



## The influence of buyer-seller relationships on organizational competitiveness in the beverages industry in Zimbabwe

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This study explored the influence of buyer-seller relationships on organizational competitiveness in the beverages industry. The research aimed to investigate the significance of building and maintaining strong buyer-seller relationships in enhancing the competitiveness of organizations operating in the highly competitive beverages market. Using a quantitative research methodology, data were collected through questionnaires. Results indicate that buyer-seller relationships in Zimbabwe's beverage industry led to increased customer loyalty, improved market responsiveness, enhanced product quality, and greater differentiation from competitors. Although achieving organizational competitiveness requires mutual understanding and commitment, the study recommends that managers in the beverages industry prioritize developing and maintaining strong buyer-seller relationships through improved communication, collaboration, mutual trust, and transparency among supply chain partners to achieve competitiveness.

Keywords: buyer-seller relationship, trust, communication, cooperation, commitment, organizational competitiveness

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### Introduction

Managing relationships between buyers and suppliers involves establishing and maintaining strategic connections between organizations that procure goods or services and potential vendors. The study examined how the management of supplier relationships impacts organizational competitiveness. Lysons and Farrington (2018) state that buyer-supplier relationship management is a strategy and that it is based on helping procuring entities to manage relations with suppliers effectively. Supplier relationships are an integral part of the overall corporate strategy, especially in the manufacturing sector, where suppliers' activities directly affect business profitability (Steele & Court 1996). Various authors (Buttle 2009, Lysons & Farrington 2018) confirm that the procurement department is responsible for operationalizing the buyer-supplier relationship strategy. The Zimbabwean production sector has faced serious economic bottlenecks

over the years. Besides competition, an uncertain economic environment characterized by foreign currency shortages and raw material shortages has also besieged the manufacturing sector. The buyer-supplier relationship is a strategy that can be leveraged to enhance a company's competitiveness. Organizations are seeking innovative ways to improve effectiveness and efficiency as the world is becoming increasingly competitive. Wachira (2013) argues, "internal processes have been the firm's main focus, which is being replaced with ways to create value to improve levels of effectiveness and efficiency. The importance and visibility of relationship management have increased over the years as firms have recognized the need to manage their internal and external organizational processes. Krause et al. (2007) confirm that when buying firms are committed to long-term relationships with key suppliers by sharing their goals and values with them and engaging in supplier development initiatives, this results in higher performance. Buying organizations ought to treat supplying firms as partners (Lascelles & Dale 1990). Several benefits are realized when firms invest in buyer-supplier relationships, such as reduced risk, enhanced knowledge sharing, improved trust and communication, greater openness, improved decision-making, and greater overall competitiveness for both parties (Handfield & Bechtel 2002, Vonderembse & Tracey 1999). While there is evidence of extensive literature on buyer-seller relationships and their influence on organizational success from other industry sectors (e.g., Kamau & Sammy 201, Munyimi & Chari 2018, Mushi et al. 2021, Nyaga et al. 2010), there is scant evidence in extant literature on studies that cover this subject in the context of the beverages industry in Africa, let alone in Zimbabwe. Very few studies have been conducted in South Africa (e.g. Loury-Okoumba & Mafini 2018, Mutekwe et al. 2020), and these studies do not provide adequate answers to pertinent questions about buyer-seller relationships and competitiveness in the Zimbabwean beverage context, which this study aims to address. The researchers are convinced that no study has been conducted in Zimbabwe that aimed to address issues of buyer-seller relationships and their connections to organizational competitiveness in Zimbabwe's beverage sector. Hence, a gap exists in extant literature that the study endeavours to close by examining how four variables of buyer-seller relationships determine the competitiveness of organisations in the beverage industry in Zimbabwe.

Thus, this study endeavors to explore the strategic relevance of fostering collaboration, trust, communication, and commitment in buyer-seller relationships to achieve organizational competitiveness in the beverages industry. Moreover, it has significant implications for both academics and various supply chains. The study provides empirical insights into buyer-seller relationships in beverage supply chain management and organizational competitiveness. The study discusses different forms of strategic relationships that buyers and sellers can emphasize to improve competitiveness. Results from this study are also intended to assist managers and executives not only in this particular sector but across all industries worldwide, as buyer-seller relationships are a necessity for organizational success. This study begins by providing an overview of the literature, the hypotheses, the methodology, the significant findings, the conclusions, and the recommendations.

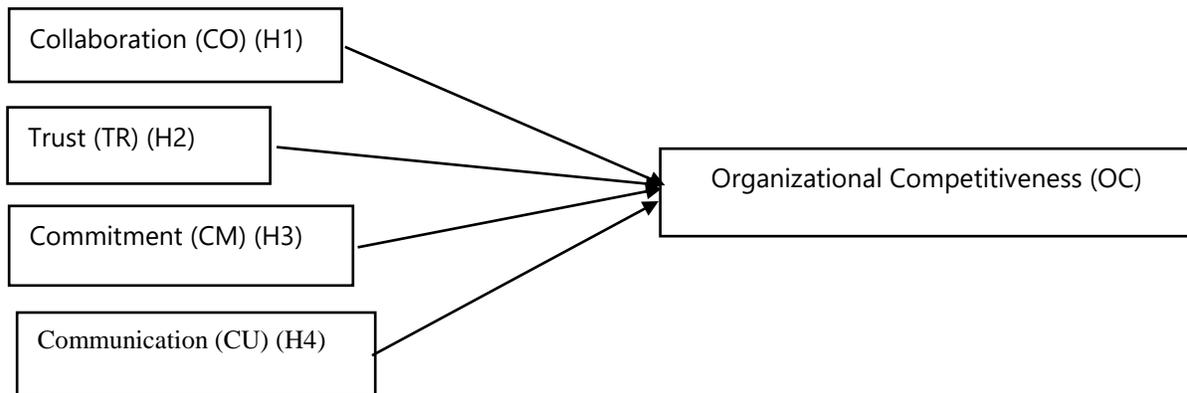
### **Theoretical Framework**

We examine agency and system theories to develop a comprehensive approach to buyer-seller relationship management. Wilhelm and Sydow (2018) discuss the relationship between business managers and agents. It emphasizes aligning agent actions with organizational objectives to enhance profitability and shareholder value. The theory addresses conflicts that may arise when suppliers fail to meet the company's goals, such as providing inadequate goods or services, insufficient quantity, delayed deliveries, or increased operating costs. These conflicts can erode trust between supply chain members. The agency theory is relevant to this study as it provides strategies for cultivating positive supplier relationships. By implementing supplier development strategies, the company can ensure suppliers meet its requirements and preferences, thereby improving contract performance. Supplier development, as

explained by Cheshmberah and Beheshtikia (2020), involves long-term collaboration between a purchasing company and its suppliers to enhance technical capabilities, quality, delivery, and cost efficiency, while also fostering continuous improvement. The Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (2013) describes supplier development as a process that focuses on individual collaboration with specific suppliers to enhance their performance and capabilities in support of the purchasing organization. Supplier development activities not only offer companies a competitive advantage but also contribute to suppliers' long-term growth and relationship enhancement (Salimian et al. 2017).

Similarly, systems theory integrates various elements, such as human resources, capital, information, materials, and financial resources, within a complex supply chain. These elements form part of a broader supply chain system. By its nature, the theory emphasizes the importance of considering both internal and external factors to understand their impact on organizational performance, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the frameworks. In today's uncertain business environment, the interconnection between buyer and supplier systems has intensified, leading to their functioning as a unified entity with subcontractors. In the supply chain, information components encompass communication and decision-making infrastructure. The Enterprise Research Center (LERC) highlights the significant purpose of information flow in supply chain management (Lambert et al. 1998). Rodoula and Wirtz (2012) emphasize the importance of information flow across three stages of the buying process: pre-transactional, transactional, and post-transactional. The exchange of data is critical as it enables the coordination of various supply chain activities. Accurate information exchange among participants is essential for material flow within the supply chain, allowing the firms to respond effectively to market dynamics. The design of the supply chain influences the extent to which information can be shared. Sharing information facilitates supply chain optimization and enhances firm performance. Bowersox et al. (2000) suggest that sharing demand forecasts and promotional information throughout the supply chain is necessary for optimal supply chain performance. Based on the above discussion, we present the conceptual framework and hypotheses development in the following section.

**Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development**



**Figure1. Conceptual Framework**

Source: the authors

Collaboration relates to the performance of tasks jointly by two or more organizations in a business relationship to achieve collective benefits (Fekpe & Fiagbey 2021). It is a form of inter-organizational relationship whereby buyers and sellers share information and duties aimed at achieving common goals in order to realize and sustain competitive advantage (Fekpe & Fiagbey 2021). Supply chain collaboration has been found to yield multiple benefits such as efficient inventory management and effective demand forecasting. Building strong buyer-supplier relationships is not only critical for business success but also a

game-changer. In their study in Kenya, Kamau and Sammy (2017) found that collaboration between buyers and suppliers resulted in a “win-win situation, but also a win more-win more situation”. In a related study, Mofokeng and Chinomona (2019) find that collaboration and partnerships were the major drivers of supply chain performance. Collaboration and integration are critical determinants of a buyer-seller relationship that yield long-term organizational benefits. When buyers and sellers collaborate, they realize multiple benefits besides financial gains, such as increased customer networks and product and service improvements. Collaboration helps buyers and sellers share information, thereby making operational issues such as order processing, replenishment, and product deliveries easier. Moreover, collaboration is cost-effective because it reduces transaction costs. Nonetheless, despite yielding several benefits, collaboration may be inadequate if it lacks technological support (Uwamahoro et al. 2024). Organizations in the beverage industry can achieve greater competitiveness by sharing timely, precise data, as information quality is a driver of successful collaboration. Similarly, visibility is critical for nurturing trust and loyalty, which is crucial for positive collaboration. Harnessing the benefits of buyer-seller collaboration (BSC) reduces overall costs, creates a win-win situation for partners, and, above all, increases profit margins and market competitiveness. Based on the foregoing discussion, this study proposes that:

*H1. Collaboration between buyers and sellers positively impacts an organizations' competitiveness.*

Trust is the mainstay of any relationship. The trust between buyers and suppliers plays a crucial role in an organization's overall performance. Buyer-seller trust is the fulcrum of any successful business partnership, underscoring the rationale for establishing strong partnerships and contributing immensely to organizational competitiveness. Strategic business partnerships characterized by mutual trust prompt partners to respond promptly. Trust promotes inter-organizational dependencies that enhance collaboration and mitigate unbridled opportunistic business behaviors between buyers and sellers. Trust defines partners' willingness to abide by each other's actions and decisions, and it is the bedrock of successful partnerships. It is particularly crucial for information exchange, resource mobilization, and expertise sharing, which are key to organizational competitiveness. Trust is the extent to which an organization like Delta Beverages is confident that its supply chain partners will honor their obligations in good faith. Trust has a strong bearing on what buyers and sellers do and the decisions they make, which are paramount to organizational effectiveness and efficiency. Trust is a multifaceted construct whose success depends on the interplay of variables such as benevolence, credibility, competence and integrity in a buyer-seller relationship (Ngouapegne & Chinomona 2018). Rooted in the relational exchange theory, trust, together with cooperation and commitment, results in competitiveness and consolidates buyer-seller relationships. Trust is a significant intermediary in inter-organizational trust, fostering resilience and organizational competitiveness by encouraging transparency, reducing transaction costs, and enabling long-term win-win benefits for both parties. Loury-Okoumba and Mafini (2018) studied how buyer-seller relationships impacted organizational performance in the FMCG retail sector. They found that trust had the most significant influence, followed by commitment, engagement, communication, and collaboration. Matevž and Maja (2013) examined the impact of buyer-supplier relationships on organizational competitiveness within a multinational company. They found that interpersonal trust and joint problem-solving were the major predictors of organizational competitiveness. Based on evidence from past studies, the current research presumes that:

*H2. Trust between buyers and sellers positively impacts the organizations' competitiveness.*

Buyer-supplier commitment is “the belief that two parties perceive and value their relationship and are thus willing to exercise their utmost devotion to maintaining it” (Loury-Okoumba & Mafini 2018, p. 5). When buyers and sellers are willing to fulfill their contractual obligations, they can successfully achieve

their goals. Moreover, the organizations are more eager to commit to a relationship when they derive satisfaction. In other words, the more buyers or sellers perceive that they are satisfied with their business partners, the greater the level of commitment. Thus, when committed partnering organizations become more dedicated to executing their operations diligently, they ensure a consistent supply of materials, timeous deliveries, and short lead times. Product development and customer satisfaction. Commitment significantly determines buyer-supplier intentions in a relationship. It influences the partner's desire to continue or terminate the relationship. Commitment leads to relationship longevity, which is the basis for competitive advantage. Besides, when commitment prevails, buyers and sellers can make short-term sacrifices to protect their interests. Accordingly, commitment is a bond that keeps buyers and suppliers together, regardless of whether they are happy or dissatisfied. Commitment can take three forms: continuance commitment (calculative and instrumental), affective commitment (inclined to identification and liking), and normative commitment (obligatory). A study by Loice (2015) established that the constructs of buyer-seller relationships, namely, commitment, communication, cooperation, and trust, had a significant positive influence on procurement performance in the Kenyan supermarket industry. Similarly, Mafini and Loury-Okoumba (2024) examined buyer-supplier commitment, confidence, and cooperation as determinants of business performance in the fast-moving consumer goods sector. They conclude that the three factors had a significant positive influence on business performance. Thus, organizations must embrace long-term cooperation with the major suppliers to achieve sustainable competitive advantage, which is essential for overall organizational performance. Based on the discussions in extant literature, this study postulates that:

### *H3. Commitment between buyers and sellers positively impacts organizations' competitiveness.*

Effective communication is key to a sustainable business relationship. According to Loury-Okoumba and Mafini (2018, p.7), "buyer-supplier communication refers to the effective exchange of information between customers and business partners, to smooth out their operations processes and establish long-term relationships". When buyers and sellers communicate effectively, they improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their operational processes. The Zimbabwean beverage sector can effectively utilize communication to broaden its market base. This can be achieved by employing joint marketing communications with their trade partners, which ensures product awareness and visibility among customers. In the beverage business, continuous communication is indispensable because it enables organizations to monitor and track product movement between buyers and suppliers consistently. Thus, communication results in highly reliable, responsive supply networks that guarantee on-time product delivery, which is critical for organizational competitiveness. Tucker et al (1996) posit that effective communication is key to achieving and sustaining competitive advantage. Effective communication fosters trust between buyers and sellers and ensures mutual benefits accrue to both parties through transparency and openness, enabling long-term collaboration. In Tanzania's maize market, Musemwa et al. (2017) found that communication variables, such as the provision of reliable, credible, and timely information, the desire to disseminate it, and receptiveness to share meaningful information, contributed significantly to organizational performance. In South Africa, Loury-Okoumba and Mafini (2018) explored five buyer-seller relationship variables for Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs) in Gauteng province. They found that engagement, communication, commitment, cooperation, and trust exerted a considerable positive effect on supplier performance. Similarly, if buyers and sellers in the Zimbabwean beverage industry establish effective communication networks, the entire supply chain would operate smoothly, thereby enhancing competitiveness. Advancements in technology have made communication easier. Information can now be shared between partners in a supply chain using information technology communications to coordinate activities among business partners and to facilitate interactions between buyers and sellers. User-friendly

and efficient ITC necessitated easy communication, which is vital for competitiveness. This study, therefore, hypothesizes that:

*H4. Effective communication between buyers and sellers enhances organizations' competitiveness.*

### Methodology

We used a quantitative method for this study. We used a sample of 248 from a sample frame of 700 participants across the supply chain, using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) method. Data were gathered through surveys via the drop-and-pick method, in which participants were given self-completion questionnaires. Response rate was about 80 percent. The sample consisted of male/female (85/15%), undergraduate/graduate (65/35%), and age below and over 45 (87/13%). The sample was derived from members of Delta Beverages' supply chain, and targeted participants were managers and supervisors of organizations that supplied raw materials and accessories to Delta, and those that bought and resold beverage products from Delta. A list of registered organizations that traded with Delta was provided in the Government Gazette of Zimbabwe (2020) report. Delta was ideal, given that it is the major player in the production of all forms of beverages in the country, and the organization with the largest market share in the Zimbabwean beverages industry. Nonresponse bias is a major deterrent to research, but to address it, post-survey adjustments were implemented to mitigate bias (Toepoel & Schonlau 2017). Moreover, the researchers prevented nonresponse by ensuring the questionnaire design was acceptable to the targeted respondents.

### Analyses and Results

We used SPSS for analysis. The data collected were sorted and coded. Descriptive statistics were used for demographics, and simple regression and correlations were employed to analyze the associations between buyer-seller relationship constructs and organizational competitiveness. As suggested by These et al. (2016), the study adopted a commonly used significance level of  $p < .05$ , and, as reflected in the table below, all  $p$ -values fell below the threshold. As such, all the associations between the independent sub-variables and the dependent variable were significant. The unstandardized regression coefficients ( $\beta$ ) estimated from the regression model are easy-to-interpret statistics that explain how the independent variable influences the dependent variable, and they are often presented alongside their corresponding standard errors (SE) (Nieminen 2022). The smaller standard errors confirm that the sample statistic for this study closely reflects the population parameter.

**Table 1. Relationships among Variables**

<i>Paths</i>	$\beta$	<i>SE</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Result</i>
CO → OC	.91	.02	.01	<i>H1</i>	Supported
TR → OC	.87	.03	.01	<i>H2</i>	Supported
CM → OC	.95	.01	.01	<i>H3</i>	Supported
CU → OC	.95	.03	.01	<i>H4</i>	Supported

*H1* (CO→OC) is supported ( $\beta=.91$ ,  $p<.01$ ). This suggests that there is a positive correlation between competitive advantage and the level of collaboration. When suppliers demonstrate greater flexibility, it increases the likelihood of doing business with the buyer and fosters greater cooperation between the two parties. The study also examined competitive interactions from a coordination perspective, emphasizing the role of coordination mechanisms in promoting collaboration among firms (Mariani 2016). Extensive coordination and positive coordination outcomes encourage increased collaboration, leading to a positive spiral effect (Gulati et al. 2012). Developing common understandings, shared goals,

and collective ideologies among network members enhances cooperation and aligns their thinking processes (De Carolis & Saporito 2006, Inkpen & Tsang 2005, Krause et al. 2007). The study supports the idea that defining clear buyer and supplier roles based on the purchased product is crucial (Kraljic 1983, Lacoste & Johnsen 2015). Different supplier roles should have distinct expectations within the framework contract. This differentiation allows for complementary strengths and a focus on win-win outcomes, rather than competition between the buyer and supplier. Clearly defining these roles creates expectations and enables a more effective buyer-supplier relationship. When there is effective collaboration between sellers and buyers, organizations like Delta Beverages can manage significant threats prevalent in Zimbabwe, owing to resource restraints and economic instability, by sharing knowledge, mobilizing limited resources, and engaging in joint risk management. Integration among buyers and sellers boosts competitiveness for all supply chain partners, improves effectiveness, efficiency, and resilience, which cannot be achieved individually in a volatile business environment. Nonetheless, collaborations can be impeded by a country's economic volatility, a repressive regulatory environment, and operational and relational management issues, a phenomenon common in Zimbabwe. In the South African petrochemical industry Botes et al. (2017) resolved that buyer-supplier collaboration did not directly influence supply chain resilience, but that it influenced the determinants of supply chain resilience. Similarly, in Nigeria Ogonu and Nwokah (2023) established that buyer-supplier collaboration was strongly correlated to organizational performance.

*H2 (TR→OC)* is supported ( $\beta=.87, p<.01$ ). It indicates that a higher level of trust between the buyer and supplier leads to greater operational efficiency and a stronger relationship between them. This outcome aligns with Sahay (2003), who emphasized the significance of trust in developing and sustaining fruitful business relationships. Fawcett et al. (2011) highlight that trust underpins the building and maintenance of supply chain relationships. Additionally, Handfield and Bechtel's (2002) empirical analysis of various manufacturing firms supports the notion that high levels of trust facilitate collaboration, information sharing, and overall operational performance. The research consistently indicates that trust plays a pivotal role in enhancing an organization's operational performance. It fosters a strong business network, contributes to firm success, and encourages long-term focus in buyer-supplier relationships. Trust is crucial for maintaining continuity in conventional channel relationships, as it drives improved competitiveness, reduced transaction costs, and better performance outcomes. Considering the beverage industry in Zimbabwe, trust plays a pivotal role in supplier-buyer relationships. Trust is a critical catalyst for partnership success and competitive advantage, and even across distinct trades. Trust is universally recognized as foundational and influences the decisions supply chain partners make, relational dynamics, and corporate engagements. Thus, trust is an invaluable asset that promotes innovation, resilience, and organizational competitiveness for supply chain partners. To build trust and manage risk, buyers and sellers in Zimbabwean supply chains should adopt proactive partnership strategies, such as establishing ethics codes and forging clear contractual agreements, to reduce exposure. Thus, buyers and sellers can build trust by fostering open communication and aligning rewards and goals across partners. When organizations create and sustain a culture of trust amongst members, the resulting benefits include reductions in transactional costs, increased innovation, and improved operational efficiencies, all of which are enablers of organizational competitiveness. However, despite the benefits it creates for chain members, implementing trust in buyer-seller relationships is also hindered in Zimbabwe by economic turbulence, stringent regulatory controls, and power asymmetry.

*H3 (CM→OC)* is supported ( $\beta=.95, p<.01$ ). Suppliers' commitment to collaborating with buyers is positive, which can lead to increased business activities between the two parties. Like any other organization, Delta Beverages strives for long-term success and, as such, aims to sustain long, relatively stable partnerships. For the organization, relationship stability entails continuity and longevity, in which the company and its partners sacrifice short-term returns to reap long-term benefits through a strategic partnership. Buyers and sellers in this chain must maintain stability and be committed to satisfying the major stakeholder, the customer. Thus, organizations that have durable partnerships, share experiences,

and are, as a result, more familiar and better understand each other, thereby leading to increased levels of commitment and trust. While Zimbabwean beverage organizations are keen to cultivate successful buyer-seller alliances, they are not immune to supply chain management challenges. Implementation challenges, uncertainties in demand and supply, limited information technology capabilities, and political and legal issues, e.g., government regulation, can curtail partner commitments, thereby impacting organizational competitiveness. This result echoes findings by Mthiyane et al. (2025) established that buyer-supplier commitment, quality information sharing, and trust were the main anchors of organizational performance in the automotive industry.

*H4* (CU→OC) is supported ( $\beta=.95, p<.01$ ). It indicates that the quality of communication plays a vital role in strengthening the relationship between the buyer and supplier. Strong communication fosters a lasting relationship, ensuring the timely delivery of orders to the buyer and prompt payment to the supplier. The responses obtained underscore the essential nature of effective communication in buyer-supplier relationships (Mohr & Nevin, 1990). Nyaga et al. (2010) also support this notion, highlighting that communication processes are fundamental to organizational behavior and critical to achieving organizational success. Considering the literature and findings, the study acknowledges that effective communication serves as the foundation for a strong customer-buyer relationship. Without it, sustaining a meaningful relationship within a business environment would be challenging. In the Zimbabwean beverages industry, information sharing enhances collaborative partnerships and buyer-supplier competitiveness. Buyer-seller communication in the Delta supply chain may be described in terms of information integration systems, shared communication infrastructure, and data accuracy. Although these are vital to Delta's supply chain competitiveness, numerous hindrances to effective communication between buyers and suppliers stem from inadequate information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure, unreliable information-sharing networks, and the cost of acquiring efficient communication means. This situation negatively impacts rapport and trust between buyers and suppliers in this supply chain, leading members to fail to adapt to market dynamics and thereby affecting organizational competitiveness. The findings indicate that modern technology is key to the success of any supply chain in Zimbabwe; buyer-seller communication fosters supply chain visibility, accurate data sharing, and data reliability, thereby resulting in organizational competitiveness. This finding augments Msemwa et al. (2017) who resolved that communication variables such as timeliness, reliability, credibility and willingness to disseminate information were key determinants successful buyer-seller relations vital for organizational performance.

## Discussion

*Collaboration* positively impacts organizational competitiveness. It improves supply chain performance, fosters innovation, mitigates risks, promotes knowledge sharing, builds trust, and drives cost reduction and efficiency. Organizations that prioritize and nurture practical cooperation with their suppliers are better positioned to attain sustainable competitive advantages in the market. Buyer-supplier cooperation positively influences supply chain performance, which is an antecedent of organizational competitiveness, as reflected in cost efficiency, delivery reliability, and product quality. When buyers and suppliers collaborate effectively, they can streamline processes, reduce lead times, and enhance overall supply chain performance; it contributes to organizational competitiveness. Cooperation between buyers and suppliers also stimulates innovation and product development. Open communication and collaboration allow suppliers to provide valuable insights and contribute to the design and development of new products. This cooperation fosters innovation, accelerates time-to-market, and enhances the organization's competitiveness by offering differentiated products.

*Trust* has been found to influence organizational competitiveness. Thus, buyer-supplier trust plays a crucial role in organizational competitiveness. It promotes collaboration, reliability, flexibility, innovation, and long-term relationships. By fostering trust, organizations can strengthen their supply chains, expand

their product offerings, and differentiate themselves in the market, ultimately enhancing their overall competitiveness. Trustworthy buyer-supplier relationships contribute to an organization's reputation and brand image. When an organization is known for maintaining trust-based relationships with its suppliers, it enhances its credibility and attractiveness to customers, investors, and other stakeholders. A positive reputation can positively impact the organization's competitiveness in the market.

*Commitment* is a significant contributor to organizational competitiveness. When both buyers and suppliers demonstrate strong commitment to one another, this can have a profound impact on the organization's ability to compete in the marketplace. A strong commitment between buyers and suppliers yields several benefits that enhance organizational competitiveness. Commitment fosters a sense of partnership and collaboration between buyers and suppliers. When both parties are committed to each other's success, they are more likely to work together closely, share information, and align their goals and strategies. Commitment between buyers and suppliers promotes reliability and dependability. Suppliers who are committed to meeting the buyer's requirements are more likely to deliver products or services on time and with consistent quality. This reliability reduces supply chain risks and ensures smooth operations, which is crucial for maintaining competitiveness.

*Communication* plays a crucial role in managing risks in the buyer-supplier relationship. By maintaining a transparent, open line of communication, both parties can identify and proactively address potential risks. This proactive approach enables the organization to mitigate supply chain disruptions, reduce costs, and maintain a competitive advantage. Effective communication helps in building strong relationships between buyers and suppliers. Trust, mutual understanding, and shared goals are vital for a successful buyer-supplier relationship. When organizations have strong relationships with their suppliers, they can negotiate favorable terms, access new technologies, and receive preferential treatment. These advantages contribute to the organization's market competitiveness. Effective communication between buyers and suppliers is essential for organizational competitiveness. It enables collaboration, information sharing, innovation, risk management, and relationship building. By leveraging these benefits, organizations can enhance their product offerings, streamline their supply chains, and gain a competitive edge in the marketplace.

### **Implication for Managers**

Organizations in the beverage industry and others across supply chain sectors must cultivate effective buyer-supplier relationship strategies, such as partnerships, collaborations, and alliances, to achieve supply chain visibility upstream and downstream. These strategies play a vital role in enhancing organizational competitiveness and creating win-win outcomes for all supply chain stakeholders. In the contemporary business environment, competition extends beyond individual organizations to encompass entire supply chains, underscoring the need to establish relationships with other entities for survival. Organizations should strive to cultivate enduring relationships with their suppliers, aiming for long-term partnerships. Thus, organizations, regardless of their line of business, need to harness virtuous relationships with their buyers/suppliers to enhance organizational competitiveness. Partnering entails establishing a long-term, personalized relationship based on trust, honesty, commitment, transparency, information sharing, and the unconditional desire to create and sustain mutually beneficial relationships between organizations as buyers and sellers in their respective supply chains.

### **Limitations and Directions for Further Study**

While this study fully explores the nexus between buyers and sellers to enhance organizational competitiveness in the beverages sector, its scope is limited, as it focuses on a single organization, thereby limiting the generalizability of its results to other related studies. Data were gathered primarily from participants in one conglomerate organization, which may not accurately reflect the broader

beverage industry's employee demographics. Besides, this study focused on only four elements of buyer-seller relationships that influence organizational competitiveness, thereby limiting its scope. A broader-scope research study that considers the study area with a focus on the entire beverage sector may produce conclusive, generalizable results. A study that includes all employees in the beverages industry will ensure proper representation and authentic participant responses.

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