Sustainable Supply Chain Management and Customer–Market Performance in Manufacturing Firms in Delta State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) and customer–market performance in manufacturing companies in Delta State, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to assess the relationship between SSCM and customer patronage and to determine its relationship with product market performance in selected manufacturing firms.

A correlational research design was adopted. The population comprised supply chain personnel in selected manufacturing companies in Delta State, Nigeria, and a purposive sampling technique was used to select 52 respondents. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using correlation statistics. Findings revealed a very strong positive relationship between SSCM and customer patronage, as well as a significant positive relationship between SSCM and product market performance. The study concludes that SSCM significantly enhances both customer patronage and product market performance in manufacturing firms. The study recommends that suppliers align with sustainability standards; the government should provide incentives to encourage SSCM adoption; investors should support alignment of supply chain strategies with market needs; and customers should provide feedback to improve product and sustainability performance.

Keywords: Customer Patronage, Delta State, Manufacturing Firms, Market Performance, Sustainable Supply Chain Management

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) has emerged as a critical strategic approach for firms seeking to balance economic performance with environmental and social responsibilities. By integrating sustainability principles into sourcing, production, and distribution processes, SSCM enhances resource efficiency, reduces environmental impact, and strengthens stakeholder relationships. Increasingly, firms adopt SSCM not only for compliance but as a competitive tool for improving market positioning and customer outcomes (Jabbour, 2020).

In contemporary business environments, customer and market performance have become central indicators of organisational success. Customer patronage reflects consumer trust and satisfaction, while market performance captures product acceptance, market share, and competitive positioning (Agyemang-Mintah & Schadewitz, 2020; Kong et al., 2020). Prior studies suggest that sustainability-oriented practices can positively influence these outcomes by improving brand image, product quality, and customer loyalty. However, the strength and nature of this relationship remain context-dependent.

In Nigeria, particularly in Delta State, manufacturing firms operate under infrastructural constraints, environmental pressures, and increasing competition. While the state hosts diverse manufacturing activities across sectors such as plastics, glass, and industrial services, many firms face challenges in sustaining customer patronage and achieving consistent market performance. These challenges raise questions about the effectiveness of existing operational and supply chain practices (Otubanjo, 2020).

Despite the growing relevance of SSCM, empirical evidence linking it to customer and market performance in developing economies remains limited. Existing studies have largely focused on financial outcomes or broader sustainability metrics, with insufficient attention to customer-driven performance indicators within local manufacturing contexts. This gap is particularly evident in Delta State, where the role of SSCM in shaping customer behaviour and market outcomes has not been adequately examined.

This study, therefore, investigates the relationship between Sustainable Supply Chain Management and customer–market performance in manufacturing firms in Delta State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Manufacturing firms in Delta State continue to face difficulties in achieving sustained customer patronage and strong market performance despite operating in a resource-rich environment. Inefficiencies in supply chain practices, including poor resource utilisation, weak sustainability integration, and limited stakeholder engagement, have contributed to declining competitiveness and inconsistent product acceptance (Otubanjo, 2020).

Although Sustainable Supply Chain Management has been widely acknowledged as a mechanism for improving organisational performance, its impact on customer and market outcomes remains unclear within the Nigerian context. Most existing studies emphasize financial performance or environmental outcomes, with limited empirical focus on how SSCM influences customer behaviour and market success (Omigie & Kubeyinje, 2022).

This lack of context-specific evidence creates a gap in understanding whether and how sustainability-driven supply chain practices translate into improved customer patronage and market performance in manufacturing firms in Delta State. Addressing this gap is essential for both academic insight and practical decision-making.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between sustainable supply chain management and customer patronage in manufacturing firms in Delta State, Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between sustainable supply chain management and the market performance of products in manufacturing firms in Delta State, Nigeria?

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between sustainable supply chain management and customer–market performance in manufacturing firms in Delta State, Nigeria.

Specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the relationship between sustainable supply chain management and customer patronage in manufacturing firms in Delta State, Nigeria.
2. Assess the relationship between sustainable supply chain management and the market performance of products in manufacturing firms in Delta State, Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

H_{01}: Sustainable supply chain management has no significant relationship with customer patronage in manufacturing firms in Delta State, Nigeria.

H_{02}: Sustainable supply chain management has no significant relationship with the market performance of products in manufacturing firms in Delta State, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

Concept of Sustainability

Sustainability is a multidimensional concept that integrates environmental, social, and economic considerations in organizational decision-making. While definitions vary across disciplines, they converge on the idea of ensuring long-term viability without compromising the ability of future systems to function effectively. From a macro perspective, sustainability refers to the capacity of systems to endure over time while allowing other systems to coexist (Oyedele, 2022). From an operational standpoint, it involves minimizing long-term risks associated with resource depletion, pollution, and waste (Shrivastava, 2019). Similarly, Sayed et al. (2021) conceptualize sustainability as the balance between economic development, environmental protection, and social equity, commonly referred to as the triple bottom line (Iherobiem, 2023).

This integrated perspective underscores the need for organizations to align their operational activities with sustainability principles, particularly in resource-intensive sectors such as manufacturing.

Supply Chain Management and Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM)

Supply Chain Management (SCM) involves the coordination of activities related to sourcing, production, and distribution to ensure the efficient flow of materials, information, and finances across the supply chain (Salazar, 2021). Effective SCM enhances organizational performance by integrating internal processes with external partners, thereby improving efficiency and competitiveness (Kim, 2019; Li et al., 2019).

Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) extends traditional SCM by incorporating environmental and social considerations alongside economic objectives. Olanrewaju (2024) defines SSCM as the management of material, information, and capital flows while simultaneously addressing economic, environmental, and social goals. Similarly, Afolabi (2022) describes SSCM as the strategic coordination of business processes to achieve long-term organizational performance through sustainability integration.

Despite variations in definition, SSCM is widely recognized as operating at the intersection of sustainability and supply chain management (Arampantzi and Ioannis, 2021). The field remains conceptually evolving, with ongoing debates regarding its scope and theoretical foundations (Carter & Jenning, 2021; Oyedele, 2022). Nonetheless, its relevance continues to grow as firms seek to enhance competitiveness while addressing sustainability challenges.

Sustainable Supply Chain Management Practices

SSCM is operationalized through various practices aimed at improving environmental and social performance while maintaining economic efficiency. These include green procurement, sustainable transportation, warehousing, packaging, and reverse logistics (Zhu et al., 2019). Sustainable packaging, for instance, reduces environmental impact through the use of recyclable materials, while reverse logistics enables resource recovery and reuse (Erik & Stefan, 2021; Jabbour, 2020).

Empirical evidence suggests that firms adopting SSCM practices achieve improved operational and financial outcomes. For example, Cao (2019) found that firms implementing environmental purchasing and logistics practices experienced enhanced competitiveness and profitability. These practices are therefore essential in driving both sustainability and performance outcomes.

Sustainable Supply Chain Management and Customer–Market Performance

The relationship between SSCM and organizational performance has gained increasing attention, particularly in manufacturing contexts. SSCM practices contribute to improved efficiency, reduced costs, and enhanced product quality, which in turn influence customer satisfaction and market outcomes (Carter & Jennings, 2021; Mollenkopf, 2021). Environmental sustainability initiatives such as waste reduction and green procurement have been linked to improved brand reputation and customer loyalty (Zhu, 2019).

Social sustainability practices, including stakeholder engagement and corporate social responsibility, further strengthen customer trust and market positioning (Wong, 2019; Freeman, 2020). Additionally, economic sustainability practices enhance innovation and competitiveness, enabling firms to respond effectively to market demands (Jabbour, 2020).

In developing economies such as Nigeria, the adoption of SSCM remains uneven, with infrastructural challenges, limited resources, and weak institutional support affecting implementation (Oyewo et al., 2019; Puska et al., 2020). However, firms that successfully integrate sustainability into their supply chains are better positioned to achieve improved customer patronage and market performance.

SSCM in the Nigerian Manufacturing Context

Manufacturing firms in Nigeria operate in a challenging environment characterized by infrastructural deficiencies, regulatory complexities, and intense competition (Adeyeye, 2020; Otubanjo, 2020). These constraints limit the effective adoption of advanced supply chain practices and reduce overall performance.

Despite these challenges, there is growing recognition of the importance of SSCM in improving competitiveness and sustainability. Studies indicate that effective supply chain management enhances collaboration, efficiency, and organizational performance (Memia, 2019; Puska et al., 2020). However, the extent to which SSCM influences customer and market performance within the Nigerian context remains underexplored, thereby justifying further empirical investigation.

Theoretical Review

This study is anchored on Stakeholder Theory, propounded by Freeman (1984). The theory posits that organizations do not operate solely to maximize shareholder wealth but are responsible to a broader set of stakeholders, including employees, customers, suppliers, communities, and the environment. Stakeholder Theory emphasizes that firms must consider the interests and well-being of all stakeholders in their decision-making processes in order to achieve long-term success.

The central argument of the theory is that sustainable organizational performance is achieved through the effective management of stakeholder relationships. Firms are expected to act ethically, maintain transparency, and balance competing stakeholder interests rather than prioritizing short-term financial gains. This perspective was further reinforced by Ehiedu (2022), who argued that stakeholder-oriented firms are more likely to build trust, legitimacy, and long-term resilience.

A key component of Stakeholder Theory is its focus on sustainability and long-term value creation. By fostering strong relationships with stakeholders, organizations are better positioned to adapt to environmental changes, regulatory pressures, and evolving customer expectations. This aligns with the growing emphasis on responsible business practices, particularly in areas such as environmental protection, social responsibility, and ethical sourcing.

The relevance of Stakeholder Theory to this study lies in its ability to explain the relationship between Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) and customer–market performance. SSCM inherently involves addressing the expectations of multiple stakeholders, including customers who increasingly demand environmentally and socially responsible products. By integrating sustainability into supply chain practices, firms can enhance customer satisfaction, strengthen brand reputation, and improve market performance. Thus, Stakeholder Theory provides a theoretical foundation for understanding how sustainability-driven supply chain practices influence customer patronage and market outcomes in manufacturing firms in Delta State, Nigeria.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies on supply chain management and sustainability provide evidence of their impact on organizational performance, particularly in manufacturing contexts. Omigie and Kubeyinje (2022) examined the influence of supply chain management practices, specifically procurement outsourcing, information flow management, and order process management, on the performance of manufacturing organizations in Nigeria. Using a survey design and statistical tools such as correlation and regression analysis, the study found a positive and significant relationship between supply chain management practices and organizational performance. The findings highlight the importance of efficient supply chain coordination in enhancing operational outcomes.

Focusing more specifically on sustainability, Olanrewaju (2024) investigated the adoption of sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) practices among manufacturing firms in Nigeria and their relationship with business profitability. The study revealed that while awareness of sustainability practices is moderately high, actual adoption remains uneven across areas such as reverse logistics, sustainable warehousing, environmental purchasing, and transportation. Nonetheless, firms that adopted SSCM practices experienced improved sales, enhanced corporate image, and better stakeholder engagement, indicating a positive link between sustainability practices and market-related outcomes.

Similarly, Iherobiem (2023) explored the effect of SSCM practices on the innovative performance of manufacturing firms in Nigeria, focusing on economic, environmental, and social sustainability dimensions. Using a descriptive survey approach, the study found that all three dimensions of sustainability significantly and positively influenced innovative performance. The findings suggest that integrating sustainability into supply chain activities enhances firms' competitiveness and adaptability, which are critical drivers of market performance.

Şahin and Özgen (2023) empirically examined the impact of customer relationship management (CRM) practices on firm performance in B2B markets using survey data from 134 purchasing professionals. The study employed statistical analysis to assess the relationship between CRM dimensions and organizational outcomes. Findings indicate a strong positive effect, showing that a one-unit increase in CRM application leads to a 0.622-unit rise in company performance. Additionally, firms that implement CRM practices more consistently experience better performance outcomes. Key CRM dimensions, customer focus, CRM organization, information management, and technology-based CRM, were all found to have statistically significant and positive effects on overall business performance.

Beyond Nigeria, Opoku and Edmond (2023) examined sustainable manufacturing practices and performance in Ghana's food manufacturing sector using a quantitative approach and structural equation modeling. The results showed that green manufacturing and inventory management practices significantly improved sustainable performance, while supply management enhanced economic performance. These findings reinforce the broader argument that sustainability-oriented supply chain practices contribute to improved organizational outcomes, including market competitiveness and performance.

Overall, the empirical literature indicates that while SSCM adoption in developing economies remains inconsistent, firms that effectively integrate sustainability into their supply chain operations tend to experience improved performance outcomes, particularly in areas related to competitiveness, innovation, and market positioning.

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METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a correlational research design to examine the relationship between Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) and customer–market performance in manufacturing firms in Delta State, Nigeria. The design is appropriate as it enables the assessment of relationships between variables without manipulation.

The population comprised supply chain-related personnel (procurement, logistics, production, and marketing

staff) in selected manufacturing firms in Delta State. A sample size of 52 respondents was used, drawn through purposive sampling to ensure respondents possessed relevant knowledge of supply chain practices.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed in line with the study variables. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity through expert review, while reliability was established using Cronbach's Alpha, with a threshold of 0.70, confirming internal consistency.

Data collection was carried out through direct administration of questionnaires. Responses were coded and analyzed using SPSS version 20. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used to answer research questions, while hypothesis testing was conducted at a 0.05 level of significance.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed. Participation was voluntary, respondents' anonymity was ensured, and information obtained was used solely for academic purposes.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Research Question One

Relationship between SSCM and Customer Patronage

Table 4.1: Correlation Result

Variables	N	r	Remark
SSCM & Customer Patronage	52	0.84	Very High Positive

Interpretation:

The correlation coefficient (r = 0.84) indicates a very strong positive relationship between SSCM and customer patronage. This suggests that improved sustainability practices enhance customer loyalty and engagement.

Research Question Two

Relationship between SSCM and Market Performance

Table 4.2: Correlation Result

Variables	N	r	Remark
SSCM & Market Performance	52	0.82	Very High Positive

Interpretation:

The result (r = 0.82) shows a very strong positive relationship, indicating that SSCM significantly improves product acceptance and market competitiveness.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

Table 4.3: SSCM and Customer Patronage

Variables	N	r	p-value	Decision
SSCM & Customer Patronage	52	0.57	0.00	Reject H_0

Interpretation:

Since $p < 0.05$, SSCM has a significant positive relationship with customer patronage. The null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis Two

Table 4.4: SSCM and Market Performance

Variables	N	r	p-value	Decision
SSCM & Market Performance	52	0.61	0.00	Reject H_0

Interpretation:

With $p < 0.05$, SSCM significantly influences market performance. The null hypothesis is rejected.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Relationship between Sustainable Supply Chain Management and Customer Patronage

The findings revealed a very high positive relationship between Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) and customer patronage in manufacturing companies in Delta State. The correlation analysis ($r = 0.84$) indicates that improvements in SSCM practices significantly enhance customer patronage, while the test of significance ($p < 0.05$) confirmed that the relationship is statistically significant, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

This finding is consistent with Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984), which argues that firms achieve sustainable success by addressing the needs of multiple stakeholders, particularly customers. From this perspective, SSCM practices such as ethical sourcing, environmental responsibility, and efficient delivery systems strengthen trust and customer satisfaction, thereby increasing patronage.

Empirically, the result aligns with Şahin & Özgen (2023), who found that effective customer relationship management significantly improves manufacturing firm performance. It also supports the findings of Ehiedu (2022), who established that supply chain management practices, particularly information sharing and supplier coordination, enhance organizational outcomes through improved customer engagement. Similarly, Ehiedu and Imoagwu (2022) confirmed that integrated SCM practices improve supply chain effectiveness and customer-related performance indicators.

In addition, the result is consistent with Marhamati et al. (2021), who found that Just-in-Time (JIT) systems, when properly implemented within supply chains, improve operational responsiveness and customer satisfaction through reduced delays and improved product availability.

Overall, the findings suggest that SSCM plays a critical role in enhancing customer patronage by improving transparency, efficiency, and responsiveness within the supply chain. This reinforces the view that customer-focused sustainability practices are essential drivers of competitive advantage in manufacturing firms.

Relationship between Sustainable Supply Chain Management and Market Performance of Products

The findings showed a very high positive relationship between Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) and the market performance of products in manufacturing companies in Delta State. The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.82$) indicates that improvements in SSCM practices are strongly associated with enhanced market performance, while the significance test ($p < 0.05$) confirms that the relationship is statistically significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected.

This outcome is consistent with Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984), which emphasizes that organizations achieve sustainable competitive advantage by balancing the expectations of key stakeholders, including customers, suppliers, and the wider market environment. From this perspective, SSCM enhances product quality, brand perception, and market acceptance by ensuring that supply chain activities align with environmental responsibility, ethical sourcing, and customer expectations. These improvements translate directly into stronger market positioning and increased demand for products.

The finding aligns with empirical evidence from Olanrewaju (2024), who reported that the adoption of sustainable supply chain practices improves sales performance, corporate image, and stakeholder engagement among manufacturing firms. Similarly, Iherobiem (2023) found that SSCM practices significantly enhance organizational innovation and competitiveness, which are key drivers of market performance in dynamic environments. In addition, Opoku and Edmond (2023) established that sustainability-oriented manufacturing practices, particularly green and inventory management systems, significantly improve organizational performance and market responsiveness in emerging economies.

The result also supports the argument that firms operating in competitive and resource-constrained environments benefit from SSCM through improved efficiency, reduced operational risks, and enhanced adaptability to market demands. By integrating sustainability into supply chain operations, manufacturing firms are better able to respond to consumer preferences, regulatory pressures, and industry competition, thereby strengthening their market position.

Overall, the findings confirm that SSCM is a critical strategic driver of market performance, as it enhances product acceptability, strengthens brand reputation, and improves the ability of firms to compete effectively in the marketplace.

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATION, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) and customer–market performance in manufacturing companies in Delta State, Nigeria. Based on the findings, it is concluded that SSCM has a strong and positive relationship with both customer patronage and market performance of products. The results of the hypotheses tested further confirmed that sustainable supply chain management significantly influences customer and market performance outcomes in manufacturing firms. The study, therefore, establishes that the integration of sustainability practices into supply chain operations is a key driver of improved customer engagement and enhanced market performance in the manufacturing sector.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are made. Manufacturing firms should ensure that their suppliers comply with established sustainability standards to strengthen business relationships, improve operational trust, and enhance market credibility. The government should support the adoption of sustainable supply chain practices by providing incentives such as tax reliefs, grants, and supportive policies that encourage firms to operate sustainably. Customers are encouraged to actively provide feedback to manufacturing companies, as this will help firms improve product quality, service delivery, and sustainability performance. In addition, investors should encourage firms to align their supply chain strategies with customer expectations and market demands, as this alignment has been shown to significantly improve performance outcomes.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Future research should expand the geographical scope of the study beyond Delta State to other regions in Nigeria in order to improve the generalisability of findings. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to examine the long-term impact of Sustainable Supply Chain Management on customer and market performance over time. Furthermore, future studies could investigate the moderating or mediating effects of variables such as technological innovation, organisational culture, and regulatory frameworks on the relationship between SSCM and performance outcomes in manufacturing firms.

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