



Supply chain management as a competitive advantage for grocery small and medium-sized enterprises in Mahikeng, South Africa

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Background: The adoption of supply chain management (SCM) strategy in the last four decades has transformed enterprises, prompting them to take a more customer-centric approach in their operations. Addressing the customer's needs through coordinated SC networks is a competitive advantage for enterprises. The purpose of this study was to explore SCM as a competitive advantage for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), specifically grocery stores in Mahikeng, South Africa.

Research objectives: The investigation sought to explore the role of supply chain collaboration in enhancing constant flow of products for business continuity and cost-saving for SMEs from third-party logistics (3PL) transport optimisation, and it was discovered that the practice of reverse logistics by SMEs recovered value and reduced waste.

Research methodology: A qualitative research method with descriptive design and a nonprobability sampling strategy was followed to conduct the study. The recorded interviews were transcribed, translated, coded and analysed via thematic data analysis to determine the outcome of the study.

Results: The study established that SCM improved cost-effectiveness through cost-saving on shared (3PL) transportation between SMEs and improved efficiency through enhanced supplier–customer relationships by maintaining continuous flow of products and services. The optimisation of transportation, continuous flow of products and services and recovery of value through reverse logistics reduced waste and increased efficiency, which enhanced competitiveness and sustainability of the retailers.

Conclusion: It is apparent that enterprises that streamlined operations through SCM also reduced waste, thereby enhancing competitiveness and sustainability. The findings indicated that owners and managers will understand the benefits of adopting SCM strategies.

Keywords: competitive advantage; competitiveness; supply chain; supply chain management; supply chain collaboration; logistics management; 3PL and grocery SMEs.

Introduction and background

The adoption of Supply Chain Management (SCM) in the last four decades has enhanced competitiveness amongst firms, including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Hong & Jeong 2006:292–302). The definition of SCM from the Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals (CSCMP) states:

Supply chain management encompasses the planning and management of all activities involved in sourcing and procurement, conversion, and all logistics management activities. Importantly, it also includes coordination and collaboration with channel partners, which can be suppliers, intermediaries, third-party service providers, and customers. In essence, supply chain management integrates supply and demand management within and across companies. (CSCMP 2013:187)

Competitiveness, then, is enhanced by the use of technology speeding up the supplier–customer information and product flow through the distribution channels to the end-customer (Marinagi, Trivellas & Sakas 2014:586–591). In exploring SCM as a competitive advantage for the grocery SMEs in Mahikeng, the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) suppliers, the third-party logistics (3PL) firms and grocery SMEs were covered.

On the other hand, in order to achieve and improve competitive advantage, supplier–customer collaboration is crucial (Wisner, Tan & Leong 2016:8). Enhancing SCM activities such as

procurement, production, sales forecasts and delivery of the finished products to the customers can offer significant benefits, such as cost reduction, in a market where there is serious competition (De Villiers 2017). Dependence on SCM provides enterprises with competitive edge, as they are able to differentiate themselves from the competitors in the eyes of the customer and operate at the lowest cost that generates higher profit margins (Christopher 2016:4).

The South African retail sector has a very matured and developed market, where the leading grocery stores are multiformat retailers operating a group of hypermarkets, superstores, supermarkets, cash and carry and non-food outlets all over the country. The report by Price Waterhouse Coopers (PwC) on retail businesses indicated that surging competition amongst the consumer goods suppliers culminated in supply chain (SC) optimisation (Faku 2016). The report also indicated that a network of FMCG suppliers and their distribution channels, comprising large, small and medium-sized retailers, are found across the country.

Retail markets are becoming highly competitive globally, as customers constantly seek better service and improved products at the lowest cost (Huang & Keskar 2007:510–523). The leading retailers utilise distribution centres to enhance replenishment of inventory in their wide distribution network of stores. SCM drives competitive advantage through the management of SC activities from suppliers to the end-customers (Faku 2016).

Theoretical framework

The study was underpinned by Porter's theory of competitive advantage. The theory emphasises cost leadership and differentiation, as stipulated in Porter's 'five forces model' (Porter 1995). The model is an essential tool that enables SMEs to withstand competition. The five forces are:

- **Competitive rivalry:** competitors providing products and services in their industry.
- **Threat of substitute products:** occurs when there are imitations to one's products and services in the market.
- **Bargaining power of buyers:** the ability of buyers to bargain for better deals (prices, transportation and others).
- **Threat of new entrants:** manifests when there are no strict regulations and competitors emerge in the market easily.
- **Bargaining power of suppliers:** varies with the number of suppliers available – where there are more suppliers available, bargaining for better deals becomes possible.

Some of the traits of cost leadership include 'high efficiency and capacity utilisation, low-cost base use of bargaining power to negotiate production costs and access to distribution channels'. The differentiations in an organisation include 'research, development and innovation; superior product

quality; recognisable branding and industry distribution amongst major channels' (Lee & Yoo 2019).

The grocery SMEs in Mahikeng benefited from both cost and differentiation in their collaboration with the FMCG and 3PL transportation suppliers.

Literature review

The literature review focused on the role of SCM in grocery SMEs in Mahikeng, the FMCG suppliers and the 3PL transportation service. The use of technology is ultimate for successful SCs (UKEssays 2020). Hence, the grocery SMEs in Mahikeng use technology in the form of computers and smartphones for Internet connectivity for placing orders and inventory control (Ulas 2019:662–671). The SMEs in Mahikeng are in the category of businesses in South Africa that have a turnover of about South African rand (ZAR) 50 million per annum (Hayes 2021; Small Business Annual Review 2016).

Supply chain management

The CSCMP (2013) definition of SCM states:

Supply chain management encompasses the planning and management of all activities involved in sourcing and procurement, conversion and all logistics management activities. It also includes coordination and collaboration with channel planners, which can be suppliers, intermediaries, third-party service providers and customers. In essence, supply chain management integrates supply and demand management within and across companies. (p. 187; Pienaar & Vogt 2012:8)

Christopher (2016:13) described SC as a:

[N]etwork of businesses that participate through the linkages of both upstream and downstream in distinct business processes and activities used to create value in the form of products and services in the possession of the end-customer. (p. 13)

A PwC report in 2016 indicated that increasing competition reflects that optimisation of SCs is becoming the main agenda of retailers and consumer goods businesses as they focus on centralising their supplies (PwC 2016:12). Evans and Collier (2007:357) posited that the main functions of SC entail sales; order processing; transportation; distribution, operations, inventory and materials management; finance; and customer service. These functions precede a typical SC structure which comprises suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, retailers and customers (Evans & Collier 2007:357). In relation to this study, the SC of the grocery SMEs in Mahikeng comprised FMCG suppliers, wholesalers and the grocery SMEs as the customers utilising 3PL transportation service providers.

Logistics management

The CSCMP (2013) defined of logistics management as:

[T]hat part of supply chain management that plans, implements, and controls the efficient, effective forward and reverse flow and storage of goods, services and related information between the

point of origin and the point of consumption in order to meet customers' requirements. (p. 117)

Logistics management is concerned with the transportation and warehousing and the link between the marketplace and suppliers of raw materials through the manufacturing point to the delivery of the final product (Mangan et al. 2012:156). The essence of these functions in SC is to streamline processes to increase efficiency and productivity in the SC (Trent & Roberts 2010:120).

The manufacturers and suppliers in South Africa are geographically scattered and far from the customers, making the logistics process complex and expensive. As a result, the SMEs apply innovative strategies such as sharing outsourced transportation and perfecting reverse logistics to build competitiveness and increase profitability (Hsiao 2010). This mode of transportation is ideal for the SMEs as they have limited storage or warehouse space as well.

Third-party logistics

Third-party logistics designates a buyer and supplier team using a 'third party that provides delivery service or delivery and warehousing services' (APICS 2013:176). A 3PL company manages all or part of another company's product delivery. Logistics outsourcing is a process whereby external logistics firms perform functions that were traditionally executed in-house (Pienaar & Vogt 2012:45). Coyle, Bardi and Langley (2003:425) define these as logistics functions offered by an external supplier.

Grocery SMEs in Mahikeng acquire products from diverse FMCG manufacturers and from various wholesalers and distributors and share 3PL transportation service for delivery.

Reverse logistics

Reverse logistics comprise that:

[P]art of returns management that plans, implements and controls the efficient, effective flow of goods and related information from a point of consumption back to a point origin in order to recapture value or properly dispose of the goods. (APIC 2013:152)

These are returns from the end-users (consumers) and business customers. A study by Chan, Chan and Jain (2012:1320) expressed that in an extremely commoditised industry, the use of recycled inputs could allow businesses to lower the cost of products and manage to remain competitive and still satisfy consumers with lower prices. Rahman and Subramanian (2012:240) posited that businesses can be enabled to achieve a competitive advantage through an improved operational performance when reverse logistics practices are effectively managed.

Traditional retail customers return 6% – 10% of sales, whilst returns from online sales are 20% – 30% (Wisner et al. 2016:336). This is an indication of the benefit that can be

generated by the grocery SMEs in Mahikeng with proper management of reverse logistics.

Supply chain collaboration

Supply chain collaboration (SCC) is the relationship between two or more discreet organisations working closely together to meet shared objectives in cost reduction, customer service improvement or any other aspects that advance SC performance (APICS 2013:27). Collaboration encompasses business planning, sales forecasting and all operations required in replenishing raw materials and finished products. Banomyong (2018) describes SCC as:

[T]he activities taking place between supply chain partners where information is shared, trust and openness is present, coordination and joint planning is done, mutual benefits and sharing of risks exist between supply chain partners and a mutual recognition of mutual interdependence with shared goal that is subject to compatibility of corporate policies. (p. 5)

Supply chain collaboration is actually rooted in supplier-customer relationship (Lambert 2014:54).

Fast-moving consumer goods suppliers in South Africa

Fast-moving consumer goods are commonly low priced and fast-moving items with a short shelf life and are purchased frequently on a daily basis by customers (Industry Today 2020). This low-cost category of consumer goods comprises processed food products, perishables, beverages, basic toiletries and simple pharmaceutical products, amongst others (Pinder et al. 2017:18). In South Africa, the suppliers of processed products are food and beverage companies, healthcare and personal care product firms and suppliers of perishables such as vegetables, dairy, poultry and beef products, amongst others (Biz Community 2020).

The grocery SMEs provide a crucial distribution channel for FMCG and utilise 3PL to save on transportation costs (Kanban Logistics 2019). This study surveyed the SC network from the FMCG manufacturers, suppliers, wholesalers and distributors that supply the grocery SMEs in Mahikeng.

Competitive advantage

Competitive advantage is 'a firm's ability to produce a good or service more efficiently than its competitors, which leads to a greater profit margin, creating a competitive advantage' (Porter 1985). Competitive advantage focuses on two core areas, cost leadership and differentiation. Cost leadership involves the use of bargaining power to negotiate low product cost and access to effective distribution channels. Differentiation involves first identifying what a consumer group requires and then the wider population market. Based on the information collated, a product or service is developed in a manner that is inimitable by competitors. Porter (1995) initiated the 'five forces model' as a tool that enabled SMEs to withstand competition. The five forces are competitive

rivalry, threat of substitute products, bargaining power of buyers, threat of new entrants and bargaining power of suppliers.

Technology use in grocery small and medium-sized enterprises in Mahikeng, South Africa

Technology is an enabler of SCM for all types of enterprises, including SMEs (SCC 2016). Technology enhances communication between supplier and customer, resulting in faster product flow (Ulas 2019). The use of technology in distribution provides opportunities in cost-reducing, limiting product handling, consolidating facilities and streamlining inventories (Murray 2019). Product handling in this study refers to a focus on food product FMCGs that supply the distributors or wholesalers supplying the grocery SMEs in Mahikeng, South Africa. These enterprises use technologies such as computers and smartphones for Internet connectivity to facilitate placement of orders and inventory control.

Problem statement

The SMEs play a crucial role in the South African economy, contributing over 20% of the gross domestic product (GDP) and over 47% of total employment in the country (StatsSA 2019). The Supply Chain Council articulates the crucial role played by SCM in enhancing competitiveness of enterprises (SCC 2016). Against this backdrop, it was imperative to explore the role of SCM driving the competitiveness of grocery SMEs in Mahikeng in the North-West province, South Africa. There is no trace of empirical evidence that explains SCM as a competitive advantage for grocery SMEs in Mahikeng, South Africa; hence, this current study proposes to close this knowledge gap.

Therefore, the research questions emanating from the problem statement are the following:

- What is supply chain collaboration's role in enhancing the constant flow of products for business continuity for Mahikeng grocery SMEs in South Africa?
- How is the cost saving for SMEs from 3PL transport optimisation for Mahikeng grocery SMEs in South Africa achieved?
- How does the practice of reverse logistics by SMEs recover value and reduce waste for Mahikeng grocery SMEs in South Africa?

Research objectives

The study pursued two objectives as follows.

Primary objective

The primary objective of the study was to explore the SCM application as a competitive advantage for Mahikeng grocery SMEs in South Africa.

Empirical objectives

There were three empirical objectives, pursued as follows:

- Exploring SCC's role in enhancing constant flow of products for business continuity for Mahikeng grocery SMEs in South Africa.
- Exploring cost saving for SMEs from 3PL transport optimisation for Mahikeng grocery SMEs in South Africa.
- Exploring whether reverse logistics practice by SMEs recovered value and reduced waste for Mahikeng grocery SMEs in South Africa.

Research methodology and design

This study adopted a qualitative research methodology and constructivist research paradigm in the exploration of SCM application as a competitive advantage for the grocery SMEs in Mahikeng. Constructivism – like qualitative research – is the process through which interviews are conducted with participants to generate research data (Lee & Lings 2008:226). Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016:291) described research design as the framework of a study on how to generate empirical evidence to examine the research questions. Empirical evidence was derived from the data collected from the participants in the study. The theoretical framework of the study comprised a theory of competitive advantage. This theory proved the important role played by SCM as a competitive advantage for grocery SMEs in Mahikeng. Competitive advantage was achieved through sharing of transportation between SMEs, which reduced transportation costs; SCC maintained the product flow and returned products created value as they were replaced for reuse.

The participants were introduced to the study and their confidentiality and nondisclosure were assured, as posited by Kumar (2016:220). They were informed of the interview duration of 10 min – 15 min and that it was to be recorded with a digital voice recorder to assist afterwards in the analysis of the data.

The sample size comprised 15 grocery SMEs, and a nonprobability sampling process was used to identify the participants who were the owners or managers of the selected businesses. Subsequently, the recorded interviews were transcribed, interpreted (meaning expressed), coded and analysed through thematic data analysis as prescribed in Saunders et al. (2016:220). The emerging views of the participants were expressed as major themes and subthemes, which were used in establishing the outcome of the study.

Units of analysis

Macaluso (2015) described a unit of analysis as a specifically identified organisation that the researcher seeks to study or research about. According to Zikmund et al. (2012), a unit of analysis is a source of data that is available to give data at the extent to which data that are collected from various sources might be combined and analysed. The units of analysis in this study were the grocery SMEs based in Mahikeng, South Africa. The owner and managers were the ones interviewed.

Validity and reliability

Validity of data was assured by comparing the transcribed data with the notebook and the audio recorder to check convergence through triangulation. Carter et al. (2014:545) stated that triangulation in a qualitative research is perceived as 'a strategy to measure validity by checking similarities (convergence) of information from various sources'. Reliability in this study was realised through the determination of whether the findings were congruent with what the study intended to achieve in relation to the instrument. Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2012:92) stated that 'reliability refers to a degree to which the results are repeatable'.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations in a qualitative study have a specific significance because of the in-depth nature of its study process. Likewise, the concern of ethical issues in a qualitative study becomes more noticeable when conducting face-to-face interviews with vulnerable respondents (Arifin 2018:30). In this study, ethical considerations of research ethics were followed throughout the research process, and this study pursued the process of getting ethical clearance certificate from the research scientific committee of the faculty. Prior to the interviews, the researcher secured permission from the participants to participate in the study, and they were also requested to sign an informed consent form.

Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed in that the details of participants and the organisation would not be disclosed, as this was for research purposes only.

Results and discussions

On the transcription of the recorded interviews and going through the coding process, six major themes and a number of sub-themes emerged as indicated in Table 1. The major themes comprised of SC challenges, competitive advantage, relationship with suppliers, dealing with competitors, customer service and competitiveness and benefits from using SC. The sub-themes identified various roles of SCM from collaboration in transportation, customer service, promotions, trade deals and competitiveness, among others (Monnagaaratwe & Motatsa 2021:5–6). The themes resonated with the primary and the empirical objectives set for the study and direct remarks from most of the participants.

Thus, the three empirical objectives were achieved, as corroborated by the themes and the evidence from the participants expressed herein.

Empirical objective 1 (achieved): Exploring supply chain collaboration's role in enhancing constant flow of products for business continuity

The adoption of SCM corresponded with the innovations in technology which enhanced the flow of information and

TABLE 1: Themes that emanated from the study.

Main Themes	Subthemes
Supply chain challenges	Suppliers' location, transportation costs, late deliveries, outsourcing, breakdowns and rented warehouse space
Competitive advantage	Availability of stock, suppliers, discount, credit and prices
Relationship with suppliers	Good relationships with suppliers, better prices and good deals and availability of stock
Dealing with competitors	Offering better customer service, lower prices, discounts, promotions, availability of stock and increased customer base
Customer service and competitiveness	Good customer service, better prices, discounts, promotion and reduced waiting time.
Benefits from using supply chain	Good relationships, collaboration, stock availability and competitiveness

Source: Monnagaaratwe, K.F. & Motatsa, K.W., 2021, 'Enhancing business competitiveness of medium-sized food produce retailers through supply chain management', *Journal of Transport and Supply Chain Management* 15(0), a639. <https://doi.org/10.4102/jtscm.v15i0.639>

products in the SC network. With greater ease of communication, the supplier–customer relationship becomes a collaborative relationship, as it is more durable and adds value for the customer because of the continuous flow of goods. Essentially, the continuous flow of goods is a competitive advantage as it keeps the business running (making it more sustainable) and increases returns. Thus, SCC drives the competitiveness of SMEs. All the respondents concurred on this collaborative relationship, as stated by Respondent 05:

'The relationship with our suppliers is important, as we get extended credit; they can exceed the quantity limit when we have extra orders. The COVID-19 pandemic brought sufferings to people and businesses, and we have survived due to the good relationship we have built with our key suppliers over a long time. A number of SMEs have closed down, especially the new ones who didn't have good record with suppliers. We have actually remained in business due to the support we continue to receive from our main suppliers, including delivering when outsourced transportation was not available.' (Respondent 05, male, manager, 10 years of experience)

Empirical objective 2 (achieved): Exploring cost saving for small and medium-sized enterprises from third-party logistics transport optimisation

The enterprise's efficiency is linked to supplier–customer collaboration, which enabled timeous supplies and streamlined the retailers' shared 3PL transportation that resulted in cost saving in operations. The participants expressed this as a relationship built over a long period of time which benefited both parties. Transport optimisation by 3PL suppliers to the grocery SMEs was crucial, especially during the lockdown period due to the coronavirus pandemic that disrupted SC, amongst other global activities. In applying SCM strategy, SMEs in a given geographic area, as in Mahikeng, utilised the 3PL firms by consolidating their orders together to make full-load shipments that minimised transportation costs. Sharing transportation to reduce cost in SC networks improved the competitiveness of the enterprises involved (Balaji & Kumar 2013). The respondents interviewed participated in this transportation cooperation, as stated by Respondent 12:

‘Transportation is one of the major cost elements in our business. In normal time, we have always outsourced 3PL firms, and it became even more important during the COVID-19 lockdown, when movement of people and goods was limited to essential services in food and medical supplies. Most small and medium-sized businesses in our area [share] transportation in full-load shipments and follow strict scheduling to save cost. Outsourcing and sharing transportation reduced costs and continue to be more efficient for our business.’ (Respondent 12, female, owner-manager, 7 years of experience)

Empirical objective 3 (achieved): Exploring whether reverse logistics practice by small and medium-sized enterprises recovered value and reduced waste

Enterprises that pursued policy on the managing reverse logistics benefited from product refurbishment and replacement for resale and reduced damaged goods and materials taken to the landfill, which reduced environmental degradation. This resale of replaced materials recovers value that the enterprise could have lost. The refurbishing, recycling and remanufacturing of damaged products and materials reduces the volume of waste taken to the landfill (Chan et al. 2012:1320). This value creation emanating from reverse logistics management increases the enterprise’s competitiveness. Ten of the enterprises claimed to be pursuing the reverse logistics management, whilst the others were aware, but have not pursued it vigorously. In support of this, Respondent 01 remarked:

‘The FMCG has a thin profit margin, which means we have to sell large quantities to optimise our margins. With that understanding, we try to save on transport by pooling our orders together to fit a full load of outsourced transport service. Replacement of damaged products is very important for our business, as it boosts our margin. At the same time, we know we have reduced waste disposal, saving the environment from pollution. This way we improve our competitiveness and sustainability [ability to continue doing business in future].’ (Respondent 01, male, owner and manager, 15 years of experience)

Conclusion

The main objective of this study sought to explore SCM application as a competitive advantage for Mahikeng grocery SMEs in South Africa. The literature review focused on SCM and its components of logistics, reverse logistics, 3PL and SCC, amongst others. The problem statement was identified, and the primary and empirical objectives were stated. The empirical objectives explored how SMEs were influenced by SCC, transportation optimisation and reverse logistics. The theory of competitive advantage underpinned the study focusing on cost leadership and differentiation using Porter’s ‘five forces model’. This research study adopted qualitative research methodology and a constructivist research paradigm to explore the use of SCM as a competitive advantage for the grocery SMEs in Mahikeng in North-West province, South Africa. The study was conducted using a descriptive qualitative research design, where 15 face-to-face semistructured interviews were conducted with owners

and/or managers, and this is where a saturation point was reached. The data that emanated from interviews were transcribed, coded and thematically analysed via content analysis for the outcome of study with the help of the ATLAS.ti computer programme. The data analysis produced six major themes and a number of subthemes which resonated with the empirical objectives set.

Empirical objective 1 sought to explore the role of SCC in enhancing constant flow of products for business continuity. Through SCC, continuous flow of goods results in a competitive advantage as it keeps the grocery SMEs running (sustainable) and increasing returns. It can be concluded that the SCC enhances the competitiveness of Mahikeng grocery SMEs in South Africa, as concurred by all respondents. Therefore, at this point, the research question 1 expressed as ‘what is supply chain collaboration’s role in enhancing constant flow of products for business continuity for Mahikeng grocery SMEs in South Africa?’ was answered. Empirical objective 2 sought to explore cost saving for SMEs from 3PL transport optimisation. The finding of this study showed that: The enterprise’s efficiency is connected to supplier–customer collaboration, which allowed timeous supplies and streamlined the retailers’ shared 3PL transportation that resulted in cost saving in operations. It can be concluded that adopting SCM strategy, SMEs in a specified geographic area such as Mahikeng in making use of 3PL firms by consolidating their orders together to make full-load shipments that minimised the transportation cost and sharing transportation to reduce cost in supply chain network improved the competitiveness of the enterprises involved.

Therefore, research question 2, expressed as ‘how is the cost saving for SMEs from 3PL transport optimisation for Mahikeng grocery SMEs in South Africa achieved?’ was answered.

Empirical objective 3 sought to explore whether reverse logistics practices by SMEs recovered value and reduced waste. The finding of the study revealed that businesses that followed the policy on managing reverse logistics gained from product refurbishment and replacement for resale, and this resale recovered value that could have been lost by the enterprise. It can be concluded that practicing reverse logistics by SMEs recovers value and reduces waste. Therefore, the research question 3, formulated as, ‘how does reverse logistics practice by SMEs recover value and reduce waste for Mahikeng grocery SMEs in South Africa?’ was answered.

In the conclusion, managerial implications and recommendations of the study are also provided (see the following sections).

Managerial implications

The managerial implications were centred around SCM and its components of logistics, reverse logistics, 3PL, SCC and competitiveness. The pursuance of Porter’s ‘five forces model’ in the theory of competitive advantage drove the

management of cost leadership and differentiation. The logistics component manages the transportation and warehousing in a SC system, whilst reverse logistics manage the backward flow of products from customers back to the supplier for replacement, recycling, refurbishing or remanufacturing. Supply chain collaboration manages the supplier–customer relationship. Indeed, SCM driving the competitiveness of grocery SMEs is managing their profitability and sustainability of the enterprise.

Limitations of the study

This study focused only on grocery SMEs that are based in Mahikeng and did not include those that are from other places in the North-West province or those from other provinces in South Africa. The study also excluded large grocery retailers, smaller grocery stores such as spaza shops and distributors. The empirical data collected involved the owners and managers of the stores with the exclusion of the employees.

Recommendations

As this study focused on grocery SMEs in Mahikeng, a recommendation is for a future study to include retail chain stores which have a national outlook in order to establish a bigger scope of the impact provided by SCM in the retail business nationally.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships which may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

This article is based on the MCom dissertation of K.F.M., and therefore he was the main researcher. K.M. helped as the main supervisor in conceptualisation of this study.

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Data availability

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Disclaimer

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