


Chapter 9


Sustainable Sourcing and Procurement Strategies for a Performance Mass Retail Supply Chain: An Exploratory Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

Mass retail supply chains are increasingly expected to balance high performance with sustainable practices. Retailers must meet economic and operational goals while addressing growing environmental and social responsibilities. This dual pressure challenges traditional sourcing and procurement strategies, which remain cost-driven. Despite interest in sustainable supply chain management, limited research explores how sustainable sourcing and procurement drive performance in the mass retail sector. This study fills that gap using an exploratory qualitative approach based on semi-structured interviews with retail supply chain stakeholders. Thematic analysis reveals emerging practices, strategic shifts, and tensions between cost constraints

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-3012-9.ch009

and long-term sustainability. Findings show that when strategically aligned, sustainable procurement can enhance performance. The study also highlights the need for better internal coordination and clearer sustainability frameworks. It offers practical insights and recommendations to support more resilient and responsible mass retail supply chains.

INTRODUCTION

Mass market retail supply chains are increasingly challenged in the global economy to balance performance with responsibility. While retailers are expected to ensure efficiency, speed, and profitability, they are also under growing pressure from consumers, regulatory bodies, and institutional stakeholders to embed environmental protection, ethical sourcing, and social equity into their operational models. As a result, sourcing and procurement practices are being redefined: no longer simple cost-control tools, they are becoming strategic drivers of long-term value and sustainability across the supply chain.

Sustainability considerations have changed the perception of managerial and strategic variables of the service company (Bentalha, 2022), encouraging procurement to shift from a purely transactional function to one embedded in broader organizational value creation logics.

Both internal organizational objectives and external regulatory pressures drive these transformations. International standards and policy frameworks offer useful guidance in this regard. ISO 20400 provides a structured approach for integrating sustainability into the procurement process, emphasizing stakeholder engagement, risk management, and supplier evaluation criteria beyond cost. The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) encourages organizations to disclose their sourcing impacts on labor, the environment, and ethics through specific procurement-related indicators (e.g., GRI 204 and GRI 308). Meanwhile, UN Sustainable Development Goal 12, particularly Target 12.7, calls for the promotion of public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities. Despite their relevance, these frameworks are rarely operationalized in practice, especially in mass retail contexts. Yet, despite their relevance, such frameworks remain underutilized or poorly operationalized in mass retail contexts, particularly in emerging economies.

In this context, integrating sustainability into procurement strategies represents both an opportunity and a major challenge. Mass retail is a complex environment, marked by scale, supplier diversity, and dynamic demand patterns. Procurement must reconcile traditional objectives, cost, quality, and delivery, with long-term environmental and social performance targets. This tension creates strategic trade-

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