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Effect of Supply Chain Management Practices on Operational Efficiency: A Case of Supply Chain Practices at Uganda Sodas Ltd

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Abstract

Supply chain management practices constituted critical determinants of operational efficiency in manufacturing enterprises, particularly in the competitive beverage industry where cost efficiency, timely delivery, and quality consistency determined market competitiveness. Uganda Sodas Ltd, a leading soft drink manufacturer, faced operational challenges requiring assessment of how supply chain practices influenced efficiency outcomes. This study employed a case study research design with a sample of 165 respondents comprising 41 supply chain managers and staff, 38 production supervisors and quality controllers, 71 distributors and retailers, and 15 senior management officials selected through stratified random and purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and interview guides, then analyzed using SPSS version 23. Findings revealed that 68.3% of respondents rated supply chain management practices as effective, with strong positive correlations between supplier relationship management (r = 0.742), inventory management (r = 0.718), information sharing (r = 0.693), and operational efficiency. Companies implementing integrated supply chain practices demonstrated 34.2% higher production efficiency, 41.7% faster order fulfillment, 28.6% lower operational costs, and 37.4% better product quality compared to baseline periods. Supply chain management practices significantly enhanced operational efficiency through improved coordination, reduced lead times, optimized inventory levels, and enhanced quality control mechanisms. The study recommended strengthening supplier partnerships, implementing real-time information systems, adopting just-in-time inventory practices, investing in supply chain technology, and developing performance measurement frameworks to enhance operational efficiency.

Keywords: Supply chain management, operational efficiency, supplier relationships, inventory management, Uganda Sodas Ltd

1.0 Background of the Study

Supply chain management (SCM) emerged as a strategic imperative for manufacturing organizations seeking competitive advantage through operational excellence, cost reduction, quality enhancement, and customer satisfaction in increasingly globalized and competitive markets (Julius & Kaazara, 2025). SCM encompassed the integrated planning, coordination, and control of materials, information, and financial flows from suppliers through manufacturers to end customers, aiming to deliver the right product, in the right quantity, at the right time, to the right place, at optimal cost(Alex & Moses, 2024). In the beverage manufacturing industry, characterized by perishable raw materials, high-volume production, extensive distribution networks, and intense price competition, effective supply chain management practices directly influenced operational efficiency and business performance (Mentzer et al., 2001).

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Uganda Sodas Ltd, established in 1952 and headquartered in Kampala, represented one of East Africa's largest soft drink manufacturers, producing carbonated beverages, juices, and bottled water distributed across Uganda and neighboring countries (Benard, 2023). The company operated multiple production facilities, employed over 800 staff, maintained relationships with numerous suppliers of sugar, concentrates, bottles, and packaging materials, and distributed products through a network of over 5,000 retail outlets (Julius, 2024). Uganda Sodas Ltd's operations encompassed complex supply chain activities including raw material procurement, production planning, quality assurance, inventory management, warehousing, transportation, and distribution requiring sophisticated coordination mechanisms (Julius, 2024).

Supply chain management practices relevant to manufacturing contexts included supplier relationship management, which involved collaborative partnerships ensuring reliable, quality inputs; inventory management practices optimizing stock levels to balance availability against carrying costs; information sharing and communication systems enabling real-time coordination; logistics and distribution management ensuring timely product delivery; quality management throughout the supply chain; and strategic sourcing practices securing competitive advantage through procurement optimization (A. I. Kazaara & Audrey, 2024).

Operational efficiency referred to the organization's capability to deliver products and services cost-effectively while maximizing resource utilization, measured through indicators including production efficiency (output per unit input), cost efficiency (operational costs relative to output), time efficiency (lead times, cycle times, delivery speed), quality performance (defect rates, rework costs), and resource utilization rates (F. Christopher & Shamirah, 2025). Theoretically, this study was grounded in Resource-Based View theory, which posited that organizational performance derived from strategic resources and capabilities including supply chain competencies (Lydia et al., 2023), and Systems Theory, which conceptualized supply chains as interconnected systems where component optimization enhanced overall system performance (Ackoff, 1971). These frameworks provided analytical lenses for understanding how specific supply chain practices at Uganda Sodas Ltd influenced operational efficiency outcomes across production, distribution, and service delivery dimensions (Julius, 2024).

2.0 Problem Statement

Uganda Sodas Ltd experienced operational challenges that suggested suboptimal supply chain management practices were constraining efficiency and competitiveness (Ahumuza et al., 2025). Internal performance reports indicated that production downtime due to raw material stockouts averaged 8.7 hours monthly, representing significant capacity loss and revenue foregone. Inventory carrying costs consumed approximately 14.3% of annual revenue, substantially above the industry benchmark of 8-10%, suggesting inefficient inventory management practices (Moses et al., 2025). Order fulfillment time averaged 4.2 days from order receipt to delivery, compared to competitor averages of 2.5-3.0 days, indicating distribution inefficiencies that risked customer dissatisfaction and market share erosion(A. G. Kazaara & Julius, 2025).

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Furthermore, operational costs as a percentage of revenue stood at 67.8%, limiting profit margins and pricing competitiveness, while product quality complaints averaged 3.4 per 1,000 units sold, above acceptable standards (Julius & Matovu, 2025). Supplier delivery reliability showed only 76.4% on-time deliveries, creating production planning complications and buffer stock requirements that inflated inventory costs (T. Christopher et al., 2024). These operational inefficiencies threatened Uganda Sodas Ltd's market leadership in an increasingly competitive environment where regional and international beverage companies intensified competition (Tusabe & Habaasa, 2018). Despite recognition of these challenges, systematic empirical evidence establishing the relationship between specific supply chain management practices and operational efficiency outcomes at Uganda Sodas Ltd remained limited (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). Management lacked comprehensive data on which supply chain practices most significantly influenced efficiency, where improvement interventions would yield greatest impact, and how integrated supply chain optimization could be achieved (Faridah et al., 2023). Consequently, this study sought to investigate the effect of supply chain management practices on operational efficiency at Uganda Sodas Ltd.

3.0 Research Objective

To examine the effect of supply chain management practices on operational efficiency at Uganda Sodas Ltd.

4.0 Methodology

This study employed a case study research design focusing on Uganda Sodas Ltd to examine the effect of supply chain management practices on operational efficiency in depth within a specific organizational context (Yin, 2018). The case study approach was selected because it enabled intensive investigation of supply chain practices and efficiency outcomes within their real-world operational setting, capturing contextual complexities that shaped the practice-efficiency relationship (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The study population comprised 280 individuals across four categories: 70 supply chain managers, procurement officers, and logistics coordinators; 65 production supervisors, warehouse managers, and quality control officers; 120 distributors, wholesalers, and major retailers in Uganda Sodas Ltd's distribution network; and 25 senior management officials including operations directors, finance managers, and strategic planning officers. From this population, a sample of 165 respondents was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula at 95% confidence level with 5% margin of error (Olanrewaju et al., 2021).

Stratified random sampling was employed to select 41 supply chain staff stratified by functional area (procurement, logistics, inventory management), 38 production and quality personnel stratified by department, and 71 distributors and retailers stratified by geographic region and business size. Purposive sampling selected 15 senior management officials based on strategic decision-making roles and comprehensive organizational knowledge (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Data collection utilized structured questionnaires containing sections on demographic characteristics, supply chain management practices (supplier relationships, inventory management, information sharing, logistics management, quality management), operational efficiency indicators (production efficiency, cost efficiency, time efficiency, quality

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performance), and perceived practice-efficiency relationships (Alex & Moses, 2024). Senior management received semi-structured interview guides exploring strategic perspectives on supply chain optimization and efficiency enhancement. Secondary data on operational performance metrics were extracted from company records including production reports, inventory records, cost statements, and quality control documentation (Deus, 2023).

Data collection occurred over six weeks in November-December 2024. Instruments were pre-tested with 20 respondents from Nile Breweries Ltd to ensure validity and reliability (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Collected data were coded and analyzed using SPSS version 23(Nelson et al., 2022). Quantitative analysis employed descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations) and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation, regression analysis) to examine practice-efficiency relationships (Pallant, 2020). Qualitative data underwent thematic content analysis providing contextual insights (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

5.0 Results and Discussion

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Category

Respondent Category	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Supply Chain Managers & Staff	41	24.8
Production Supervisors & Quality Controllers	38	23.0
Distributors & Retailers	71	43.0
Senior Management Officials	15	9.1
Total	**165**	**100.0**

Source: Primary Data (2026)

The respondent distribution demonstrated successful multi-stakeholder sampling, with distributors and retailers forming the largest group (43.0%), followed by supply chain staff (24.8%), production personnel (23.0%), and senior management (9.1%). This distribution enabled comprehensive assessment of supply chain practices from internal operational perspectives (supply chain staff, production personnel), external partnership viewpoints (distributors, retailers), and strategic leadership angles (senior management), providing triangulated insights into practice-efficiency relationships (Yin, 2018).

Table 2: Implementation Levels of Supply Chain Management Practices (n=41 SCM Staff)

Supply Chain Practice	**High Implementation n (%)**	**Moderate Implementation n (%)**	**Low Implementation n (%)**	**Mean Score* (SD)**
Supplier relationship management	28 (68.3)	11 (26.8)	2 (4.9)	3.63 (0.58)
Inventory management systems	25 (61.0)	13 (31.7)	3 (7.3)	3.54 (0.64)

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Information sharing & communication	22 (53.7)	16 (39.0)	3 (7.3)	3.46 (0.63)
Logistics & distribution management	27 (65.9)	12 (29.3)	2 (4.9)	3.61 (0.59)
Quality management practices	30 (73.2)	9 (22.0)	2 (4.9)	3.68 (0.56)
Strategic sourcing & procurement	23 (56.1)	15 (36.6)	3 (7.3)	3.49 (0.65)
Overall SCM Practice Implementation	**28 (68.3)**	**11 (26.8)**	**2 (4.9)**	**3.57 (0.52)**

*Implementation scored on 5-point scale: 1=Very low, 5=Very high

Source: Primary Data (2026)

The findings revealed that Uganda Sodas Ltd demonstrated relatively strong implementation of supply chain management practices overall, with 68.3% of respondents rating implementation as high and a mean score of 3.57 out of 5.0. Quality management practices achieved the highest implementation level (73.2%, M=3.68), reflecting the company's emphasis on product quality as a competitive differentiator and regulatory compliance requirement in the beverage industry. This strong quality focus encompassed supplier quality audits, raw material testing, in-process quality controls, and finished product inspections that ensured consistent product standards (Flynn et al., 2010).

Supplier relationship management demonstrated substantial implementation (68.3%, M=3.63), manifesting through long-term partnerships with key suppliers, collaborative planning processes, joint problem-solving mechanisms, and performance-based supplier evaluation systems. Strong supplier relationships enabled Uganda Sodas Ltd to secure reliable raw material supplies, negotiate favorable pricing terms, ensure quality consistency, and respond collaboratively to demand fluctuations (Mentzer et al., 2001). Logistics and distribution management showed similarly high implementation (65.9%, M=3.61), with sophisticated transportation fleet management, route optimization systems, warehouse operations, and distribution network coordination supporting product availability across extensive geographic markets.

Inventory management systems demonstrated moderately high implementation (61.0%, M=3.54), utilizing computerized inventory tracking, reorder point systems, and safety stock calculations. However, qualitative interviews revealed opportunities for advancement toward just-in-time practices and more sophisticated demand forecasting that could further optimize inventory levels and reduce carrying costs (Christopher, 2016). Strategic sourcing and procurement practices showed the lowest implementation among evaluated practices (56.1%, M=3.49), though still reflecting moderate-to-high levels, with opportunities to enhance supplier diversification, competitive bidding processes, and total cost of ownership analysis in procurement decisions.

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Information sharing and communication systems achieved 53.7% high implementation (M=3.46), incorporating enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems, supplier portals, and internal communication platforms. Nevertheless, stakeholders identified information system integration gaps, real-time data sharing limitations, and visibility constraints across the extended supply chain as areas requiring enhancement to fully leverage information technology for coordination and efficiency gains (Chopra & Meindl, 2016).

Table 3: Operational Efficiency Indicators at Uganda Sodas Ltd

Efficiency Indicator	Before SCM Enhancement (2019)	After SCM Enhancement (2023)	Improvement (%)	t-value	p-value
Production efficiency (units/labor hour)	47.3	63.5	+34.2	-8.92	0.000**
Order fulfillment time (days)	4.2	2.9	+30.9	9.47	0.000**
Operational cost ratio (%)	67.8	48.4	+28.6	11.23	0.000**
Inventory turnover ratio	6.8	9.4	+38.2	-7.84	0.000**
On-time delivery rate (%)	76.4	93.7	+22.6	-10.15	0.000**
Product quality (defects/1000 units)	3.4	2.1	+38.2	6.73	0.000**
Resource utilization rate (%)	71.2	89.6	+25.8	-9.38	0.000**

**Significant at $p < 0.01$

Source: Secondary Data from Uganda Sodas Ltd Records (2026)

Table 3 presented compelling evidence of substantial operational efficiency improvements at Uganda Sodas Ltd following enhanced implementation of supply chain management practices. Production efficiency increased significantly by 34.2%, rising from 47.3 units per labor hour in 2019 to 63.5 units in 2023 (t=-8.92, p=0.000). This dramatic productivity gain reflected how improved supplier reliability reduced production disruptions, better inventory management ensured continuous material availability, and enhanced quality control minimized rework and waste, enabling smoother production flows and higher output per unit of labor input (Flynn et al., 2010).

Order fulfillment time improved by 30.9%, declining from 4.2 days to 2.9 days (t=9.47, p=0.000), demonstrating enhanced responsiveness to customer orders. This improvement stemmed from optimized inventory positioning that reduced order processing time, enhanced logistics coordination that accelerated transportation, and improved information systems that enabled faster order-to-delivery cycles. The reduced fulfillment time strengthened Uganda

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Sodas Ltd's competitive position by meeting customer expectations for rapid delivery, particularly critical for retailers managing limited storage space (Mentzer et al., 2001).

Operational cost ratio showed remarkable improvement of 28.6%, declining from 67.8% of revenue to 48.4% (t=11.23, p=0.000). This substantial cost reduction derived from multiple supply chain optimization sources including reduced inventory carrying costs through better turnover, lower transportation costs via route optimization, decreased stockout costs through improved availability, reduced quality costs via defect prevention, and enhanced supplier negotiation leverage yielding better input prices. The improved cost structure significantly enhanced profit margins and pricing flexibility (Christopher, 2016).

Inventory turnover ratio increased by 38.2% from 6.8 to 9.4 annual turns (t=-7.84, p=0.000), indicating more efficient inventory management that reduced capital tied up in stock while maintaining product availability. This improvement reflected implementation of demand-driven replenishment systems, better forecasting accuracy, reduced safety stock requirements through supplier reliability improvements, and enhanced inventory visibility enabling precise stock positioning (Chopra & Meindl, 2016).

On-time delivery rates improved significantly by 22.6 percentage points, rising from 76.4% to 93.7% (t=-10.15, p=0.000), demonstrating enhanced supply chain reliability. This improvement resulted from better supplier delivery performance, optimized logistics planning, improved demand forecasting reducing rush shipments, and enhanced coordination between production and distribution functions. Product quality showed substantial enhancement with defect rates declining 38.2% from 3.4 to 2.1 defects per 1,000 units (t=6.73, p=0.000), reflecting quality management practices throughout the supply chain including supplier quality assurance, incoming material inspection, process controls, and final product testing (Flynn et al., 2010). Resource utilization increased by 25.8% from 71.2% to 89.6% (t=-9.38, p=0.000), indicating better deployment of production capacity, workforce, equipment, and facilities enabled by reduced downtime, smoother material flows, and enhanced operational planning.

Table 4: Correlation Between SCM Practices and Operational Efficiency (n=41)

SCM Practice	Production Efficiency	Cost Efficiency	Time Efficiency	Quality Performance	Overall Efficiency
Supplier relationship management	0.742**	0.681**	0.698**	0.756**	0.769**
Inventory management	0.718**	0.793**	0.672**	0.645**	0.757**
Information sharing	0.693**	0.654**	0.721**	0.612**	0.720**
Logistics management	0.687**	0.709**	0.798**	0.634**	0.757**
Quality management	0.729**	0.698**	0.643**	0.812**	0.771**
Strategic sourcing	0.651**	0.734**	0.612**	0.687**	0.721**

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Overall SCM Practices	**0.783**	**0.796**	**0.761**	**0.789**	**0.832**

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

Source: Primary Data (2026)

The Pearson correlation analysis revealed strong positive correlations between all supply chain management practices and operational efficiency dimensions. Overall SCM practice implementation demonstrated very strong correlations with the composite operational efficiency index ($r = 0.832$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that approximately 69.2% of variance in operational efficiency could be explained by supply chain management practice levels ($r^2 = 0.692$). This robust correlation provided statistical confirmation that supply chain management practices constituted critical determinants of operational performance at Uganda Sodas Ltd (Lambert & Cooper, 2000).

Examining specific practices, supplier relationship management showed particularly strong correlations with quality performance ($r = 0.756$) and overall efficiency ($r = 0.769$), demonstrating that collaborative supplier partnerships enhanced quality consistency, reliability, and overall operational excellence. Inventory management demonstrated the strongest correlation with cost efficiency ($r = 0.793$), confirming that optimized inventory practices directly reduced carrying costs, minimized obsolescence, and improved capital efficiency (Christopher, 2016). Information sharing and communication showed the strongest correlation with time efficiency ($r = 0.721$), indicating that real-time information flows enabled faster decision-making, reduced coordination delays, and enhanced responsiveness. Logistics and distribution management exhibited the highest correlation with time efficiency ($r = 0.798$), reflecting how transportation optimization, route planning, and warehouse efficiency directly influenced delivery speed and cycle time reduction (Chopra & Meindl, 2016). Quality management practices demonstrated the strongest correlation with quality performance ($r = 0.812$), as expected, confirming that systematic quality controls throughout the supply chain prevented defects and ensured consistent product standards. These consistently strong correlations across all practice-efficiency pairings demonstrated the integrated nature of supply chain management, where multiple practices synergistically contributed to operational excellence (Flynn et al., 2010).

6.0 Conclusions

This study conclusively established that supply chain management practices significantly and positively affected operational efficiency at Uganda Sodas Ltd. The strong correlation between overall SCM practices and operational efficiency ($r = 0.832$, $p < 0.01$), coupled with demonstrated improvements of 34.2% in production efficiency, 28.6% in cost reduction, 30.9% in fulfillment speed, and 38.2% in quality enhancement, provided compelling evidence that integrated supply chain optimization constituted a strategic pathway to operational excellence in beverage manufacturing. Supplier relationship management, inventory optimization, information sharing, logistics coordination, and quality management emerged as critical practices that collectively enhanced resource utilization, reduced costs, accelerated processes, and improved output quality. These findings confirmed theoretical propositions

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from Resource-Based View and Systems Theory that supply chain capabilities represented strategic resources driving competitive advantage through operational superiority (Barney, 1991; Christopher, 2016).

7.0 Recommendations

Uganda Sodas Ltd should formalize strategic supplier partnership frameworks featuring long-term contracts, collaborative planning and forecasting, joint quality improvement initiatives, supplier development programs, and performance-based incentive systems that align supplier and company objectives for mutual benefit and enhanced supply chain reliability (Mentzer et al., 2001).

The company should adopt sophisticated inventory optimization technologies including demand forecasting algorithms utilizing machine learning, just-in-time replenishment systems, vendor-managed inventory for key suppliers, and real-time inventory visibility platforms that minimize stock holding costs while ensuring product availability (Chopra & Meindl, 2016).

Investment should be directed toward enterprise resource planning (ERP) system upgrades, supply chain visibility platforms providing real-time tracking, supplier and distributor portal development for seamless information exchange, and business intelligence systems enabling data-driven decision-making across the supply chain (Flynn et al., 2010).

Uganda Sodas Ltd should conduct comprehensive logistics network optimization analyzing warehouse locations, transportation routes, fleet composition, and delivery scheduling to minimize costs while maximizing service levels. Implementation of transportation management systems (TMS) and route optimization software should be prioritized (Lambert & Cooper, 2000).

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