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E-SOURCING STRATEGIES ON EFFICIENCY OF PROCUREMENT PROCESSES OF SUGAR FACTORIES IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Sugar factories are increasingly confronted with greater global competition and changing markets environment despite their effort to use e-sourcing strategies as a key pillar to improve procurement performance. This has resulted in unnecessarily high operation costs, poor inventory control, unacceptable supplier appraisal standards and uncoordinated business activities in the procurement positions, thus affecting general performance. E-sourcing has become a powerful tool which facilitates accountability and audit-ability. This study sought to determine the effect of e- sourcing strategies on efficiency of procurement process of Sugar factories in Kenya. The study adopted a correlational research design where the target population was 165 who were the Head of Agriculture, Head of Finance, Head of Manufacturing, Head of ICT, Head of Marketing, Head of Purchasing and Procurement staff working in sugar factories in Kenya. The study findings are presented in form of tables, figures and graphs. The e-sourcing strategies; e-tendering strategy, e-prequalification strategy and e-evaluation strategy could only explain 59.8% of efficient procurement performance as shown by R^2 of 0.598. The study recommends that sugar factories suppliers should procure document management software which will enables them to register their suppliers online and submitted their mandatory requirements online. The results of this research may guide in policy formulation for the sugar sub sector.

KEY WORDS: *E-Evaluation, E-Prequalification, E- Sourcing, E-Tendering, Efficiency of procurement process*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

According to Chepkwony (2017), e-sourcing strategies are the procedure of defining requirements and pre-qualifying for identifying possible suppliers. While e-auctioning concentrates on evaluating suppliers, negotiating, and contract administration, e-tendering concentrates on requests for information, proposals, and quotations. In the public sector, e-tendering, e-prequalification, e-auctions, e-prequalification, and e-invoicing are some of the often utilized techniques. Requisitions and purchase orders are created, and requested items are delivered, as part of the e-ordering and payment process. Analytics involves viewing uses and taking remedial action when needed as part of end-to-end integration. The effectiveness of e-procurement depends on a two-way information exchange between all parties involved in the process to produce results that are profitable for both parties, aside from the fact that it uses technology, (Kisimbii & Maalim, 2019).

According to Addo (2019), e-sourcing is crucial for eliminating deficiencies in procurement management processes, because effective supply chain management is necessary to reduce and control risks. With e-sourcing, labor-intensive procurement processes including e-auctions, e-tenders, exchanging supplier contracts, and signing questionnaires for supplier on-boarding can be completed electronically instead of by hand. The process uses a centralized platform to connect many entities and operations. The administration of vendors and suppliers is one of the most important aspects of e-sourcing. The administration of supplier relationships and supplier information is also addressed. E-sourcing also requires the use of e-tendering, e-auctioning, e-ordering and payment, analytics, and e-informing (Kisimbii & Maalim, 2019).

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In order to improve tighter control over expenditure in today's volatile economy, more investment in e-sourcing is strongly advised. In the sugar industry, procurement is a basic competency that, if properly handled by procurement departments, potentially is a considerable source of competitive advantage. This is the rationale behind why businesses hire highly qualified employees to manage their procurement needs. To be successful, procurement departments must develop and maintain appropriate supply and purchase strategies that give firms more competitive advantages (Addo, 2019).

E-sourcing has been touted as a technique to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of procurement where an organization can either directly or indirectly purchase the raw materials through e-sourcing at a significantly cheaper cost. Additionally, e-sourcing promotes firm's competitive posture and transparency, (Musau, 2015). According to Gichuhi and Waruguru, (2020), any business enterprise must accept and incorporate information technology into its everyday operations in order to succeed.

Organizations can expand their potential suppliers' sources without incurring any additional costs by communicating with vendors and suppliers online and having access to any information they need with the push of a computer button. This is due to the fact that they are no longer reliant on those providers and dealers they can physically see. In the convenience of their offices, they can access any region of the world to source their inputs. Their operations are improved by their online interactions and partnerships with suppliers and customers (Ntooki & Alexander 2021). E-sourcing, according to Shaw and Subramaniam (2002), is crucial to business-to-business (B2B) e-commerce. Business-to-business e-commerce conducted online improves interorganizational coordination and integration, which lowers transaction costs and offers tremendous opportunities for firms to source products and services from suppliers that are willing to compete. E-sourcing not only contributes strategically to the value chain but also encourages the expansion of supply chain networks (Hawking & Stein, 2004).

The agriculture sector, the basis of economic growth and a means of support for at least 25% of Kenyans, benefits greatly from the sugar business. The subsector employs the majority of workers and provides the majority of households' livelihoods, accounting for 15% of the agricultural GDP (Sugar Directorate 2023). The industry has fifteen sugar factories, including the Chemelil Sugar Factory, Kibos Sugar and Allied Factories, Mumias Sugar Factory, Nzoia Sugar Factory, Soin Sugar Factory, South Nyanza Sugar Factory, Sukari Industries Limited, Trans-mara Sugar Factory, West Kenya Sugar Factory, and Butali Sugar Factory. Muhoroni Sugar Factory is in receivership while Kwale International Sugar Company has not yet been put into operation (Sugar Directorate, 2023).
Significant obstacles, such as high input costs and fierce competition from low-cost producers, are currently facing the Kenyan sugar business. Given the products' supply and demand, it is evident that major adjustments and research into boosting this sector's growth and competitiveness continue to be the highest priority for the nation (KSB, 2022).

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Sugar factories are increasingly confronted with greater global competition and changing markets environment despite their effort for e-sourcing strategies which is a key pillar to procurement performance improvement. As a result, there are now excessively high operating costs, poor inventory management, inappropriate criteria for supplier evaluations, and disorganized business operations in the procurement positions, all of which have an impact on overall performance. From roughly US$676 per tonne in 2014 to US$1007 per tonne in 2018, the cost of producing sugar has soared. When compared to pricing on the global market and those of other regional manufacturers, Kenya's cost of production is high. The reasons for this high cost of production range from tendering, issuance of licenses, and traders. E-sourcing is one way that sugar factories can reduce their operating cost by adopting the use of technology in its sourcing. As evidenced in sourcing advertisements, most of sugar factories procurement process are done manually and no provision for use of technology. Majority of sugar companies spend a lot of time and money on sourcing procedures. This has made it more difficult for the business to meet its goals, especially when it comes to lowering total procurement costs and lead times. While the adoption of e-tendering has been shown to have an impact on procurement performance, sugar factories have continued to record subpar performance in this area. Studies have not addressed how e-sourcing strategies influence procurement performance, and those that are available on the topic have not explicitly linked it with procurement performance in Kenyan sugar factories. This study is necessary to fill this research gap by determining the impact of e-sourcing approaches on procurement performance in Kenya since none of the reviewed studies have examined the relationship between e-tendering, e-prequalification, and e-evaluation and efficiency of procurement process.

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2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Electronic sourcing is the act of acquiring data on potential new suppliers for a business via the internet and online tools. It supports each step of the procurement process, including the selection of competent vendors through pre-qualification, evaluation, and final selection. According to Barngetuny and Kimutai (2015), the PPOA establishes guidelines for how all of these actions must be carried out.

Electronic supplier identification refers to the process of using the internet to identify potential new suppliers for a business. With certain criteria in place for identifying the providers, this is done. Quality concerns and geography are two typical factors utilized to identify suppliers electronically. According to Ezeani and Asogwa (2018), the criteria used to identify suppliers may vary depending on the particular commodities. Making a list of possible suppliers for new and emerging commodities, products, and services requires the utilization of the internet's power. According to Flynn and Davis (2017), businesses should regularly compile a complete list of suppliers to account for both expected and unanticipated preferred providers. Today's businesses can find new suppliers thanks to the development of technology, which gives them more time to focus on other crucial tasks.

Choosing the best suppliers will assist the business obtain the desired level of quality, the appropriate pricing, and the required time frame. According to Aggrey (2011), choosing a supplier can serve as a channel for information that can boost an organization's efficiency and competitiveness. The most important phase in an organization is choosing its suppliers because businesses are still more dependent on them. According to Gupta and Narain (2015), the capabilities of suppliers are seen as a resource for the growth of buyers' and buyers' own distinctive capabilities. The selection of an electronic supplier is affects the firm's performance, particularly with regard to the final product's quality, design, cost, and manufacturer ability. According to Kannan and Tan (2002), there are both tangible and intangible variables that go into the selection of suppliers. According to Beil (2010), supplier assessment refers to the process by which a company selects, assesses, and awards contracts to particular businesses or suppliers.

Mabhodha and Choga's (2021) study sought to ascertain how ICT applications have affected Zimbabwean procurement procedures. 110 respondents made up the study's population. This research employed quota sampling with employment-based strata. For the purpose of the study, 86 respondents were chosen using a percentage of 78% from each strata. Primary data came via questionnaires, while secondary data came from examinations of pertinent literature. The study's findings showed that although e-payments for procurement were available, their use was rather minimal. The analysis further proved that organizational and individual goals drove the acceptance and adoption of e-payments in procurement. To evaluate the claim that the Technology Acceptance Model underlay the uptake of technology, this study examined people's perceptions of usability of ICT. The adoption and growth of e-payments in procurement were attributed to ICT training and skill development, businesses' dedication to them, and the availability of financial resources. The researchers suggested additional research to be done on the subject of public entities' acceptance of e-payments in commercial activities. However, because quota sampling was utilized in the study, it is difficult to extend the results to the full population because it is hard to determine the test's sampling error from a single quota. This methodological discrepancy is what the current study seeks to resolve.

In a study, Hajir (2021) looked at the effects of e-tendering, e-sourcing, and e-payments on the operational performance of retail supermarkets in Nairobi City County. Technology Acceptance Model served as the study's foundation, while positivism was used as its paradigm. The researcher chose a case study design. With the aid of questionnaires and interview guides, primary data was collected from the procurement managers of the 94 retail supermarkets in Nairobi County that were registered. The quantitative information was analyzed using regression, descriptive, and Spearman rank correlation methods. Correlation tests were utilized in the analysis, and the results demonstrated that the adoption of e-tendering, e-sourcing, and e-payment significantly enhances operational effectiveness of retail supermarkets. E-procurement strategies had a favorable and statistically significant impact on operational performance, according to regression analysis. The research, however, concentrated on retail supermarkets, a contextual gap that the current study aims to overcome by concentrating on sugar factories.

Ndei and Mutuku's (2021) investigated how e-sourcing impacted the performance of NGOs in Kenya. The main objective of the study was to establish a relationship between e-procurement and NGO performance in Kenya. One of the primary objectives of the study was to determine the relationship between e-sourcing, e-ordering, e-invoicing, and e-payment and the performance of NGOs in Kenya. Descriptive research methods were employed in the study.

135 procurement employees were the investigation's target population. The census survey was used. Primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire and the drop-and-pick approach. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to evaluate the quantitative data, and content analysis was used to study the qualitative data. Regression and correlation were used as inferential statistics. The study found a strong significant correlation between e-sourcing and performance, a medium significant correlation between e-ordering and performance, a strong significant correlation between e-invoicing and performance, and a strong significant correlation between e-payment and performance. However, the investigation adopted performance of NGOs as the dependent variable, a conceptual divergence that the present investigation intends to seal by focusing on procurement performance of sugar factories as the dependent variable.

The difficulties in adopting e-sourcing in Ghana's public sector were examined by Addo (2019). 16 government-owned enterprises under the supervision of the Ministry of Finance made up the study's sample. There were 48 total respondents in the sample since three respondents were randomly selected from the purchasing departments of each of the 16 companies. The investigation made use of both secondary and primary data. A questionnaire served as the major method for the study's primary data collection. Content analysis was used to analyze qualitative data. Quantitative data were analyzed using the frequency distribution, mean scores, and standard deviations. Additionally, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were run. It was discovered that barriers to e-payment adoption in Ghana's public sector included staff competency, a deficient legislative system, a deficient technology infrastructure, and security of procurement transaction data. However, because the study was conducted in Ghana, it is impossible to generalize the results to other nations, including Kenya.

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN

In this study, correlational research design was used. As a result, the researcher was better able to identify facts, evaluate relationships, and appropriately describe, analyze, and interpret data (Siedlecki, 2020). In a correlational study, Waters (2017) proved that two or more quantitative variables from the same set of participants are utilized to ascertain whether there is a relationship (or covariance) between the two variables.

The target population was 165 respondents who were the heads of the departments of agriculture, finance, manufacturing, ICT, marketing, and purchasing, as well as the store clerks, purchasing clerks, purchasing assistants, procurement officers, and senior procurement officers who work in sugar factories. The sample size were selected for the study using the census technique because they are involved in sourcing products and services for their respective units.

A semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data for the study in order to get the gist of things. Since it was believed that study participants were literate and capable of providing acceptable answers to the topics posed, questionnaires are preferred in this study. Supervisors continually examined, assessed, and point out problems in this research in order to determine the content validity. Prior to the actual data collection, pre-testing responses from the respondents was examined and used to develop the questionnaires. Internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha where the coefficient of 0.858 was actualized. A high value of alpha is typically cited as evidence that the items assess an underlying (or latent) construct, according to Patterson et al. (2018).

4.0 FINDINGS

The study sought to establish the significance, direction and strength of the relationship between efficiency of procurement process which was the dependent variable and e-sourcing strategies, which was the independent variable and the findings are presented in Table 1.

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Table 1 Correlations

		E_Tendering	E_Prequalification	E_Evaluation	Performance
E_Tendering	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
E_Prequalification	Pearson Correlation	.452**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
E_Evaluation	Pearson Correlation	.696**	.552**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
Performance	Pearson Correlation	.500**	.590**	.741**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), N=162

The findings in Table 1, reveals that E-tendering strategy had a positive significant Pearson correlation coefficient with efficiency of procurement performance (r = 0.500, p < 0.05). E-prequalification strategy had a positive significant correlation with efficiency of procurement performance (r = 0.590, p < 0.05). The study established that E-evaluation strategy had a positive significant relationship with efficiency of procurement performance (r = 0.741, p < 0.05).

The study findings showed that e-tendering strategies, e-prequalification strategy and e-evaluation strategy had a positive correlation with efficiency of procurement performance. There is need therefore for organizations to embrace e-sourcing sourcing strategies for them to enjoy efficient procurement performance which is indicated by reduced cost and timely service delivery. This is concurrence with Ndei and Mutuku's (2021) who investigated how e-sourcing impacted the performance of NGOs in Kenya where they found a strong significant correlation between e-sourcing and performance. Gathima and Njoroge (2018) study on how the County Government of Nairobi, Kenya, performed after using e-tendering concurs with this study since the results of the correlation study showed that there was a strong correlation between E-tendering practices and performance in the Nairobi City County Government.

A multiple regression model was used to test the hypothesis determine the relationship between-sourcing strategies and efficiency of procurement performance and the findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.773[a]	.598	.590	.74479

a. Predictors: (Constant), E_Evaluation, E_Prequalification, E_Tendering

Table 2 revealed that e-sourcing strategies indicated by e-evaluation, e-prequalification and e-tendering had positive significant relationship with efficient procurement performance as shown by the value of (R = 0.773). The results showed that 59.8% of efficient procurement performance is explained by e-sourcing strategies (R Square = 0.598). Other factors (error term) not in the study attributed to 40.2% variation in efficient procurement performance.

Table 3 ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	130.414	3	43.471	78.366	.000[b]
	Residual	87.646	158	.555		
	Total	218.059	161			

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), E_Evaluation, E_Prequalification, E_Tendering

Table 3 findings on ANOVA reveals that there existed significant relationship between e-sourcing strategies and efficient procurement performance ($F_{(3,161)}$ = 78.366, p <0.05). This implies that there was a statistically significant relationship between e-sourcing strategies and efficient procurement performance since the significant value was

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0.00 which is below 0.05. This shows that the model used suited the data in explaining the relationship between e-sourcing strategy and efficient procurement performance.

Table 4 Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.471	.168		2.805	.006
	E_Tendering	.066	.071	.066	.930	.004
	E_Prequalification	.253	.058	.267	4.391	.000
	E_Evaluation	.673	.080	.639	8.452	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

The findings in Table 4 shows that there exists a significant positive relationship between e-tendering strategy and efficient procurement performance (β = 0.066), e-prequalification strategy and efficient procurement performance (β = 0.253) and e-evaluation strategy and efficient procurement performance (β = 0.673). The results were all significant since the p values were 0.004, 0.000 and 0.000 respectively which was less than 0.05.

The beta coefficient of 0.066 implies that when e-tendering strategy increases by an additional unit, efficient procurement performance of sugar factories increases by 0.066, beta coefficient of 0.253 for e-prequalification increases efficient procurement performance of sugar factories by an additional unit, beta coefficient of 0.673 for e-evaluation increases efficient procurement performance by an additional unit,

The multiple regression model for the coefficient of determination now becomes:
$Y = 0.471 + 0.066\ X_1 + 0.253\ X_2 + 0.673\ X_3$…….. (4.4)

Where Y = Efficient Procurement Performance, X_1 = E-Tendering Strategy X_2 = E-Prequalification Strategy, X_3 = E-Evaluation Strategy

The study findings showed that e-sourcing strategies indicated by e-tendering, e-prequalification and e-evaluation significantly influences efficient procurement performance. The findings agree with Ndei and Mutuku's (2021) who investigated how e-sourcing impacted the performance of NGOs in Kenya. The study found a strong significant correlation between e-sourcing and performance, a medium significant correlation between e-tendering and performance, a strong significant correlation between e-evaluation and performance, and a strong significant correlation between e-prequalification and performance. The analysis found a correlation between organizational success and e-procurement. The findigs also concur with a study by Abdullahi (2018) who ascertain how private hospitals in Nairobi County's supply chains performed in relation to e-procurement where they established that E-sourcing and procurement performance has a 0.782 correlation coefficient (R), which is a high and positive association.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that procurement department was not effective and efficient since use of technology had not enabled them to deliver goods/service on time or reduced on the cost of procurement of goods and services and that automation of procurement process had not facilitated check on purchase price variance.

The study recommends that sugar factories suppliers should procure document management software which will enables them to register their suppliers online and submitted their mandatory requirements online. This will ensures that only verified suppliers have access to their online services or works as aligned with an e-procurement plan and approved budget.

The study recommends that once they acquire a document management system they should make it a mandatory for all the submission of quotations to be done through the system and ensures that opening and closing of quotations is automated. This will enable them to evaluate bidders online and notification for successful and unsuccessful bidders enabled as well as the generation of inspection and acceptance of goods certificate with unique identifies.

The study recommends that for procurement department to be effective and efficient, they need to use of technology which will ensure timely reporting as well as reduced on the cost of procurement of goods and services through automation of procurement process.

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