordination in channel activities, raise buyer-supplier satisfaction, increase a firm's competitiveness, and furthermore improve the entire supply chain Maloni and Benton (2000). In order for a buyer and supplier to form a strong collaboration, both parties must recognize and apply a number of aspects. These characteristics include an ongoing communication on subjects other than those generally covered in contractual negotiations, shared product creation, joint quality improvement initiatives, and access to respective internal organizations. Veludo and colleagues (2006).

According to Lemke et al. (2003), suppliers have a significant impact on the overall performance of the firm through cost reduction, joint product, service, and product development. Furthermore, Yang et al. (2009) emphasized the significance of suppliers in terms of ongoing quality improvement across all business processes. Suppliers are also important to a company because they elucidate the significance of procurement to a supermarket that seeks to achieve quality and consumer loyalty According to Ganesan (1994), procurement performance is the focal point of a firm's competitive advantage since it promotes profitability, market share, and product innovation. Quality performance and customer responsiveness may be attained by effective purchasing strategy, Kaufman et al (2000). Lambert and Cooper then defined the worth of a good buyer-supplier relationship in terms of cost, product and service knowledge, and value addition. The connection marketing theory, resource-advantage theory, and agency theory are three major approaches that link relationship dimensions to competitiveness, according to Autry and Golicic (2010).

2.5 Role of Collaboration on retailer competitiveness

Collaborative relationships, also known as creative relationships, involve a small number of suppliers who provide items or services that are critical to a company. Skinner and others (1992). Togar and Sridharam (2002) defined collaboration as two or more members working together to create a competitive advantage through the sharing of information, making joint decisions, and sharing benefits, resulting in profitability, customer satisfaction, and overall firm competitiveness. Nagurney (2010) proposes that collaborations between buyer and supplier require a readiness to collaborate on new and improved ways to operate and compete in the market. Collaborative partnerships between retailers and suppliers are a technique to reduce needless expenditures in the supply chain and add value to products by more effectively understanding and responding to consumer requirements. Tan and Kannan (2005). According to Kim (2001), in a collaborative approach, both parties obtain lower costs by working together to reduce both buyer and supplier operating expenses, which is accomplished through better inventory management and the removal of extraneous tasks and procedures. Buyer-supplier collaboration has a significant impact on the overall firm's flexibility, responsiveness, and modularization capabilities, which in turn helps the firm build capabilities for increasing competitive advantage and profitability.

Relationship expectations are vital for driving collaboration in inter-organizational partnerships. Krause, (2006). (2006). Buyer-supplier collaboration is a shift from transactional commercial agreements to relational exchanges in which the roles of suppliers and buyers are no longer defined just in terms of product ownership transfer but also as mutually beneficial partners. Mr. Mac Neil (2004). Kim (2001) proposed that mutual objectives, integrated policies, cooperative decision making, communication, and sharing of benefits and losses are necessary for effective collaborations. Information sharing, cooperative decision making, and incentive alignment are all variables that facilitate collaborative activity between the buyer and supplier. Bechtel and Handfield (2002). Successful retailer-supplier collaboration can help relieve strain at all critical points in the supply chain system and Relationship expectations are important for motivating inter-organizational collaboration to bring products to market faster, reduce production and logistics costs, drive market share, and increase sales on both sides. Squire and colleagues (2005). Collaboration should be part of strategic business operations planned jointly by supplier and retailer, not merely a list of separate projects.

In order to gain a competitive edge and increase market share, buyers place a major emphasis on developing closer collaborative connections with suppliers. Long-term connections,

according to Ganesan (1994), enable organizations to be more efficient in procurement while also being more effective in delivering quality and lowering transaction costs. Bendapudi and Berry (1997) described relationship enhancement as widening and enhancing the buyer's relational relationships with service providers. Bonds are the foundations of connections that have an impact. The consistency of the buyer-seller collaboration If the bond is strong, the result will be long-term cooperation between both parties, impacting competitive advantage and positive financial performance. Gronroos (1994). Different types of bonds form between retailers and suppliers as a result of mutual adjustment between counterparts Morgan and Hunt, (2004). These bonds influence the exchange process and the expenses of moving to another supplier or buyer Chen (2003). A bond can act as an exit barrier, lowering its value and having a detrimental impact on the partnership. Chen (2003). According to McCall (1970), collaborative connections are psychological, emotional, economic, or physical attachments in a relationship that emerge via association and interaction and serve to strengthen the partnership.

2.5.1 Temporal bonds

Temporal ties are dimensions of relationships. According to McCall (1970), relationships are dynamic and grow over time by providing a boundary for interaction and possible interactions. Fort et al. (2003) identified four stages of relationship development: pre-relational, exploring, developing, and stable. According to Gronroos (1994), relationship growth is divided into three stages: initiative, purchase, and product use. Castro et al. (2005), on the other hand, categorized relationship growth in terms of experience, uncertainty, distance, and commitment. According to Dwyer et al. (2007), relationship stages develop from mutual awareness, exploration, expansion, commitment, and dissolution. All relationship stages change throughout time, as does the tie between buyer and seller.

2.5.2 Social bond

Social bonds are used to strengthen the relationship between the parties concerned. According to Dwyer et al. (2007), psychological loyalty is built between buyer and supplier and is transmitted in decision making. Social relationships serve as a motivator to maintain a relationship. It causes the parties to stick closer together and reflects a higher level of mutual affinity, leading the store and supplier to collaborate and gain mutual benefits. McCall (1970). It is a marketing activity in which the outcome of the exchange may be determined by bargaining, negotiation, power, conflict, and shared meaning between buyer and seller.

Negotiations and bargaining features of social bonding may occur at the beginning of the relationship, according to Wilson et al. (1995). Negotiations and bargaining are parts of social bonding that may occur early in the relationship, whereas shared meaning emerges as the relationship progresses. McCall (1970) stated that social bonds emerge over time as personnel from both firms become acquainted with one another during the cooperation, and those that interact tend to have strong bonds with one another. Social relationships provide barriers to transferring partners, resulting in a lengthier partnership.

2.5.3 Structural bond

According to Chen (2003), structural bonds are formed as a result of one party's need to achieve its goals, and these bonds bring the members together, keep them together, and cause them to interact in a relationship. Bendapudi and Berry (1997) described structural bonding as the application of marketing programs that produce value for the customer and necessitate investments by the retailer that cannot be salvaged if the relationship ends, and switching suppliers can be costly. According to Berry (1995), there are three stages of relationship marketing. Level one depends on pricing incentives to establish client loyalty, but creating a competitive edge is difficult because prices can be matched with competitors. Level two is based on social bonds, while level three is based on structural solutions to consumer problems that include value-added services. Customers cannot acquire these benefits on their own since they are too costly. Structural bonds form only when a relationship has been in place for a long period, and that bond brings partners together from that point forward through relationship maintenance Turnbull and Wilson (1989). Hsieh et al. (2005) defined structural bonds as value-added services that are designed to provide information and knowledge about items that are not available elsewhere and are costly for the buyer and supplier to terminate the relationship. Structural bonds make it harder for competitors to mimic, giving a collaborative partnership firm a competitive advantage.

2.5.4 Benefits of buyer-supplier collaborative partnerships

Table 2.1

Aspect	Collaboration brings
Forecast accuracy	Increased external visibility will force better
Lead time	Reductions following sharing and joint improvements
Inventory	Reduced as stock levels fall

Utilization of resources	Improved in a leaner operation with less waste
Costs	Reduced and improved
Service levels	Increased and improved
People	Trust and improved relationships

Source: Emmet and Crocker, The relationship driven supply chain (2006)

2.6 Variables for good long-term relationships

Long-term partnerships allow businesses to respond to changes in consumer demand. Nagurney (2010). In B2B marketplaces, attaining long-term orientation has become one of the most important concerns in the buyer-seller relationship Ford (2001). Morgan and Hunt (2004) highlighted the importance of maintaining relationships between buyer and supplier, stating that a long term relationship improves a firm's procurement performance, which in turn influences a firm's quality performance, product innovation, customer responsiveness, and finally a firm's financial performance. Relationships tend to strengthen over time, with results often improving year after year. It tends to improve more steadily over time as all parties involved, the customer and vendor, communicate more. Relationships may last longer if the necessary factors are in place and both partners find it appealing to explore further participation, according to Emmet and Crocker (2006). According to Morgan and Hunt (2004) and Gronroos (1994), relationship management, which focuses on approaches to building, developing, and maintaining successful relational exchange, is shifting marketing orientation from a short-term transactional process to a long-term intimate relationship with involved parties. Trust, dedication, cooperation, communication, and mutual goals are the most important characteristics for long-term buyer-supplier relationships, according to Winsor and Tan (2000). Without these elements, it is difficult for a company to establish long-term connections and attain competitiveness.

2.6.1 Trust

Trust has been defined as an individual's or group's expectation that another party's verbal or written pledge may be depended on (2000). According to Anderson and Narus (1990), it is the firm's conviction that another company will take activities that will result in favorable outcomes for the firm as well as acts that will not result in negative outcomes. Smith et al. define trust as "confidence in the motives of the other party in settings involving risk or belief of benign action to the other party" (2002). The emphasis is on a partner's intention and ability to maintain promises, and it deals with partner attributes such as work specific abilities and delivery

reliability, Trust has been defined as an individual's or group's expectation that another party's verbal or written pledge may be depended on (2000). According to Anderson and Narus (1990), it is the firm's conviction that another company will take activities that will result in favourable outcomes for the firm as well as acts that will not result in negative outcomes. Smith et al. define trust as "confidence in the motives of the other party in settings involving risk or belief of benign action to the other party" (2002). The emphasis is on a partner's intention and ability to maintain promises, and it deals with partner attributes such as work specific abilities and delivery reliability.

According to Harwood (2006), buyer-supplier relationships typically involve four distinct parties: the buying organization, in this case TM Pick „n Pay, the buyer, who is a person who represents the buying organization, the vendor organization, and the sales representative, who is a person who represents the vendor organization. According to Harwood (2006), trust exists between these parties in a number of different contexts, starting with the personal relationship between a potential customer and a salesperson. Organizational trust is the term used to describe the degree of trust that the buyer and the sales representative have in the selling and the buying company. A buyer and the buying organization, a sales representative and the vendor organization, as well as an employee and their employer, can all have an intra-organizational relationship of trust. There can be intra-organizational trust between an individual and their employer as well as between a buyer and the buying organization and a sales representative and the vendor organization. Furthermore, trust between organizations is known as inter-organizational trust. Organizations are groups of people, and the interplay between the various levels of trust that exist between various people and the various hierarchical levels inside the two organizations Davis and Hunt (2008). The ability of the store to maintain long-term partnerships depends on each of the four trust-related entities. Due to the presence of these trusts, the buyer and supplier can mutually commit to an organization's strategic performance, which results in value creation. Eggert and Ulaga (2006). According to Hunt and Davis (2008), purchasing behavior is strongly linked to value addition of goods and services, thereby competitive advantage, increasing consumer pleasure and loyalty within retailing.

According to Ganesan (1994), trust encourages retail buyers and suppliers to concentrate on the relationship's long-term benefits, which ultimately improves the performance outcome in buyer-supplier interactions as well as a firm's competitiveness and transaction cost reduction. While Handfield and Bechtel (2002) claim that long-term relationships are the key to trust's

influence on buyer-supplier collaboration, Morgan and Hunt (2004) observed that trust has a significant impact on establishing cooperation inside a partnership. Moreover, Smith et al. (2002) showed that continuity in buyer-supplier interactions depends on trust. Since it lowers transaction costs, negotiation costs, monitoring and oversight expenses, and uncertainty in information sharing, trust was emphasized in the transaction cost economic theory as a driver of economic value, replacing control. Chu and Dyer (2003). Trust is viewed as a crucial component in the relational exchange theory to create and maintain relational exchange Handfield and Bechtel (2002). Gaining mutual trust between buyer and seller through information and knowledge exchange that results in a collaborative learning process and the sharing of costs for identifying and seizing new possibilities increases organizational profitability (Inkpen, 2001; Lado et al, 2008). In general, trust is among the variables that contribute to the upkeep of long-term relationships and competitive advantage for both suppliers and retailers.

2.6.2 Commitment

The ability to commit to a relationship, the willingness to make temporary sacrifices to uphold the partnership, and the belief in the relationship's stability all contribute to the development of a stable relationship (Gounaris, 2005; Ulaga and Eggert, 2006). According to Ganesan (1994), commitment to a relationship is being prepared to make short-term sacrifices in order to reap long-term rewards. This goes beyond just weighing the costs and advantages of a relationship. According to (Ulaga and Eggert, 2006; Ganesan 1994; Morgan and Hunt 2004), trust is a key factor in determining how committed a relationship will be. By lowering the sense of danger associated with partners acting opportunistically, boosting confidence that short-term injustices would be rectified over time, and decreasing transaction costs in an exchange relationship, trust strengthens commitment to a relationship. According to Rajagopal (2005), commitment is also seen as a crucial sign of relationship quality, and it can be summed up as the desire to forge a solid connection and the readiness to make temporary compromises in order to keep the relationship going.

Rajagopal, 2005 set out that commitment between buyer and supplier is an ongoing desire to preserve a valued relationship, supporting Gounaris' (2005) claim that it is the assumption that trading partners are prepared to dedicate energy to sustaining the relationship. Partners provide resources through commitment to maintain and advance the collaboration's objective. John and Heide (2009). Retailers and suppliers that are committed to one another are more likely to believe that their current relationships are significant and should be maintained for the long

term, which improves the procurement process. Stanko and co. (2007). Retailer and supplier can maintain the relationship through recognizing and internalizing one another's objectives and values. According to Kwon (2005), strong levels of commitment are necessary for both parties to create and maintain a competitive advantage. Commitment is the primary force behind long-term relationships. Retailers compete on the basis of their procurement performance Stanely, (2004), and the success of that performance is heavily reliant on the level of commitment and trust between the retailer and its suppliers Gefen (2000). According to Ford (2001), the majority of strategic alliance failures were caused by a lack of commitment among the parties involved. Supply chain planning is built on information exchange and partnership between partners, both of which are crucial for the successful management of the supply chain.

2.6.3 Communication

Relationships and organizational success depend on effective communication. According to Ford (2001), the quality of information sharing involves its correctness, relevance, sufficiency, and credibility. When buyers and suppliers communicate crucial details about materials and product design challenges, they are more likely to boost product quality, decrease customer response times, and save money through improved operational and product design. Gounaris (2005). The success of a connection is based on how much information is provided between the buyer and seller. Information is thought to be a potentially effective source of competitive advantage, replacing inventory.

According to Anderson and Narus (1990), communication is the official and informal transmission of pertinent information between businesses. The willingness of both parties to exchange crucial information demonstrates open information sharing, according to Mavondo and Rodrigo (2001). Furthermore, a lack of trust can result in reluctance to provide information and make it challenging to discuss sensitive information like financial data, which can impede the parties' ability to plan strategically Fawcett and Marnan (2001). Mavondo and Rodrigo (2001) discussed the problem of cross-cultural communication and information exchange challenges and how they might be a major barrier to business. Coordination, contentment, dedication, and performance of channel members can all be improved by effective communication, according to Goodman and Dion (2001). The presence of trust and support makes people more eager to share information with others and encourages two-way communication. It will aid in balancing supply and demand, boost profitability, and improve relationship quality, all of which will boost business competitiveness (Bac, 2000). Feather and Marnan (2001). Effective communication is a vital part of partnerships between buyers and

suppliers, say Goodman and Dion (2001). In order to connect with suppliers, procurement operations use a number of media, including the phone, fax, face-to-face meetings, mail, e-mail, Internet, and electronic data interchange (EDI). This improves the efficiency of procurement, customer happiness, and profitability. Roger and Mavondo (2001). The costs and effects of faulty estimates can be reduced by frequent communication between merchants and suppliers, which can speed up timely and accurate responses to turbulent markets. Bird (2005). A less powerful channel party has a propensity to withhold information and feedback from more powerful ones when there is an unequal power connection. Therefore, the restricted information flow will hinder the channel interactions and have an impact on the effectiveness of the supply chain. According to Bird (2005), good communication is essential for preserving a long-term buyer relationship and achieving excellent procurement performance.

2.6.4 Cooperation

Cooperation is described as complementing coordinated acts made by businesses in a dependent relationship to attain a single goal or a set of goals, with the expectation that this cooperation will be reciprocated in the future. Narus and Anderson (1990). The cooperation between the retailer and supplier, according to Gefen (2000), displays the expectations of working together to accomplish both shared and individual goals. The cooperative B2B connection is primarily supported by the mutual trust of the participants in the business. Without a solid relationship, suppliers and buyers are less motivated to cooperate and share information Stanely (2004). According to (Anderson and Narus 1990; Nagurney 2010), cooperation and satisfaction have a favourable association with channel dispersion. Cooperation among partner employees will boost a company's productivity and effectiveness, enabling the achievement of shared goals and objectives. Narus and Anderson (1990). According to Gefen (2000), collaboration is necessary for exchange partners to coordinate supply chains and deal with extremely uncertain consumer demand in a dynamic economic climate, which compels retailers to seek more responsiveness and supply flexibility from their suppliers. Cooperating spouses better comprehend one another's expectations and desires, which ultimately assist them in achieving their shared objectives to enhance the competitiveness and quality of their relationships. Wang and Liu (2000). Cooperating parties are more likely to preserve long-term partnerships and improve performance.

Buyers and sellers' cooperation is evaluated based on their honesty, decency, reliability, and reputation. According to Barrat (2004), the benefits of collaboration make exchange parties more confidence to engage in cooperative activities and avoid opportunistic behaviours, which

enhances the effectiveness of procurement. The degree of the retailer's cooperation with the supplier, according to Maloni and Benton (2000), increases the supplier's leverage over the retailer. In order to reach targeted goals, maintaining the channel relationship is necessary. Cooperation also reflects the importance and competence of the supplier's goods and services, which leads to effective results. Benton and Maloni.

2.6.5 Mutual goals

The concept of reciprocal goals is defined by Kwon, (2005) as the degree to which partners share goals that can only be fulfilled via collaborative activity and the maintenance of the relationship. According to Kwon (2005), shared goals are a compelling argument for maintaining a relationship. Mutual objectives influence performance satisfaction, which in turn influences how committed a couple is to one another. A similar but broader idea is shared values, which are described as "the extent to which partners have beliefs in common about what behaviors, goals, and policies are important, unimportant, appropriate or inappropriate, and right or wrong" by Morgan and Hunt (1994, p. 25). More so than individual ambitions, shared objectives promote cooperation and stewardship actions that will result in achievement. The idea of shared objectives motivates both the customer and the seller to stay in the partnership for the long run, resulting in successful mutual competition.

2.7 Challenges of buyer-supplier relationship management

Barrat (2004) suggests that long-term relationships foster trust, commitment, and relationship dynamics that dampen the positive or negative impact of commitment on consumption. They believe that because parties in a long-term relationship gain a high level of experience with each other, clients may find that service providers have lost their ability to be objective, or their thinking has become outdated, or they too much, he argues, may lead you to believe. Therefore, it adds less value. Barrat, (2004). The authors also found that partners in long-term relationships may have higher expectations of other providers, which may increase the likelihood of dissatisfaction or this suggests that the parties may be acting opportunistically by abusing the trust between the two parties. According to Narain and Singh (2012), splits between buyers and suppliers are frequently brought about by one side's perception that the other party is growing stale as the relationship develops. Long-term connections, according to Liu and Wang (2000) and Kwon (2005), give the impression that the agency no longer invests effort in developing original ideas for the client. The main motivation for clients to transfer partners is

the need for more original ideas. According to Narain and Singh (2012), relationships between buyers and suppliers can succeed or fail based on communication and trust.

1. Relationship achievements are as well hindered by the following summarized aspects according to Emmet and Crocker, (2006).
2. Absence of trust: The fear here is usually of giving information that will be made available to the competition or used against the providers.
3. Poor Communication: This usually means the absence of inadequate up-to-date information sharing and the format and method of communication being used will be inappropriate.
4. No big picture view: focusing on own issues and problems without employing new ways and methods.
5. No risk taking: Fear of depending on one partner and risk associated with such.
6. Wanting quick and short-term wins: In reality success will depend on time and effort over longer periods.
7. No sharing of benefits: The power view of keeping it all, whereas all should save from mutual collaborations.
8. No planning, all kick and rush: Collaboration involves hard work and skills to build the relationship and there is need for adequate strategic planning.
9. Lack of top support: rigid company rules or lack of top management support.
10. Fear of change: Remaining with the status quo in times of change and stable turbulence.
11. Prefer power-based adversary transactional approach: some firms prefer the old way of marketing management the use of Porter's theory.

2.8 Chapter summary

The impact of buyer-supplier relationship management on business competitiveness was covered in this chapter through a review of previous research by other authors. The researcher reviewed the literature in this chapter with a focus on the study's objectives before turning to secondary sources of data. The relevance of the abstracted data and its connection to the study were considered before presentation. Research methodology will be the main topic of the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEACH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The theoretical framework for this investigation was described in the preceding chapter. This chapter explains the methods and assumptions that are used to acquire data. The research philosophy may have an impact on the way the study is carried out. Answering the research questions, resolving the research problem, and achieving the planned objectives, as outlined in chapter one, are all made possible by the research paradigms, methods, and methodologies that were applied. Consequently, the following is the chapter's goal:

1. To evaluate research approaches and research designs used.
2. To expound on research methodologies adopted.
3. To introduce the data collection methods and research instruments developed and used to collect data to answer questions.
4. To describe the research population, sample and sampling procedures.
5. To explain the validity and reliability of instruments used to collect data.
6. To explain the ethical considerations, limitation and delimitations applied.

3.1Research Approach

The researcher employed a mixed technique approach. A mixed method approach integrates both qualitative and quantitative methods.

3.1.1The Qualitative Approach

This approach focuses on "what" and "why" people believe the way they do. Considering TM Pick n Pay store that wants to increase customer traffic as an example. A thorough investigation reveals that more women frequent this store than men. An in-depth conversation with potential customers in the category is a good way to find out why men weren't coming to the business according to Leung and Shek's (2011) .The store doesn't have enough items for men, which is why there are fewer women visiting the store. However, this was only understood by personally interacting with them and understanding why they didn't visit the store because there were more female products which are groceries and other basic commodities than male products. As an

example, after successfully interviewing female customers, visiting the nearby stores and malls, and selecting them through random sampling.

The goals of the qualitative approach were succinctly stated by Leedy and Ormrod (2010:136). Description, interpretation, verification, and evaluation were the four objectives they specified. First, researchers that use a qualitative approach shed light on the characteristics of certain circumstances, contexts, processes, interactions, systems, or people. Secondly, it gives the researcher new understanding of a certain occurrence, new theoretical views on that phenomenon, and the ability to identify issues with the phenomenon. Thirdly, it enables the researchers to examine the applicability of particular hypotheses, assertions, theories, or generalizations in actual situations. Last but not least, it gives a way for a researcher to assess the efficiency of particular inventions, programs, or practices. Typically, qualitative research does not allow the researcher to determine cause-and-effect relationships, to respond to queries like "What led to what, or why did that occur?"

According to Sepeng (2010), Qu and Dumay (2011), Klein and Olbrecht (2011), and other experts, the qualitative approach has certain characteristics. They assert that the qualitative method has two features: it focuses on things that happen in a natural environment (the actual world), and it involves investigating these occurrences in all of their complexity. The findings are not oversimplified by the researchers. The researchers make an effort to present the subject in its complex form since they are aware that the issue they are researching has numerous dimensions and layers. The researcher is used as a tool. The qualitative approach presupposes that understanding any social phenomenon under study requires the ability of the investigator to analyse and make sense of the phenomenon. Its foundation is the philosophy.

Finally, it responds to the circumstances, demands, and requirements of the stakeholders locally. Instead of using numerical data, the qualitative approach relies on converting information from observations, reports, and recordings into written words.

3.1.2 The quantitative approach

The quantitative approach, according to Everest (2014), entails gathering numerical data, making observations and measurements of occurrences that can be statistically analyzed, duplicated, and replicated by the same or other researchers under similar circumstances. The qualitative approach's supporters assert that its capacity to turn data into statistics offers it a significant advantage over the qualitative approach (Rose, Spinks & Canhoto, 2015). If results are quantified, they are easily acceptable. This lends the quantitative approach's conclusions

subjectivity and dependability. In addition, Sepeng (2010) believes that it permits logical reasoning, scientifically validating ideas, and gathering conventional data, typically from a sizable number of respondents. According to quantitative purists, social observations ought to be treated as entities in the same manner that physical scientists treat physical objects. Qu and Dumay (2011) argue that social science research should be objective and that the observer is distinct from the things being seen. Real causes of social scientific outcomes can be reliably and validly discovered, and time and context-free generalization is desirable and feasible (Klein & Olbrecht, 2011). The researcher mainly used the quantitative approach through issuing of questionnaires, to carry out the study.

In the quantitative approach, researchers eliminate biases, keep a healthy emotional distance from the subjects of their research, and test or empirically support their stated ideas (Sepeng, 2010; Everest, 2014). The facts and the reasons behind behavior are highlighted by the quantitative approach. It attempts to increase population and to identify broad trends in a population as opposed to specific patterns for a single person. The quantitative approach has five qualities, according to Leung and Shek (2011). In order to assure its reliability and validity, it first relies on logical approaches, such as testing hypotheses that follow explicit norms and processes. Accuracy and precision in measuring are also necessary. Second, the study must be conducted with objectivity throughout. The researcher develops into an impartial, unbiased, and detached scientist. Thirdly, it is crucially important that the results are representative and generalizable in order to explain social events and forecast outcomes. Fourthly, using mathematical models, statistical techniques, and presentations, the quantification of the findings is emphasized. Finally, reliability, internal and external validity, and impartiality are fundamentally important aspects of the study's criteria.

3.2 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive research design since the study is intended to gather qualitative data that would describe the impact of buyer-supplier relationships on the organisation's competitiveness. Bryman and Bell, (2007) view a research design as the framework which provides for the collection and analysis of data. Creswell (2009) defined research design as the strategies and procedures for study that cover the choice between general hypotheses and specific techniques for data gathering and analysis. He continued by outlining the three different sorts of research designs: mixed methods, qualitative, and quantitative. Quantitative methods test objective theories by looking at relationships between variables, whereas qualitative methods test theories through questions, procedures, and data collection and

interpretation. A mixed method combines qualitative and quantitative techniques. A research design, according to Kumar (2005), is the regular strategy a researcher employs to respond to inquiries about dependability, objectivity, truthfulness, and financial circumstances. Additionally, he divides research into three categories: explanatory research, descriptive research, and co-relational research. According to Saunders et al definition's from 2007, a research technique is a procedure that includes the types of data gathering, analysis, and interpretation that researchers suggest for their investigations. Explanatory qualitative and descriptive quantitative methods were both used by the researcher to gather data and analyse information.

Since the research intended to learn more about the target population's perspectives, it is also primarily qualitative. In this study, the researcher sought to understand how respondents felt about the role that the buyer-supplier relationship had in accomplishing the objective of competitive advantage. Since it is one of the techniques in which the procedures are formalized and explicated in a less rigid way, the qualitative approach was also a significant factor. The role of buyer-supplier relationships in achieving the goal of competitive advantage was examined using the case study of TM Pick n Pay. Because these techniques are seen as particularly useful in producing an in-depth, complete evaluation of the case, case studies frequently favour them.

While descriptive research was used to describe the population under investigation in light of some key variables, exploratory research was used to uncover ideas and insights. The reliability, validity, and dependability of the research are all improved by combining qualitative and quantitative research designs.

3.2.1 Justification of the research design

A descriptive research design was used because it provides insight of what the research is trying to convey to the reader. The descriptive research design helped to describe fully the impact of buyer-supplier relationship on achieving goal of competitive advantage, and it bridges the gap between qualitative and quantitative research which helps quits the debate which is the best. Also by using a descriptive research design, the data obtained can be presented in different meaningful ways which include graphs, pie charts and tables Dawson (2002).

3.3. Descriptive research

According to Shuttleworth (2008), descriptive study design is a scientific methodology that entails watching and describing a subject's activity without in any way altering it. According to Dawson (2002), it is information-oriented and seeks to identify the circumstances, issues, or viewpoints that are prevalent at a certain period. Through the use of questionnaires and interviews, descriptive research design enables the researcher to get insight into the implications of retailer-supplier relationships on retailer competitive advantage. Reporting on events is more versatile when done through descriptive research. According to Dawson (2002), it is helpful to pinpoint the fields of study that can help with the analysis of abstract data in cases when models cannot be created.

The researcher was able to use several data gathering procedures with the descriptive method and had information provided about them. It makes it possible to predict a problem's course of action. Even when there is no way to create control over the variables, the researcher is still able to report on what is occurring and what has already occurred.

3.4 Exploratory research

Unstructured and informal methods are used in exploratory research designs to gather data for studies. It is qualitative in nature and involves identifying and paying attention to people's reactions in a carefully constructed environment. It is designed to define and clarify a problem. To obtain non-biased information and cut down on formality, it was decided to use both ways.

3.5 Target Population Sample

According to Sullivan (2007), the population refers to the people who are included in a study. Population was defined as people, individuals, organizations or groups, and communities by Saunders et al. This refers to a particular group of individuals with a particular interest that the researcher employed to carry out the study. The 18 employees who performed purchasing duties and the 3 managers who participated in decision-making at the TM Pick n Pay Mutare branch made up the target population. Ten sales representatives from the under-researched supermarket suppliers made comprised the target population from the supplier's side. The researcher used quantitative research method through issuing of questionnaires, to determine the sampling size. The respondents used for this study were 31 workers from a population of 40.

3.6 Population and sample frame

Table 3.0

Sample elements	Target population
Management	3
Retailer departmental buyer (supervisors)	6
Supplier agent (sales representatives)	10
Merchandiser	12
Total	31

The above information was obtained from the TM Pick ‘n Pay Mutare data base.

3.7 Sampling frame

According to Saunders et al. (2007), sampling is the process of choosing a subset of the complete population to serve as a representative sample of the full population. A sample frame is a list of the population's members that the author used to determine the sample size. Due to the tiny size of the community, the researcher employed the entire population as the sample size, which resulted in a total of 31 responses. The senior management, personnel of the procurement department, suppliers' agents—who are the ones who engage with each other in the buyer-supplier relationship—and merchandisers were employed by the researcher to acquire data on the firm's competitive position and degree of customer satisfaction.

3.7.1 Sampling techniques

The researcher employed judgemental sampling, including sampling with probability and non-probability, as well as the census approach. To select the sample size from the target population, the census sampling method was utilized. When the population is too small, a census is the method of choice, as Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) pointed out. Every member of the population is counted during a census. Considering that the population is too tiny, the researcher used the entire target population as the sample size.

Since information on persons who work directly with suppliers was needed, judgment was used to choose the target demographic. It is based on the knowledge the researcher has and the expertly expressed judgment. This entails the purposeful selection of individuals from the available population based on the researcher's capacity to do so. The procurement department's employees and managers who work directly with suppliers were used in the study. According to Kent (2007), purposive sampling is based on the researcher's judgment and the criteria that were used to choose the sample. Purposive sampling has the benefit of offering a wide variety

of non-probability sampling approaches from which the researcher can draw conclusions. These distinct techniques each produce different intended results, which support the sample under study. However, because it is reliant on personal judgment, purposeful sampling is quite vulnerable to researcher bias.

3.7.2 Stratified sampling

This sampling technique divides the population elements into strata or subgroups initially, after which sample elements are randomly chosen from each subgroup. Stratification may be determined by demographic or geographic factors. In my situation, stratification was used to divide up the workers into several groups based on the departments they worked in.

3.8 Data collection

3.8.1 Secondary data

Information that is gathered from sources other than the main focus of the study is known as secondary data. The information may be directly or indirectly related to the topic of the study, and it occasionally may include the mentioned author's opinion, which is dependent upon the author's viewpoints. To gain a thorough understanding of the research topic, the researcher examined online websites, textbooks, journals, feedback files, TM Pick n Pay supplier data base records, and feedback files. The secondary sources were used to supplement the primary data and were mostly used for the literature review, term definition, and term explanation. While not directly obtained from respondents, the advantage of secondary data is that it is already available, saving the researcher time.

3.8.2 Primary data

Primary data is information that has not been processed and comes directly from the source. The information is gathered while conducting the research and may be used afterwards as secondary information. It is the data that has been gathered from respondents especially for the study's goals. Fieldwork was conducted using questionnaires, interviews, and observations to get accurate data about the effects of the retailer-supplier relationship. Since real people involved in managing the retailer-supplier relationship were interviewed, it was crucial for the researcher to collect primary data because it was more congruent with the study's goals.

3.8.3 Interviews

In an interview, chosen participants are questioned to learn what they do, believe, or feel in relation to the specified area of inquiry, according to Collins and Hussey's definition from 2003.

To ensure consistency of inquiry and thorough information, interviews were utilized in which the management was asked a set of standard questions. Utilizing an interview guide and one-on-one conversations with each respondent, the researcher conducted interviews. It aided the researcher in gathering information about important study topics directly from sources. Each participant had an interview that lasted no longer than 20 minutes. To conduct the interviews, the researcher first scheduled a meeting with the management of TM Pick 'n Pay. The respondent's information conveyed through nonverbal communication was used by the interviewer to gain clarity and additional explanation on key topics of inquiry. The information gleaned from the interviews was written down and recorded

3.9 Research instruments

These are the instruments used to collect data for the study. To get as much information as possible, the researcher decided to use a variety of research tools. The tools include questionnaires, which are typically considered ideal in survey research where a broad coverage is required, and interviews, which are considered when surveying few individuals and in need of a lot of information. After weighing the dependability, benefits, and drawbacks of each data extraction strategy, both methods were employed to gather information.

3.9.1 Questionnaires

The study included open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires. When open-ended questions were utilized in addition to the structured standard questions, the respondents provided their replies as well as an explanation. With questionnaires, respondents can voice their opinions without worrying about being identified. Saunders and co. (2007). When examining primary data, the researcher was able to administrate the population while saving time and money. Documentation and analysis, however, took time. The employee of TM Pick 'n Pay was individually given the questionnaires by the researcher, who then collected them once they had completed the "drop and pick" technique of answering. Due to the distance between the researcher and supplier respondents, the researcher submitted the questionnaires to the representatives of the suppliers via email.

3.10 Validity and reliability sampling

3.10.1 Validity

Validity is the capacity of an instrument to measure what it is intended to measure, according to Saunders et al. It is concerned with whether the findings are accurate in relation to what they

seem to be. The researcher made sure that the research measure's items sufficiently captured the study's study domain and that validity was guaranteed by using reasonable judgement.

3.10.2 Reliability

Jalil (2013) asserts that a credible sample should comprise at least 30% of the target population and have less than 100 sampling units. The sample size chosen accurately reflected the supermarket's categories.

3.11 Data Presentation and Analysis

After gathering the data, the researcher converted the results into information that was easier to grasp. Histograms, pie charts, tables, and other presentation tools that were appropriate for usage were used to present the information.

3.11.1 Chapter Summary

The study project's methodology, which was based on the data sources, research design, and data collection tools, was described in the chapter. The information that will be offered in chapter 4 was all developed with the aid of the data that was gathered by the researcher.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

The chapter presents the material gleaned from the questionnaires and interviews, analyses it, and discusses it. Tables, graphs, and pie charts were used in this chapter to present the research's findings.

4.1 Response rate

Interviews and questionnaires were used by the researcher to gather data. The response rate for the surveys was 27/28 (96%), and the response rate for the interviews was 3/3 (100%). According to Dawson (2002), the response rate must be at least 30% in order for the results to be regarded as genuine and a true reflection of the population sample.

Table 4.1

	QUESTIONNAIRES				INTERVIEWS
Respondents	Buyer supervisor	Supplier agent	Merchandiser	Total	Management
Distributed	6	10	12	28	3
Response	6	10	11	27	3
Percentages (%)	100%	100%	92%	96%	100%

Source: primary data 2022

4.2 Duration served

The respondents' service history in the roles they currently hold is shown in the table below.

Table 4.2

Position	Experience				Total
	Less than 1 year	1-3 years	4-6 years	More than 7 years	
Buyer supervisor	1	2	3	0	6
Supplier agents	1	0	7	2	10
Merchandiser	3	5	3	0	11
Total	5	7	13	2	27
Percentage %	19%	26%	48%	7%	100%

Source: Primary data 2022

According to table 4.2 above, 19% of the total respondents (5/27), or less than one year of experience, and 26% of the total respondents (7/27), or between one and three years of experience, respectively, have completed the survey. 13/27, or 48%, of the total respondents had four to six years' experience or less, while 2/27, or 7% of the population, had more than seven years' experience in the roles they had at the time the research was performed. The researcher was able to reach judgments on the validity and trustworthiness of the data presented thanks to knowledge of the experiences. The lack of TM Pick 'n Pay managers with more than seven years of experience can likely be attributed to the fact that majority of the personnel was transferred to the new brand when the two supermarkets, TM and Pick 'n Pay, merged.

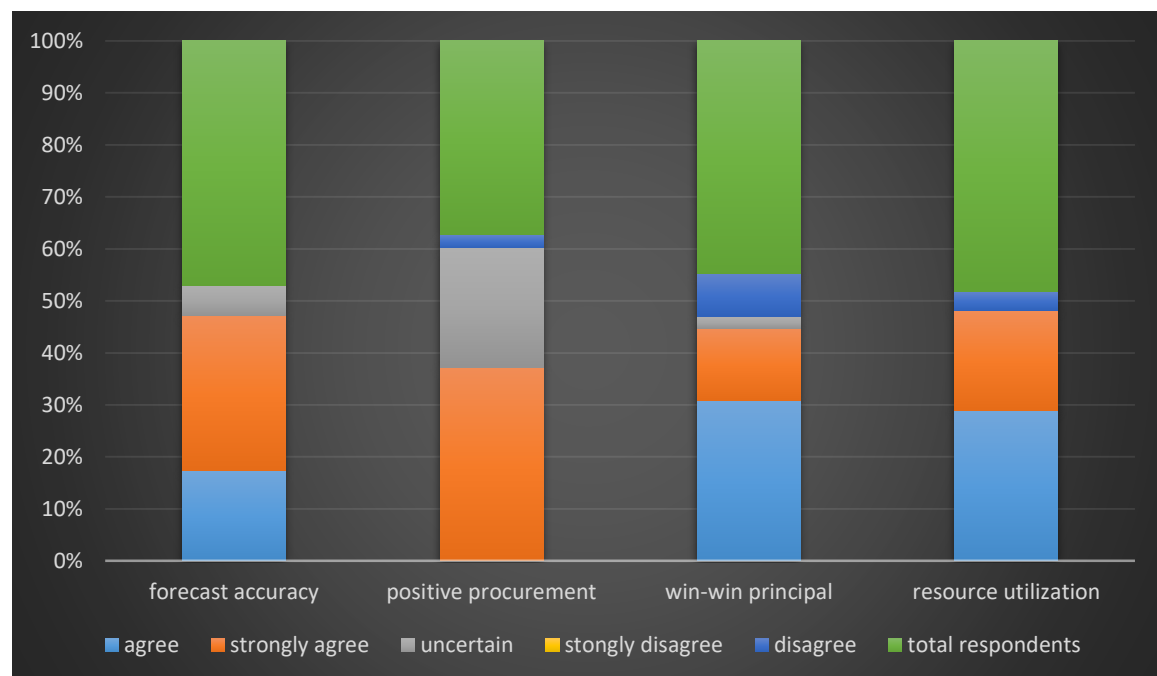
4.3 The role of collaboration on retailer competitive advantage.

The purpose of the study was to determine how collaboration affected business performance within the buyer-supplier relationship management process. The comments from the

respondents—supplier agents, buyer supervisors, and merchandisers—ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree on these objectives are summarized and shown in the graph below.

Figure 4.3

Products of collaboration to a company



Source: primary data 2022

According to the data shown on the above mentioned figure 15/27, 56% of respondents who work as supplier agents, buyer supervisors, and merchandisers strongly agree that collaboration improves prediction accuracy. 9/27 (33%) agree, whereas 3/27, or 11%, were uncertain about the claim that collaboration increases the likelihood that a relationship would succeed. The majority of respondents—89%—believed that reliable future forecasts can be made through collaboration and partnership. On the aspect of successful procurement, which is thought to be the result of collaboration between the buyer and the supplier, 16/27 respondents, or 60%, strongly agree with it. 10/27 respondents (or 37%), were uncertain. The results demonstrate

that a greater proportion of respondents concur that collaboration improves the buyer's success in procurement.

The buyer supervisor, merchandiser, and supplier agents all expressed their opinions, with 7/27 (25%) strongly agreeing, 15/27 (56%) agreeing, 1/27 (4%), uncertain, and 4/27 (i.e., 15% disagreeing) to the proposition that the buyer-supplier relationship management process should be based on the mutual benefit principle. According to the results, 81% of respondents thought that the win-win principle applied to B2B relationships.

Additionally, the results show that 10/27 (37%) of the respondents, who are supplier agents, buyer supervisors, and merchandisers, strongly agree, 15/27 of these respondents, or 56% of them, agree, and 2/27 of these respondents, or 7% of them, disagree that there is full utilization of resources when buyers and suppliers collaborate. 93% of the supplier agents, buyer supervisors, and merchandisers who responded to the surveys held the opinion that collaboration maximizes the utilization of the resources of the parties concerned. this is supported by Johanson J. et Mattson L.G. (1987).

In order to learn more about the impact of collaboration on a company's competitiveness, the researcher interviewed the management of TM Pick 'n Pay. According to data gathered by the researcher, the company switched from transactional marketing to collaborative marketing by establishing buyer-supplier relationships with its major suppliers. This was done with the aim of improving product quality, lowering costs, reducing inventory in their warehouse by obtaining just-in-time delivery, and raising customer satisfaction by offering competitive pricing. Aside from the anticipated advantages, the supermarket has positively improved its purchasing capabilities, fully utilized its financial resources, and facilitates long-term planning.

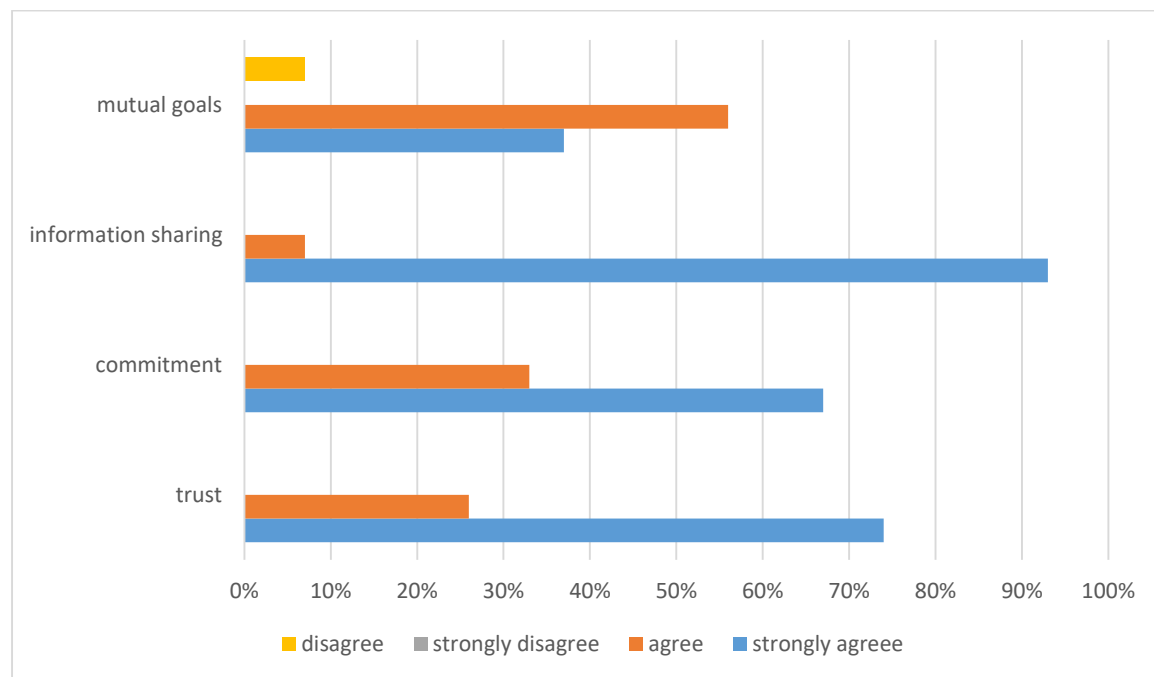
The researcher deduced from the findings that the cooperation between TM Pick 'n Pay supermarket and its suppliers produced forecast accuracy, improved procurement performance, full resource utilization, and application of the win-win concept. Nagurney (2010) claims that single source suppliers are being created by buyers in response to pressure to improve quality, cut inventory, create just-in-time systems, and shorten time to market. The author concurs with the research findings by arguing that teamwork improves procurement performance. Ganesan (1994) made the argument that a firm's competitive advantage revolves around its procurement performance. The goal of buyer-supplier collaboration, according to Lyons and Farrington (2006), may also be to maximize resource utilization, profitability, customer happiness, and financial performance while securing reciprocal advantages and additional competitive value.

According to the research findings, TM Pick 'n Pay is also benefiting from the authors' predicted outcomes of their collaboration.

4.4 The strategies to maintain long term relationship management

To experience the advantages of long-term collaborations between buyer and supplier, the goal was to learn how to establish connections that would last.

Fig 4.4



Source: primary data 2022

The results showed that 20/27, or 74% of the respondents, who were supplier agents, buyer supervisors, and merchandisers, strongly agreed, and that 7/27 of these respondents, or 26% of them, agreed that long-term relationship management and trust between the buyer and supplier are both necessary. The buying supervisor, merchandiser, and supplier representatives who responded all agreed that building trust is essential for successful relationships.

The respondents, who are supplier agents, buyer supervisors, and merchandisers, acknowledged that dedication on the part of the parties to a relationship is an additional factor in a long-term successful relationship. These were demonstrated by the research's findings, which revealed that 18/27 (67%) of respondents strongly agreed and 9/27 (33%) of respondents

agreed. This resulted in a higher percentage of 67% of supplier agents, buyer supervisors, and merchandisers who strongly agreed, with no respondents disagreeing or expressing uncertainty.

Furthermore, the results demonstrate that exchanging knowledge is a further component of successful long-term relationships. Information sharing is crucial and promotes the success of long-term relationships, as evidenced by the fact that 25/27 of the population—supplier agents, buyer supervisors, and merchandisers—strongly agree with this statement (93% strongly agree). The remaining 2/27 members of this population also concur. There was no disagreement or uncertainty among the entire community of supplier agents, buyer supervisors, and merchandisers.

The abovementioned table shows that 10/27, or 37% of replies, from supplier agents, buyer supervisors, and merchandisers strongly concur that shared objectives are a necessary component of sustaining long-term relationships. 15/27 (56%) of the respondents agree with the statement, and 2/27, or 7% of the total, disagree. Even if 7% of the respondents to the survey disagreed, the results showed that since a bigger percentage of 93% did, shared goal planning is also a factor in the success of long-term relationships.

The two management members identified effective communication as the key to a successful long-term relationship. The researcher learned this knowledge from the interviews she did and after being questioned about the tactics used to maintain long-term relationships. The researcher also discovered that, along with shared strategic commitment and preparation, trust—which two of the management said is acquired through effective communication—is a crucial component of relationship success and long-term preservation. The two managers also emphasized that their ability to sustain long-term relationships with suppliers was a result of their collaboration, honesty, and frequent negotiations with suppliers, which cultivated a sense of trust and loyalty that paved the way for long-lasting relationships.

As evidenced by the research findings, the researcher has noted that mutual goal planning, information sharing, trust, and commitment are the techniques a buyer and seller can employ to establish long-term effective relationships. Emmet and Crocker (2006) claim that if the correct conditions exist and both parties are drawn to pursuing deeper participation, relationships may continue longer. According to Winsor and Tan, (2000) the key factors include respect, devotion, cooperation, communication, and shared objectives.

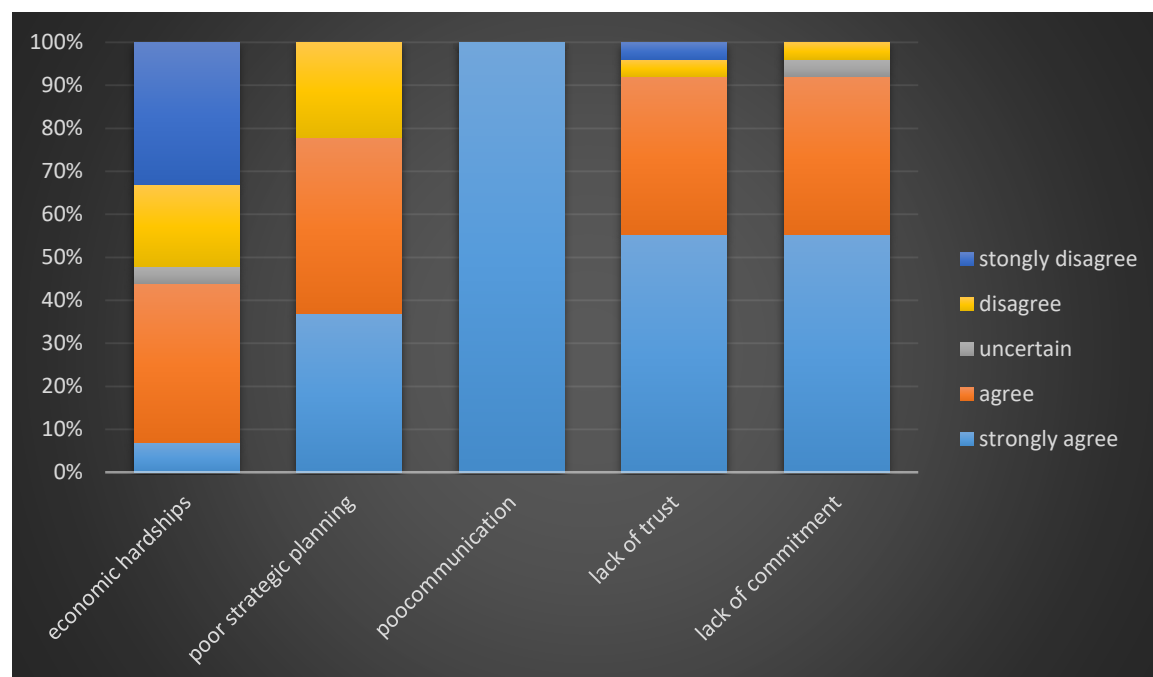
According to Togar and Sridharam (2002), a competitive advantage can be developed by information sharing, group decision-making, and benefit sharing, all of which improve profitability, client happiness, and overall business competitiveness.

4.5 The challenges which lead to buyer-supplier relationship failure

The researcher asked information on the difficulties retailers have in their interactions with suppliers and why those relationships fail. Four questions related to this purpose were answered by buyer supervisors, supplier representatives, and merchandisers. The diagram below summarizes their answers. On the five factors that are thought to be a challenge to relationship success—economic challenges, lack of trust, poor communication, lack of strategic planning, and lack of commitment—they varied their opinions from highly agree to strongly agree.

Figure 4.5

Challenges of buyer-supplier relationship



Source: primary source 2022

Results reveal that 2/27 (7%) of respondents strongly agree that Zimbabwe's economic woes are a hurdle for businesses in the success of their relationships. 10/27 (37%) respondents agree, 1/27 (4%), were unsure, 5/27, or 19%, disagree, and 9/27, or 33%, strongly disagree that economic hardships in Zimbabwe are to blame for failed relationships. The results demonstrate that the nation's economic problems are not the cause of failed relationships because 52% of

respondents opposed the theory, which is a bigger percentage than the 44% who believed it was accurate.

Figure 4.5 also shows that poor strategic planning is a difficulty for B2B relationship management success, with 10/27, or 37% of the population, strongly agreeing, 11/27, or 41% of the population agreeing, and 6/27, or 22% of the population disagreeing. According to the research, 78% of respondents agree that relationship management challenges for businesses include poor strategic planning as a cause of relationship failure.

Poor communication is the issue of managing buyer-supplier relationships, strongly agree buyer supervisors, supplier agents, and merchandisers, as evidenced by the above graph, which reveals that 100% of survey respondents.

The results shown in figure 4.5 also show that a difficulty to successful B2B relationships is a lack of trust. The greater percentages of 15/27 (56%) strongly agree and 10/27 (37%) agree, which together represent 93% of the population, show that it is evident. The agreeing respondents opposed the 1/27 (4%) strongly disagreeing and disagreeing respondents, which together make up a lower percentage of 8% of the people opposed to the idea of lack of trust as a challenge.

In addition, the findings from figure 4.5 show that 15/27 (56%) of respondents strongly agree, 10/27 (37%) of respondents agree, 1/27 (4%) of respondents are unsure, and 1/27 (4%), of respondents disagree, that a lack of commitment is a barrier to the success of relationships. The findings demonstrate that failing to commit is a problem in buyer to supplier relationship management, as seen by the 93% approval rate of the proposal.

According to the findings, the main obstacle to successful relationships, according to the researcher, is poor communication. The researcher also noted that the difficulties in managing relationships between buyers and sellers are a lack of commitment, inadequate strategic planning, and a lack of trust. The results also suggest that economic hardship, including liquidity crises, illegal trade, supply shortages, and fierce competition, among others, are not the causes of relationship failures but rather difficulties that successful buyer-supplier relationship management seeks to resolve.

According to Fawcett and Marnan (2001), a lack of trust can result in reluctance to provide information and can make it difficult to exchange sensitive information, such as financial data, impeding the parties' ability to plan strategically. Since trust, dedication, and information

sharing are interdependent, their absence hinders the success of the others. Mavondo and Rodrigo (2001) claim that the use of a variety of media by procurement functions to communicate with suppliers improves procurement performance, customer satisfaction, and profitability. These media include phone, fax, face-to-face meetings, mail, e-mail, the Internet, and electronic data interchange (EDI). This indicates that in order to gain from successful communication between the customer and provider, one must have the necessary resources and be prepared to contribute to its success. The costs and effects of faulty estimates can be reduced by frequent communication between merchants and suppliers, which can speed up timely and accurate responses to turbulent markets. Poor communication, as stated by Bird (2005), also prevents relationships from succeeding. This indicates that in order to gain from successful communication between the customer and provider, one must have the necessary resources and be prepared to contribute to its success. The costs and effects of faulty estimates can be reduced by frequent communication between merchants and suppliers, which can speed up timely and accurate responses to turbulent markets. Poor communication, as stated by Bird (2005), also prevents relationships from succeeding.

Lack of commitment, lack of trust, and inadequate strategic planning were the three main obstacles to successful business-to-business relationships with management, procurement, and general managers. During the researcher's interviews with the management, the management provided the information. According to the data gathered, relationships that failed were almost always the result of poor communication; as a result, management emphasizes how crucial communication is to the success of a relationship. TM Pick „n Pay managers who were questioned were adamant that poor communication is what causes a lack of trust, commitment, and cooperation, making it the factor they highlighted as being highly responsible for relationship failure.

The management also emphasizes that poor performance on products and services quality, lack of financial resources to execute effective logistics, and ignorance of the topic of B2B relationship marketing were the main causes of relationship failures, particularly with small suppliers. The data acquired also showed that honest and high-quality performance on goods and services are the factors that lead to trust and commitment, therefore the answers to long-term successful relationship management are regular negotiations, effective and efficient communication, and these factors.

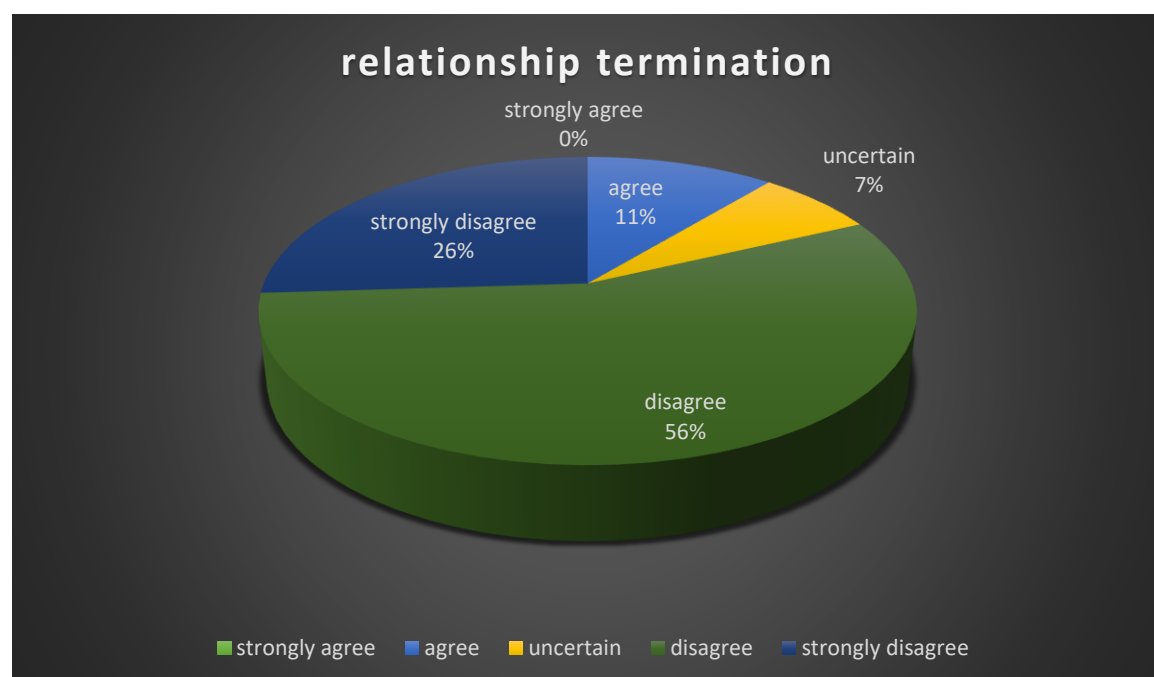
Additionally, data gathered indicated that one difficulty the business is facing is employees' ignorance of the value of connections and their significance. Despite the fact that there is more to the relationship than just the exchange of goods and money, the majority of employees still believe that the relationship between their company and its suppliers is merely transactional. The organization faces the challenge of fear of the risks associated with having just one or a few suppliers, which hinders the development of new relationships and, to some extent, leads to relationship failures. The effectiveness of buyer-supplier partnerships depends on both parties' willingness to engage in cooperative working, information sharing, trust, commitment, among other elements, as stated by numerous authors [Bac, (2000); Gounaris, (2005) Rajagopal, (2005) Ganesan (1994)]. These examples demonstrate how a lack of commitment from either party can cause a relationship to fail. As a result, the entire workforce must be devoted and willing to participate in relationship success.

4.6 Breach of contract between buyer and supplier cause relationship to be terminated

The researcher also gathered data in order to add to the body of knowledge on the topic of managing buyer-supplier relationships and to answer the open question of whether contract breach is a problem that results in relationship termination.

Fig 4.6

Relationship termination



The results show that no percentage strongly agreed, 3/27, which is 11% of the population agreed, 2/27, which is 7% of the population was uncertain, 15/27, which is 56% of the population disagreed, and finally 7/27, which is 26% of the population strongly disagreed that in case of contract breach the relationship should be terminated. According to the responses, 82% of people oppose ending the relationship due to a breach of the contract, which is evidenced by the responses. The respondents did, however, point out that the reason for the contract violation is what will ultimately cause the relationship to end. Mentioned include unable to communicate, unable to adapt to changes in the market and damaged financial position of the other party.

4.7 Chapter Summary

Tables, graphs, and pie charts were used in the chapter to present, analyse, and discuss the data. Through surveys and interviews, the data from the research findings were collected from the chosen respondents. The conclusion and recommendations are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 introduction

The study sought to analyse how managing relationships between buyers and suppliers affects a company's ability to compete. The study's stated objectives were to establish the impact of collaboration on firm competitiveness, to identify long-term relationship maintenance techniques, and to identify the difficulties retailers face in managing their buyer to supplier relationships. The chapter provides a summary of the research; conclusions are drawn based on the research's results with respect to the study's goals and the data that was acquired; and suggestions are provided in light of the factual discoveries and the secondary data presented in chapter two.

5.2 Summary of research

The study concentrated on how buyer-supplier relationship management affects a company's ability to compete. The goal was to ascertain how collaborative partnerships affect a company's ability to compete as well as the best ways to keep successful long-term connections. Additionally, it wants to draw attention to the difficulties TM Pick n Pay is having keeping up business to company ties. Due to the fierce rivalry that supermarkets face, it was necessary to conduct the study in order to determine the degree to which buyer-supplier relationship management can improve competitiveness. On the subject of the research, literature was provided as it had been put forth by various academic authors. The research objectives, the advantages of managing buyer-supplier relationships, and the theories advanced by other writers that contributed to the research issue were all explained in the chapter. The rest of the highlighted research underlined profitability, successful procurement outcomes, and competitive advantage as the results of cooperative collaborations between buyers and suppliers.

The research was primarily descriptive in nature and centred on the research design. It examined the methods the researcher used to collect data, population sampling strategies, and the accuracy and dependability of the information gathered. Top managers, buyer agents, supplier agents, and merchandisers for both the buyer and the supplier under study made comprised the target group.

The research focused on data processing, presentation, and discussion of study results. In order to gather information during the field research, questionnaires and interviews were used. The researcher transformed the data into information, which was then shown as tables, graphs, and pie charts. As a result, the framework for the research's summary, conclusion, and recommendation was constructed.

According to the research's findings, collaboration plays an important role in improving forecast accuracy, resource utilization, procurement performance, and the mutual benefits of buyer and supplier. For a long-term relationship to succeed, communication, trust, mutual planning, commitment, and information sharing are necessary components. Respondents emphasized that communication was especially crucial in Zimbabwe's challenging economic environment. Lack of communication, poor strategic planning, poor performance by the other person in a relationship, lack of trust, and lack of commitment were all mentioned as obstacles faced by retailers in the success of relationships in the research.

5.3 Conclusions

The role of collaboration on company competitiveness

The study came to the conclusion that collaboration plays a key role in a firm's procurement performance, correct future planning, the win-win principle, and resource utilization. According to the research's findings, 89% of survey respondents agreed that collaboration improves forecast accuracy, and 97% said that improved procurement performance is a result of these relationships between buyers and suppliers. The research's findings also showed that 81% of people believe that a collaboration between a company and its suppliers results in mutually beneficial outcomes and 93% of people believe that full resource utilization occurs. The results of the study demonstrate that collaboration plays a crucial role in enhancing a company's competitive advantage.

Strategies to maintain long term successful relationships

The strategies suggested by the research findings that result in long-term planning include trust, dedication, information sharing, mutual goals, and teamwork. 74% of respondents who responded to research questionnaires strongly agreed that trust is necessary for lasting

relationships. Since 100% of the population agreed with the laid fact and 93% agreed that sharing information is another tactic for building long-term successful relationships, commitment was also identified as being essential. The importance of shared objectives was also emphasized, as 93% of respondents thought that they were crucial. Interview data revealed that collaboration between the buyer and supplier is a factor in long-lasting relationships. The study comes to the conclusion that mutual goal planning, cooperation, trust, commitment, and sharing of information are key elements of long-term effective relationships.

Challenges facing retailers in buyer-supplier relationships

Poor communication has been recognized as the primary issue causing the other obstacles for all the issues that have been raised in the research. Lack of commitment and lack of trust are the two key components of a successful relationship, and they are brought on by poor communication. 100% of the responders strongly agreed that managing the buyer-supplier relationship is hampered by poor communication. The study also showed that Zimbabwe's economic difficulties, such as the liquidity crisis and informal trade, are not the causes of failed connections but rather the driving force behind the development of buyer-supplier relationships that improve business performance. The study then came to the conclusion that a lack of trust, inadequate communication, lack of commitment, inadequate strategic planning, subpar performance, and a fear of risk are the main challenges of buyer-supplier relationships.

According to the research's findings, a buyer's competitive advantage is attained through trust, commitment, cooperation, communication, and joint goals; the absence of these components is a problem that results in failed relationships. Positive effects of buyer-supplier relationship management include better resource use, improved procurement, lower costs, and more accurate forecasts.

5.4 Recommendations

It is advised that the business keep up its relationships with its suppliers and create more new ones. The conclusion that collaborations are a crucial element in boosting a company's competitive advantage forms the basis for the advice. According to Brencic (2001), a firm's buyer-supplier relationships are its most significant sources of competitive advantage and have a direct and indirect impact on its position and performance in the worldwide market. Additionally, Veludo et al. (2006) noted that buyer supplier collaborations are a crucial component of organizational performance, competitiveness, and long-term economic success. According to Nagurney (2010), cooperation between a buyer and a supplier entails a readiness

to brainstorm new and improved ways to conduct business and compete in the market. Based on the literature, the researcher suggests that in order to benefit from relational marketing, the supermarket and its suppliers cooperate voluntarily.

Long-term partnerships, according to Nagurney (2010), let businesses adapt to shifting client needs. The researcher then advised TM Pick „n Pay to employ these strategies in order to increase its competitiveness by maintaining long-term fruitful relationships. The findings suggested that trust, commitment, communication, and mutual goals planning are the elements that lead to long-term relationships. With Morgan and Hunt (2004) stating that a long-term relationship improves a firm's procurement performance, which in turn influences a firm's quality performance, product innovation, customer responsiveness, and ultimately a firm's financial performance, relationship maintenance between buyer and supplier is seen as crucial. When the firm's procurement performance is improved, it is able to lower costs, supply high-quality, reasonably priced goods and services, and achieve the company vision. Retail supermarkets may be guaranteed of improved performance in their operations, which will increase consumer satisfaction and provide their business a competitive advantage, by upholding solid relationships with their suppliers. According to Emmet and Crocker (2006), relationships may endure longer if the proper conditions are met and both parties find it appealing to pursue greater involvement; as a result, in order to achieve the goal of obtaining mutual benefits, TM Pick n Pay should put the researcher's advice into practice.

The researcher advises the business to conduct effective and efficient communication with its suppliers in order to prepare for issues that could result in relationship failures. Relationships and organizational success depend on effective communication. According to Ford (2001), the quality of information sharing involves its correctness, relevance, sufficiency, and credibility. The organization is also advised to exercise patience and a willingness to collaborate with their supplier, involving consistency in communication, as research indicates that relational marketing is more advantageous over the long term than it is over the short term. Emmet and Crocker (2006) state that relationships tend to grow stronger over time and can frequently produce better outcomes each year when all sides are involved.

The research study has verified that relationships between buyers and suppliers are a highly important and crucial way to boost a retail organization's competitiveness. It is recommended that both buyers and suppliers adopt the idea in order to benefit from the growth of ties between them.

5.5 Areas for future study

The implications of buyer-supplier interactions on performance in the service sector require further study. The researcher noted that only product vendors were included in this study. Since the current study only made predictions for a particular branch, a more thorough investigation is also required to determine the consequences of cooperative partnerships and supply chain performance.

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