EFFECT OF IN-STORE LOGISTICS OPERATIONS PRACTICES ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN SUPERMARKETS IN MOMBASA COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to establish the relationship between in-store logistics operations practices on customer satisfaction in supermarkets in Mombasa County. The study used descriptive cross sectional census survey design. The study population was 10 supermarkets based on Mombasa County in Kenya. The data collection was done by use of questionnaires that were administered to the respondents using drop and pick later method. The respondents were supermarket managers. The study used correlation analysis and regression analysis to establish the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable. The study found out that supermarkets adopted a variety of in-store logistics operations practices in the areas of forward and reverse logistics, in-store activities, inventory management, multi-retail activities and data management and master store planning. The study also found out that customer satisfaction improved as a result of adopting in-store logistics operations practices. the study recommended that supermarkets should adopt forward and reverse logistics, in-store activities, inventory management, multi-channel retail activities and data management and store planning in-store logistics operations practices because they contribute to customer satisfaction.

Key words: In-Store Logistics, Operations Practices, Customer satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Developing and maintaining a competitive advantage is becoming increasingly difficult for retail stores in today's hypercompetitive business and ever more complex global environment. As customers demand for more customized products and services offerings increases, stores are looking for new and innovative ways to differentiate themselves. An interesting opportunity is presented by the excellence in logistics operations(Yazdanparast, Manuj, & Swartz, 2010).In-store logistics operations include handling, ordering, arranging and processing of merchandise within the store(Samli, Pohlen, & Jacobs, 2005).It focuses on all flow processes within outlets of store-based retailing (Kotzab & Teller, 2005). Kotzab (2000) characterized in-store logistics as consisting of point of destination (shelves), point of delivery, objects (single stock keeping units and related information) and tasks which involves transportation, inventory carrying and shelf management, and labelling and order management. The ultimate goal of in-store logistics is efficiency, which means to offer quantities of items as requested by end-users at lowest cost possible (Kotzab & Teller, 2005).

One of the propositions of a unified theory of logistics is that competitive advantage goal of the firm is to continuously create customer value to satisfy end users. Johnson (1998) determined that success in the market place rests on the firm's ability to attract, satisfy, and retain its customers by creating customer value. Accordingly, Bowersox *et al.* (2000) argued that the goal of integrated logistics, both inside and outside a firm within the supply chain, is to enhance customer value. Creating customer value is possible by focusing on logistics customer service(Manrodt, Holcomb, & Thompson, 1997). Oliver (1980) proposed Expectancy-Disconfirmation Paradigm (EDP) as the most promising theoretical framework for assessment of customer satisfaction. According to this paradigm, consumers purchase goods and services with pre-purchase expectations about the anticipated performance. The expectation level then becomes the standard against which the product or service is judged once it is consumed or used with outcomes being compared with the expectations. Resource Based View explains that the identification and possession of internal strategic resources contributes to a firm's ability to create and maintain a competitive advantage and improve performance (Crook, Ketchen, Combs, & Todd, 2008).

Kenya has the second most developed retail market in sub-Saharan Africa with about 30 per cent of the retail shopping being done in formal outlets and it is the second most formalized African country in terms of formal retail penetration with retail penetration standing at around 30 per cent (Citigroup Report, 2012). The growth of supermarkets in Kenya has been attributed to

increased urbanization, a growing middle class with a changing lifestyle as well as market liberalization that has led to competition in the sector. The dominant players in this sector include Nakumatt, Tuskys, Uchumi, Ukwala, Chandarana, Eastmatt and Naivasas well as Budget amongst other recent entrants. The Kenyan retail industry is hypercompetitive as a result of increased globalization, well informed and increasingly demanding customers as well as increased bargaining power of suppliers.

In-store logistics involve the operations that manage the inventory flow from the store's receiving dock to the point of sale passing through the stock room (store warehouse). In-store logistics operations include handling, ordering, arranging and processing of merchandise within the store (Samli, Pohlen, & Jacobs, 2005).In-store logistics operational activities can be grouped into five main categories: forward and reverse logistics, in-store activities, inventory management, multichannel (online/store) retail activities, data management and in-store master planning.

Forward store logistics involves delivery to the store from distribution centers as well as from external vendors. Reverse in-store logistics involves returns from the customers as well as end of season returns from the store to the Distribution Center (DC). Forward and reverse logistics activities also manifest store-to-store transfers. In-store activities consist of the receiving process of the stock into the store, hanging point-of-sale labels, price tickets, promotional stickers and security tags. It also involves product put-away, replenishment and stocking operations as well as performing physical counts. Inventory management involves activities such as inventory optimization, accuracy and loss prevention as well as use of RFID technology. Multichannel (online/store) retail activities involves management of orders made online for in-store pick and researching online prior to making a purchase in the store.

Customer satisfaction is defined as a function of the customer's expectations and perceptions of performance according to the expectancy - disconfirmation paradigm (Tse & Wilton, 1988) and it is a construct closely related to perceived service quality (Magi &Julander, 1996).Rust and Oliver (1994) suggests that customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction – a "cognitive or affective reaction" – emerges as a response to a single or prolonged set of service encounters. Satisfaction is a "post consumption" experience which compares perceived quality with the expected quality (Anderson & Fornell, 1994).Conceptually, satisfaction is an outcome of purchase and use resulting from the buyer's comparison of the rewards and costs of the purchase in relation to the anticipated consequences. Operationally, satisfaction is similar to attitude in that it can be assessed as the sum of the satisfactions, with the various attributes, of the product or service(Gilbert & Carol, 1982).

Satisfaction is a result of positive evaluation of the quality and value of various service elements. Customers compare their actual experiences with retailer's service with the expectations and the desired outcomes – thus satisfaction will depend on the competitive structure of the market, the

degree of differentiation, customer involvement and shopping experience (Anderson *et al.,* 1994). In a retail setting, customers evaluate their service experience in various dimensions (Dick *et al.,* 1995). The first dimension is the store's servicescape in that many argue that satisfaction with the service experience increases when retail store makes it easy for the customers to find the products they are looking for, when the store layout seems logical and when there are enough signs (Bitner *et al.,* 1992, Richardson *et al.,* 1996). The second dimension is the store's products or merchandise (Bloemer & De Ruyter, 1998) and the third dimension involves interactions with the retail store personnel (Semeijn *et al.,* 2004). Personal interactions with the service provider are considered crucial to customer satisfaction (Bitner, 1990; Hartline *et al.,* 2000).

Customer satisfaction can be achieved by improving service quality. Ciavolino, Enrico & Jens (2007) contend that service quality is the measure of service levels based on the attributes of the core product or service. Such attributes includefacility layout, clean environment, clear labeling, location, process - queue management, waiting time, express checkouts, operation hours, delivery time, additional services like parking, parent and baby facilities, loyalty/membership cards, variety of groceries, durability, merchandise quality and merchandising.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives for this study were:

i) To determine the in-store logistics operations practices that have been adopted by supermarkets in Mombasa County, Kenya.
ii) To establish the effect of in-store logistics operations practices on customer satisfaction in supermarkets in Mombasa County, Kenya.
iii) To determine the challenges of adopting in-store logistics operations practices by supermarkets in Mombasa County, Kenya.

METHODS

This study involved a descriptive cross-sectional census survey design. The population of the study comprised all supermarkets in Mombasa County. This study used primary data. The primary data was collected using structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered using drop and pick later method.

The following regression model will be used:

$$Y=\beta_0+\beta_1X_1+\beta_2X_2+\beta_3X_3+\beta_4X_4+\beta_5X_5+\varepsilon$$

In the above equation, Y represents customer satisfaction, $\beta_0$represents the level of customer satisfaction without the influence of the in-store logistics operations practices.X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4, X_5 represents forward and reverse logistics, in-store activities, inventory management, multi-channel retail activities and data management and store planning respectively. β_1, β_2, β_3, β_4 and β_5 are the coefficients of forward and reverse logistics, in-store activities, inventory management, multi-channel retail activities and data management and store planning respectively and they represent the estimate effect of each of these categories of in-store logistics operations practices on customer satisfaction.

Independent variables consisted of specific in-store logistics operations which were derived from four general categories namely forward and reverse logistics, in-store activities, inventory management, multi-channel retail activities and data management and store planning. The dependent variable was customer satisfaction. Dependent variable was measured in terms of increase in sale volumes of the store, sustained loyalty of customers, increase in patronage time of individual customers as well as the increase in purchases per customer visit.

RESULTS

Relationship between In-store Logistics Operations Practices and Customer Satisfaction

In this section, regression analysis was done to determine if there is a relationship between in-store logistics operations practices and customer satisfaction. Table 1 shows the average responses for each aspect of in-store logistics operations practices and the corresponding customer satisfaction.

Table 1: In-Store Logistics Operations Practices and Customer Satisfaction

Respondent	X_1	X_2	X_3	X_4	X_5	Y
1	4.50	3.50	4.75	3.33	4.67	4.00
2	3.75	4.00	3.25	2.33	3.83	2.83
3	4.50	4.25	4.25	2.00	3.67	3.67
4	4.00	4.00	4.25	1.00	4.00	3.67

5	4.50	4.33	4.50	3.00	4.67	4.00
6	2.25	2.00	4.50	1.00	2.00	3.67
7	4.00	4.50	3.00	3.67	4.83	4.50
8	4.00	4.25	3.25	3.67	4.83	4.50
9	4.00	4.50	4.00	3.67	4.83	4.50
10	4.50	3.50	4.50	3.33	4.33	4.00

From Table 1, Y represents customer satisfaction, $\mathbf{X_1}$, $\mathbf{X_2}$, $\mathbf{X_3}$, $\mathbf{X_4}$, $\mathbf{X_5}$ represents forward and reverse logistics, in-store activities, inventory management, multi-channel retail activities and data management and store planning respectively. Table 1 shows the mean of dependent and independent variables. The data in Table 1 was used to perform regression analysis as shown below.

Table 2: Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.785[a]	.617	.137	.47979	.617	1.287	5	4	.415

a. Predictors: (constant), forward and reverse logistics, in-store activities, inventory management, multi-retail activities, data management and store planning

From table 2 Adjusted R^2 is 0.137 which means that there was 13.7% positive variation in customer satisfaction index due to changes in independent variables, and 86.3% variation of the dependent variable due to other factors not in the model. The correlation coefficient R represents the strength of the relationship between the variables. The study found that the correlation coefficient was 0.785 thus there was a strong positive correlation between in-store logistics operations practices and customer satisfaction, that is, there is a positive relationship between independent and dependent variables.

This was subjected to a test of significance as follows:

H_0: R=0 (the coefficient of correlation is not significant)
H_0: R≠0 (the coefficient of correlation is significant)

It is a one tail test at 5% level of significance, therefore df=n-2=10-2=8 thus the decision rule would be to reject H_0if computed t is greater than 1.686

Computed $\mathbf{t=r\sqrt{n-2/1-r^2}} = 0.785\sqrt{9/1-0.785^2} = 5.785$

Decision: since computed t (5.785) is greater than critical t, the null hypothesis is rejected implying that the coefficient of correlation is significant.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.481	5	.296	1.287	.415[b]
	Residual	.921	4	.230		
	Total	2.402	9			

a. Dependent Variable: customer satisfaction index
b. Predictors: (Constant), forward and reverse logistics, in-store activities, inventory management, multi-retail activities, data management and store planning

From the ANOVA table the significance value for the model was 0.415 which means that the model was statistically insignificant since it is higher than 0.05.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	1.538	2.111		.729	.507	-4.323	7.399
	Forward and reverse logistics (X_1)	-.725	.553	-.950	-1.310	.261	-2.261	.812
	In-store Activities (X_2)	.284	.582	.413	.488	.651	-1.331	1.899
	Inventory Management (X_3)	.451	.445	.549	1.014	.368	-.784	1.686
	Multi-retail activities (X_4)	.281	.327	.576	.859	.439	-.626	1.188
	Data management and store planning (X_5)	.389	.612	.661	.636	.560	-1.310	2.088

a. Dependent Variable: customer satisfaction

From Table 4, the following regression equivalent was established:

$$\mathbf{Y=1.538-0.725X_1+0.284X_2+0.451X_3+0.281X_4+0.389X_5}$$

From the equation, the study found out that holding forward and reverse logistics, in-store activities, inventory management, multi-retail activities and data management and store planning, customer satisfaction (dependent) would be 1.538. A factor increase in in-store activities would lead to an increase in customer satisfaction by a factor of 0.284, a unit increase in inventory management would lead to an increase in customer satisfaction by 0.451, an increase in a unit of multi-retail activities would lead to an increase of 0.281 in firm's customer satisfaction, a unit increase in data management and store planning would lead to an increase in customer satisfaction by 0.389. However, from the equation, a unit increase in in-store forward and reverse logistics would lead to decrease in customer satisfaction by 0.725. This information shows that there is a positive relationship between in-store activities, inventory management, multi-retail activities and data management and store planning and customer satisfaction. It also shows that there is a negative relationship between forward and reverse logistics and customer satisfaction.

From Table 5 below, it can be observed that there is a positive significant relationships between customer satisfaction and forward and reverse logistics, in-store activities, multi-retail activities and data management and store planning. The study found out that customer satisfaction is positively correlated to forward and reverse logistics with a positive correlation value of 0.224. The correlation analysis also revealed that customer satisfaction was positively correlated to in-store activities having a correlation value of 0.322. Inventory management has a negative correlation value of -0.106 implying that it is negatively correlated to customer satisfaction. The study also revealed that customer satisfaction has a strong positive correlation with multi-channel retail activities with a correlation value of 0.658. Customer satisfaction has a positive correlation with data management and store planning having a positive correlation value of 0.569.

Table 5: Significance of Correlation between Individual Variables

		Customer Satisfaction Index	Forward and Reverse Logistics	In-store Activities	Inventory Management	Multi-Retail Activities	Data Management and Store Planning
Customer satisfaction index	Pearson Correlation	1	.224	.322	-.106	.658*	.569
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.534	.365	.770	.039	.086
Forward and reverse logistics	Pearson Correlation	.224	1	.718*	.082	.541	.788**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.534		.019	.823	.106	.007
In-store activities	Pearson Correlation	.322	.718*	1	-.483	.544	.819**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.365	.019		.157	.104	.004
Inventory management	Pearson Correlation	-.106	.082	-.483	1	-.322	-.291
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.770	.823	.157		.364	.414
Multi-retail activities	Pearson Correlation	.658*	.541	.544	-.322	1	.829**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.039	.106	.104	.364		.003
Data management and store planning	Pearson Correlation	.569	.788**	.819**	-.291	.829**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.086	.007	.004	.414	.003	

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Challenges of Adopting In-Store Logistics Operations Practices

From table 6, unreliable vendors to the Distribution Center (DC) delivery is the most faced challenge with a mean of 2.70 followed by stock holding cost with a mean of 2.40. Inventory management system challenges and ever changing store information comes third and fourth asmost faced challenge with a mean of 2.20 and 2.0 respectively. Table 6 shows the descriptive statistics for challenges for adopting in-store logistics operations practices.

Table 6: Challenges for Adopting In-Store Logistics Operations Practices

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Unreliable vendors for DC delivery	10	2.70	0.483	1
Store capacity for Distribution Center (DC)	10	1.90	0.994	5
Store-to-store transfers	10	1.70	0.949	11
Ever changing store information	10	2.00	0.943	4
Cross training of store logistics staff	10	1.80	1.032	9
Stock holding costs	10	2.40	0.966	2
Lack of big data analysis tools	10	1.80	0.789	9
Lack of capacity for multi-channel operations	10	1.70	1.059	11
Online and store pickup synchronization	10	1.90	1.197	5
Innovation challenges	10	1.90	0.876	5
Unreliable inventory supplies	10	1.90	0.738	5
Inventory management system challenges	10	2.20	1.135	3
Valid N (listwise)	**10**	**1.992**		

The next challenges faced challenges are store capacity for distribution center, online and store pickup synchronization, innovation challenges and unreliable inventory supplies all with a mean of 1.90. These are followed by cross training of in-store logistics staff and lack of big data analysis tools with a mean of 1.80. The least experienced challenges are store-to-store transfers and lack of capacity for multi-channel operations with a mean of 1.70.

Summary of Findings

The objectives of the study were to determine the in-store logistics operations practices that have been adopted by the supermarkets, establish the effect of in-store logistics operations practices on customer satisfaction and determine the challenges of adopting in-store logistics operations practices. The target respondents were managers of the respective supermarkets. Most of the supermarkets have been in business for over 10 years.

The research outcome provided an insight on the extent to which in-store logistics operations practices are important to supermarkets. Forward and reverse logistics, in-store activities, inventory management, multi-channel retail activities and data management and store planning were the in-store logistics operations practices under research and the respondents agreed that the practices are indeed important to the supermarkets.

Data management and store planning was viewed by the respondents as the most important practice. This was followed by inventory management then forward and reverse logistics and in-store activities. The least adopted in-store logistics operations practices was multi-channel retail activities.

The results agreed with Reinartz, Manfred and Wayne (2004) that data management practices help firms to manage customer relationships more effectively across the stages of relationship initiation, maintenance and termination which is key to managing customer satisfaction. The results also agreed with Bhausaheb and Routroy (2010) that firms are keen in managing their inventory so as to reduce costs, improve the quality of service, enhance product availability and ultimately ensure customer satisfaction. The results indeed agreed with Turley and Chebat (2001) that integration of operational management with store's atmospherics contribute to sales performance and building of customer satisfaction

The study found out that the coefficient of correlation was 0.785 thus there was a strong positive correlation between in-store logistics operations practices and customer satisfaction. The following equation was established:

$$\mathbf{Y=1.538-0.725X_1+0.284X_2+0.451X_3+0.281X_4+0.389X_5}$$

From the equation, the study found out that holding forward and reverse logistics, in-store activities, inventory management, multi-channel retail activities and data management and store planning, customer satisfaction index (dependent) would be 1.538. The study also found out that forward and reverse logistics may result to customer dissatisfaction if not well managed because it has a negative estimate effect of -0.725.

The research outcome also provided an insight on the challenges which supermarkets have to overcome when practicing in-store logistics operations. The research found out that unreliable vendor to the distribution center was the most faced challenge followed by stock holding costs.

Inventory management challenges and ever changing store information also experienced in a great extent. The respondents also said that they experience challenges such as store capacity for distribution center, online and store pickup synchronization, innovation challenges and unreliable inventory supplies in a moderate extent. The respondents also said that they have cross training of in-store logistics staff challenges as well as lack of big data analysis tools to a small extent. The least experienced challenges were store-to-store transfers and lack of capacity for multi-channel operations.

Conclusions

From the findings of the study, supermarkets in Mombasa County have adopted forward and reverse logistics, in-store activities, inventory management and data management and store planning practices to a great extent. The study also found out that multi-channel retail activities have only been adopted to a moderate extent.

The study found out that there was a strong positive correlation between in-store logistics operations practices and customer satisfaction. Supermarkets view in-store logistics operations practices as very important hence adoption of in-store logistics operations practices by supermarkets have a positive effect on customer satisfaction. The study also found out that there are several challenges which hinder optimal adoption of in-store logistics operations practices.

Recommendations

From the findings of the study, the researcher recommends that supermarkets should adopt in-store logistics operations practices: forward and reverse logistics, in-store activities, inventory management, multi-channel retail activities and data management and master store planning, because they positively contribute to customer satisfaction.Policies and guided frameworks on how to fully adopt in-store logistics operations practices are also recommended to the supermarkets. There is no adequately documented framework thus respective supermarkets can, at their organizational level, formulate their own in-store logistics operations practices and policies. A framework will give in-store logistics operations practices' guidelines to employees and how they can be integrated to their routine operations at a minimal cost.

Supermarkets should adopt forward and reverse logistics in their supermarkets to ensure that right product quantities and qualities are available in the shelves at the right time. Promotional materials, expired products as well as end of season products should be removed from the shelves in time. Also, the supermarkets should ensure that there is a dedicated linkage from the shelves to the store's backroom to facilitate for faster replenishment of products anytime they are

needed.It would be recommended that this practice be managed properly because it may result to customer dissatisfaction if mismanaged.
Supermarkets should also incorporate in-store activities practices in their in-store logistics operations to promote ambient shopping environment within the store. This would ensure an increase in customer patronage time as well as an increase in individual purchases from the store.It would also be recommended that supermarkets facilitate proper documentation of the retail store activities as well as proper placement of productswithin the store because it would lead to customer satisfaction.

It would be recommended that supermarkets should ensure that they hold inventories at the lowest costs possible while ensuring stock adequacy, quality service and uninterrupted supplies to foster customer satisfaction. The supermarkets should adopt a system that would ensure products are available within the store when they are needed without necessarily having them stored in the store. This would ultimately reduce stock holding costs.

The results of this study found out that data management and store master planning in-store logistics operations practices ultimately lead to customer satisfaction. It would therefore be recommended that supermarkets adopt these practices with the sole purpose of acquiring, managing and modeling customer information to sustain customer advantage. This would foster supermarkets' ability to customize customer offerings to suit customer tastes and preferences which in turn would lead to enhancement of perceived quality of the products and services thuspromoting customer satisfaction. The supermarkets should also dedicate adequate store space for customer circulation and patronage within the store.

It would also be recommended that supermarkets adopt interchangeable service channels so that they are where the customers want them, when they want them, anytime, anywhere and in multiple formats. This is necessitated by the fact that customers have different channel preferences and expectations for different service types depending on their needs and demands.

Suggestions for Further Research

The study only covered supermarket in Mombasa County and there is a need to conduct a research on all supermarkets in Kenya. Further research would be appropriate to establish the relationship between each aspect of in-store logistics operations practices (forward and reverse logistics, in-store activities, inventory management, multi-channel retail activities and data management and store planning) and customer satisfaction. Clearly, research needs to be conducted on the effect of in-store logistics operations on customer satisfaction from a customer perspective because this research only focused on the supermarket managers' perspective. This

would bring to light what in-store logistics operations practices make customers satisfied. Also a study looking at the other factors that affect customer satisfaction in a retail environment could be conducted.

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