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Supplier Selection Criteria in Nigerian Manufacturing Sector

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Abstract
The study examines supplier selection as a strategic purchasing function for enhancing profitability in the Nigerian manufacturing sector. It emphasizes that effective supplier selection can significantly contribute to profit maximization by ensuring the acquisition of quality materials at the lowest possible cost. The study focuses on three major dimensions of supplier selection: negotiation, competitive bidding, and constraints affecting contemporary supplier-selection practices. Given the substantial proportion of organizational revenue controlled by purchasing activities, the study recommends that qualified purchasing professionals should manage supplier negotiation, selection, and procurement commitments in accordance with established purchasing ethics and principles. It concludes that Nigerian manufacturing firms can improve profitability, develop reliable supply chains, and sustain productive supplier relationships by adopting well-structured purchasing systems and professional supplier-selection practices.

Keywords: Supplier Selection, Purchasing Strategy, Negotiation, Competitive Bidding, Profit Maximization.

Introduction

There is increasing recognition in contemporary business and supply-chain management literature that the purchasing function has evolved from a routine administrative activity into a strategic organizational function capable of contributing directly to cost efficiency, value creation, competitiveness, and profitability. In manufacturing organizations, purchasing decisions are particularly important because substantial financial resources are committed to the acquisition of raw materials, components, machinery, equipment, and production-related services. Consequently, the effectiveness with which organizations plan, source, negotiate, select, and manage suppliers can have significant implications for their overall financial and operational performance. Recent evidence indicates that strategic procurement practices can

improve organizational performance by enhancing operational efficiency, information visibility, procurement cycle time, and supplier relationships (Yusuf et al., 2024). Similarly, contemporary procurement literature emphasizes that purchasing should contribute beyond transactional cost reduction by supporting organizational resilience, sustainability, risk management, and long-term value creation.

Profitability remains a fundamental indicator of the financial health, growth, and sustainability of business organizations. Manufacturing firms, in particular, must continuously identify ways of controlling costs while maintaining the quality and availability of the inputs required for production. Purchasing therefore represents an important area through which firms can influence their cost structures and competitive positions. Recent research in the Nigerian manufacturing sector found that strategic procurement practices have a significant relationship with corporate performance and that e-procurement can improve operational performance through greater data visibility, reduced procurement cycle time, and stronger supplier relationships (Yusuf et al., 2024). This development demonstrates that the purchasing function is increasingly becoming a strategic component of business management in Nigeria rather than merely a support activity. The strategic orientation of purchasing is especially important in an environment characterized by fluctuating input prices, supply disruptions, infrastructure limitations, exchange-rate pressures, and increasing competition.

Organizational performance is influenced by the ability of firms to create value for their major stakeholders, including shareholders, employees, customers, suppliers, creditors, and other relevant parties. For manufacturing firms, creating sustainable value requires effective coordination between internal operations and external supply-chain partners. Supplier selection is one of the principal purchasing decisions through which organizations can achieve this objective because the quality, reliability, cost, capacity, and responsiveness of suppliers directly affect production operations. Research has established that effective supplier selection can improve the competitive capabilities and overall performance of buying firms. Rezaei et al. (2018), for example, demonstrated that supplier-selection constructs relating to quality, service, and strategic fit can improve quality, delivery performance, flexibility, and cost performance. More recent studies have reinforced the multidimensional character of supplier selection, identifying quality, on-time delivery, material price, information sharing, reliability, risk, and transportation cost among important criteria for supplier evaluation (Khan et al., 2023).

Supplier selection is therefore a strategic tool through which the purchasing function can contribute to organizational profitability and operational effectiveness. The process involves identifying, evaluating, comparing, and selecting suppliers that possess the capacity to satisfy an organization's requirements in terms of price, quality, delivery, reliability, capacity, technical competence, financial stability, responsiveness, and other relevant criteria. Contemporary research indicates that supplier selection has become increasingly complex because organizations must consider economic, environmental, social, technological, and risk-related factors when evaluating potential suppliers. In the Nigerian manufacturing sector, Orji and Ojadi (2021) found that economic criteria, particularly quality and cost, were highly important in sustainable supplier selection, while pandemic-related response capabilities also became significant considerations. Consequently, effective supplier selection should not be based solely on the lowest purchase price; rather, it should consider the supplier's total contribution to organizational value and the potential costs associated with poor quality, unreliable delivery, production disruption, and supply risk.

The importance of supplier selection is further strengthened by the relationship between supplier performance and organizational operational outcomes. A manufacturing organization that selects

suppliers without adequately evaluating their capabilities may experience defective materials, production delays, increased inventory costs, interrupted production schedules, customer dissatisfaction, and reputational damage. Conversely, selecting competent and reliable suppliers can support production continuity, improve product quality, reduce procurement-related risks, and enhance responsiveness. Recent research on supplier selection under disruption risk shows that organizations increasingly need procurement arrangements that incorporate supplier reliability, alternative sourcing, and contingency considerations to protect operations against supply disruptions (2024). Similarly, Dza et al. (2024) found that supplier relationship management positively influences operational performance and that supply-chain resilience strengthens this relationship.

In the Nigerian manufacturing sector, these issues are particularly significant because firms must balance cost minimization with the need for uninterrupted access to quality production inputs. Strategic procurement can assist manufacturing firms in managing these challenges by strengthening supplier relationships, improving information flow, adopting digital procurement systems, and developing systematic supplier-selection procedures. Yusuf et al. (2024) found that e-procurement, data visibility, procurement cycle time, and supplier relationships were important contributors to operational performance in the Nigerian manufacturing context. In addition, research on sustainable supplier selection in Nigeria demonstrates the importance of integrating economic and risk-related considerations into supplier evaluation, thereby showing that supplier selection is not simply a purchasing decision but an important component of broader supply-chain strategy (Orji & Ojadi, 2021).

Against this background, the present study examines supplier selection as a strategic tool of the purchasing function and its contribution to profit maximization in the Nigerian manufacturing sector. The study focuses particularly on supplier selection, negotiation, and competitive bidding as important dimensions of purchasing practice. The central argument is that manufacturing firms can enhance profitability when suppliers are selected systematically on the basis of relevant performance criteria, when purchasing personnel negotiate effectively with suppliers, and when competitive bidding is implemented transparently and objectively. The study is therefore designed to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on strategic purchasing by examining how supplier-selection practices can support cost efficiency, operational effectiveness, and profitability within Nigerian manufacturing firms.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine supplier selection criteria in Nigerian manufacturing sector. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine the effect of supplier selection on the profitability of manufacturing firms.
2. Examine the contribution of negotiation to profit maximization.
3. Determine the effect of competitive bidding on the profitability of manufacturing firms.

The increasing complexity of modern manufacturing and supply-chain operations has made strategic purchasing increasingly important to organizational performance. Nevertheless, the effective implementation of supplier-selection practices remains a concern where procurement decisions are influenced by inadequate supplier evaluation, weak procurement procedures, limited information, insufficient professional capacity, or excessive emphasis on initial purchase price. Contemporary evidence suggests that effective procurement requires an integrated approach involving supplier relationships, digital systems, risk management, transparency, and systematic evaluation of supplier capabilities (Yusuf et al., 2024; Dza et al., 2024). The continued reliance on poorly structured supplier-selection processes may increase procurement costs, expose manufacturing firms to supply disruptions,

and negatively affect production efficiency and profitability. It is against this background that this study seeks to examine supplier selection as a strategic purchasing tool and determine its implications for profit maximization in the Nigerian manufacturing sector.

An Overview of the Purchasing Function

The purchasing function has undergone considerable transformation as organizations increasingly recognize procurement as a strategic contributor to organizational performance rather than a purely transactional activity. Modern purchasing encompasses activities involved in identifying organizational requirements, sourcing potential suppliers, evaluating supplier capabilities, negotiating contractual terms, purchasing goods and services, managing supplier relationships, monitoring supplier performance, and ensuring that acquired resources support organizational objectives. In manufacturing organizations, the function extends to the procurement of raw materials, components, equipment, machinery, tools, spare parts, and production-related services. Its effectiveness is therefore closely associated with production continuity, cost management, product quality, delivery performance, and organizational competitiveness.

Contemporary procurement is increasingly concerned with obtaining the right goods or services at the appropriate total cost, quality, quantity, time, location, and contractual conditions while simultaneously managing supply risks and creating sustainable supplier relationships. Yusuf et al. (2024) demonstrate that strategic procurement can enhance manufacturing performance through mechanisms such as e-procurement, improved information visibility, reduced procurement cycle time, and stronger supplier relationships. This indicates that purchasing decisions have implications beyond the immediate transaction because procurement activities can influence the efficiency and resilience of the entire supply chain.

Supplier Selection

Supplier selection is the systematic process through which an organization identifies, evaluates, compares, and chooses suppliers capable of meeting its purchasing requirements. The purpose of the process is to identify suppliers that can consistently provide the required goods or services at acceptable levels of quality, cost, delivery, reliability, capacity, and service. Supplier selection is therefore a critical component of procurement because the performance of selected suppliers can directly affect production operations, customer satisfaction, organizational costs, and competitiveness.

Khan et al. (2023) identified quality, on-time delivery, material price, and information sharing as particularly important criteria, while transportation cost, reliability, reputation, risk, technical capability, responsiveness, and flexibility may also influence supplier decisions. Similarly, research on sustainable supplier selection in manufacturing emphasizes the integration of economic, environmental, and social considerations into supplier evaluation (Orji & Ojadi, 2021). Thus, an effective supplier-selection process should evaluate both the immediate purchasing requirements of the organization and the supplier's capacity to contribute to long-term supply-chain performance.

A competent supplier is one that possesses sufficient production capacity, financial stability, technical capability, quality-management systems, delivery reliability, responsiveness, and willingness to maintain a productive relationship with the purchasing organization. Supplier selection should therefore involve due diligence and objective assessment before contractual commitments are made. A structured supplier evaluation process can reduce the likelihood of supplier non-performance and enable organizations to select suppliers that are better positioned to meet production requirements. Rezaei et

al. (2018) found that supplier selection based on quality, service, and strategic fit can enhance the operational capabilities and performance of buying firms.

The traditional emphasis on price as the dominant supplier-selection criterion is increasingly being replaced by a broader total-value perspective. While purchase price remains important, contemporary supplier-selection models recognize that the actual cost of procurement may include transportation, inspection, inventory holding, poor-quality costs, delays, administrative costs, and disruption-related losses. Research in manufacturing supplier selection similarly identifies cost, quality, delivery, risk, and other operational criteria as important elements of supplier evaluation (Khan et al., 2023). Therefore, selecting the supplier with the lowest quotation does not necessarily produce the lowest total procurement cost or the highest organizational value.

The Carter's 10Cs framework remains a useful conceptual lens for understanding supplier evaluation because it emphasizes multiple dimensions of supplier capability rather than price alone. The ten dimensions—competency, capacity, commitment, control, cash, cost, consistency, culture, clean practices, and communication—can be interpreted as complementary indicators of supplier suitability. However, contemporary supplier-selection research suggests that such traditional frameworks should be complemented with additional considerations such as sustainability, resilience, technological capability, information sharing, risk exposure, and flexibility. Current studies show that supplier evaluation increasingly incorporates economic, environmental, social, and resilience-related criteria in response to the complexity of modern supply chains (Orji & Ojadi, 2021; Khan et al., 2023).

The consequences of selecting an unsuitable supplier can be considerable. Poor supplier selection may result in defective materials, production interruptions, delayed deliveries, contractual disputes, excess inventory, increased transportation costs, and reduced customer satisfaction. Conversely, selecting reliable suppliers can support stable production, improve quality, reduce costs, and strengthen organizational competitiveness. Recent research on supplier selection under disruption risk emphasizes the importance of considering supplier reliability and alternative procurement arrangements when organizations operate in uncertain environments (2024). In addition, Dza et al. (2024) established that effective supplier relationship management contributes positively to operational performance and that supply-chain resilience strengthens this relationship.

Negotiation in Supplier Selection

Negotiation is an important component of the purchasing and supplier-selection process because it provides an avenue through which buyers and suppliers establish mutually acceptable terms concerning price, quality, quantity, delivery, payment, warranties, service requirements, and contractual responsibilities. In contemporary procurement, negotiation is not simply a mechanism for forcing suppliers to reduce prices; it is a strategic process through which the parties attempt to create and capture value while establishing conditions that support effective contract performance. Kelly and Chicksand (2024), in their systematic review of bargaining in purchasing and supply management, identify supplier bargaining as a central purchasing activity and emphasize the need for greater conceptual understanding of how bargaining contributes to purchasing outcomes.

Effective negotiation can contribute to organizational profitability by enabling purchasing professionals to secure commercially favourable terms while maintaining acceptable levels of quality, delivery, and supplier performance. However, successful procurement negotiation should consider the total value of the agreement rather than concentrating exclusively on the unit purchase price. A price concession that results in inferior quality, late delivery, inadequate service, or unreliable supply may ultimately increase

the buyer's total cost. Consequently, negotiation should address the complete range of contractual and operational requirements necessary to achieve sustainable purchasing outcomes.

Negotiation is also closely connected with supplier selection because the existence of alternative qualified suppliers can strengthen the buyer's bargaining position. Evidence from business-to-business procurement negotiations indicates that introducing a new potential supplier can increase savings and strengthen competitive pressure, particularly where the procurement process is transparent (Delina et al., 2023). This suggests that supplier sourcing and negotiation should not be treated as isolated activities. Rather, organizations should maintain adequate knowledge of supplier markets and develop competitive sourcing options that enable procurement personnel to negotiate from an informed position.

Effective negotiation should also contribute to the development of long-term supplier relationships. Modern supply chains require collaboration between buyers and suppliers in areas such as quality improvement, information sharing, innovation, risk management, delivery coordination, and problem resolution. Dza et al. (2024) found that supplier relationship management has a positive influence on operational performance and that supply-chain resilience strengthens this relationship. Therefore, procurement negotiation should seek a balance between achieving immediate commercial benefits and establishing sustainable relationships with suppliers capable of supporting organizational objectives.

In supplier selection, negotiation may involve several stages, including preparation, information gathering, identification of objectives, supplier engagement, bargaining, agreement, contract finalization, and post-negotiation evaluation. Effective preparation requires purchasing personnel to understand the organization's requirements, supplier-market conditions, cost structures, alternative sources, quality expectations, delivery requirements, and potential risks. Negotiators should establish clear priorities and determine which terms are essential and which may be subject to compromise. The ultimate objective should be to obtain appropriate quality, competitive total cost, reliable delivery, acceptable contractual conditions, and sufficient supplier commitment while maintaining professional and mutually beneficial relationships.

The contribution of negotiation to profitability is particularly relevant in manufacturing because procurement expenditure can represent a substantial component of production costs. Effective negotiation can reduce acquisition costs, improve payment terms, reduce logistics costs, strengthen service conditions, and secure supplier commitments that minimize the probability of production disruption. However, the effectiveness of negotiation should ultimately be assessed in terms of total procurement value and supplier performance rather than price savings alone. This broader perspective is consistent with contemporary supplier-selection research, which emphasizes quality, delivery, information sharing, reliability, and other criteria alongside cost (Khan et al., 2023).

Competitive Bidding in Supplier Selection

The effectiveness of competitive bidding depends substantially on the quality of the evaluation criteria and the transparency of the procurement process. Selecting a supplier solely because it offers the lowest price can be problematic when the supplier lacks the capacity or competence to meet the buyer's requirements. Current supplier-selection research demonstrates that quality, delivery, material price, information sharing, reliability, and other criteria should be considered together when evaluating suppliers (Khan et al., 2023). Thus, the best bid should generally be interpreted as the offer that provides the greatest overall value in relation to the organization's requirements rather than simply the cheapest quotation.

Competitive bidding can also contribute to profitability by increasing competition among suppliers and encouraging them to provide more favourable commercial and service terms. Recent research on

procurement bidding demonstrates that competitive supplier environments can influence procurement savings and negotiation outcomes, particularly where new potential suppliers are introduced into a transparent procurement process (Delina et al., 2023). Furthermore, contemporary procurement models increasingly examine bidding and supplier allocation in relation to multiple costs, including purchasing, transportation, ordering, administrative, holding, and manufacturing costs, thereby reinforcing the importance of evaluating total procurement cost rather than quoted price alone (2024).

For competitive bidding to achieve its intended objectives, supplier evaluation should be conducted objectively, consistently, transparently, and without discrimination. The purchasing organization should establish clear specifications, communicate requirements to potential suppliers, define evaluation criteria before bids are assessed, and maintain appropriate documentation of the decision-making process. Important supplier attributes may include financial capability, production capacity, technical competence, quality assurance, delivery reliability, reputation, compliance, responsiveness, and risk-management capability. This approach is consistent with recent supplier-selection research, which recognizes that supplier evaluation is a multidimensional decision involving both quantitative and qualitative criteria (Khan et al., 2023).

In the Nigerian manufacturing sector, competitive bidding can provide opportunities for firms to control procurement expenditure, improve transparency, and identify suppliers capable of providing better value. Nevertheless, its effectiveness depends on the professionalism of procurement personnel, availability of reliable supplier information, objective evaluation procedures, and management commitment to ethical procurement practices. The strategic procurement literature in Nigeria indicates that improving procurement systems, supplier relationships, information visibility, and procurement processes can contribute to improved manufacturing performance (Yusuf et al., 2024). Competitive bidding should therefore be regarded as one component of a broader strategic purchasing system rather than as an isolated cost-reduction technique.

Supplier Selection Constraints

Supplier selection is a complex strategic decision because organizations must evaluate several competing criteria while operating under uncertainty, information limitations, supply-market volatility, and organizational constraints. The selection process may involve the simultaneous assessment of price, product quality, delivery reliability, production capacity, technical competence, financial stability, service capability, sustainability, risk exposure, and the supplier's ability to maintain long-term performance. Contemporary supplier-selection research emphasizes that these criteria are multidimensional and that their relative importance varies according to the nature of the product, industry, supply-market conditions, and strategic objectives of the buying organization (Khan et al., 2023). In addition, supplier selection has become more difficult because disruptions, economic uncertainty, and sustainability requirements require purchasing organizations to consider factors beyond conventional cost and quality measures (Orji & Ojadi, 2021).

Another important constraint is the availability and quality of information about prospective suppliers. Purchasing organizations may not always possess complete, accurate, or current information regarding supplier capacity, financial position, production capability, quality systems, delivery performance, ethical practices, or exposure to supply risks. Information asymmetry can therefore make it difficult for buyers to distinguish between suppliers with genuine capability and those that merely offer attractive commercial terms. Recent supplier-selection studies emphasize the importance of information sharing, supplier reliability, quality, delivery performance, and risk assessment in making effective supplier decisions (Khan et al., 2023). In the Nigerian manufacturing environment, these challenges may be

further intensified by supply disruptions, infrastructure constraints, exchange-rate fluctuations, and uncertainty in the availability and cost of production inputs. Strategic procurement practices such as supplier integration and improved information visibility can help firms respond more effectively to these challenges (Yusuf et al., 2024).

Ethical and organizational factors can also constrain supplier-selection decisions. Unethical influence, conflict of interest, favoritism, political or personal connections, and pressure from organizational stakeholders may interfere with objective supplier evaluation. Such practices can result in the selection of suppliers who are unable to provide the required quality, quantity, price, or delivery performance. From a procurement-governance perspective, supplier selection should therefore be based on transparent procedures, clearly defined evaluation criteria, documented decisions, and professional judgment. The use of objective criteria is particularly important because procurement decisions can have substantial financial consequences for manufacturing organizations. Recent evidence on business-to-business procurement indicates that transparent competition among suppliers can improve procurement outcomes and generate savings, particularly when alternative suppliers are introduced into the sourcing process (Delina et al., 2023).

Supplier-selection constraints may also arise from inadequate professional competence within the purchasing function. Effective supplier evaluation requires purchasing personnel to possess knowledge of market analysis, cost assessment, negotiation, supplier-risk evaluation, contract management, quality requirements, and supply-chain management. Where procurement personnel lack these competencies, organizations may rely excessively on price or personal recommendations rather than conducting comprehensive supplier evaluations. Contemporary procurement practice increasingly requires professionals to combine commercial competence with analytical, technological, relationship-management, and risk-management capabilities (Kelly & Chicksand, 2024). Therefore, the professionalism and competence of procurement personnel constitute an important determinant of the quality of supplier-selection decisions.

Another constraint relates to the tension between short-term cost reduction and long-term supplier performance. Organizations may be tempted to select the supplier offering the lowest initial price, even when that supplier has weaknesses in quality, delivery reliability, capacity, or service. Such decisions can produce hidden costs through defective materials, production downtime, delayed deliveries, additional inspection, emergency purchasing, and customer dissatisfaction. Current supplier-selection research supports the use of a multidimensional approach in which price is considered alongside quality, delivery, information sharing, reliability, transportation costs, and other performance criteria (Khan et al., 2023). Similarly, sustainable supplier-selection research demonstrates the importance of incorporating economic, environmental, and social considerations into supplier evaluation (Orji & Ojadi, 2021). Thus, effective supplier selection requires organizations to evaluate total value and total cost rather than focusing exclusively on the quoted purchase price.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a conceptual research approach and relied exclusively on secondary sources of information. The study did not involve primary data collection, field surveys, interviews, or experimental procedures. Relevant information was obtained from published peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, conference materials, institutional publications, and credible electronic sources addressing purchasing management, supplier selection, procurement strategy, negotiation, competitive bidding, supplier relationships, and organizational profitability. The literature was reviewed thematically to establish the conceptual relationship between supplier-selection practices and

profit maximization in manufacturing organizations. Particular attention was given to contemporary empirical and conceptual studies that explain supplier-selection criteria, procurement efficiency, supplier relationships, supply-chain resilience, and strategic purchasing. This approach enabled the study to synthesize existing knowledge and develop an informed understanding of supplier selection as a strategic component of the purchasing function.

Conclusion

This study examined supplier selection as a strategic tool of the purchasing function and its contribution to profit maximization in the manufacturing sector. The review establishes that supplier selection is no longer a routine purchasing activity but an important strategic decision with implications for procurement costs, product quality, delivery reliability, operational continuity, supply-chain resilience, and organizational profitability. Effective supplier selection enables manufacturing firms to obtain suitable materials and services from suppliers that can satisfy established requirements while minimizing procurement and supply risks. Contemporary evidence indicates that supplier-selection decisions should consider multiple criteria, including cost, quality, delivery performance, supplier reliability, information sharing, capacity, risk, and sustainability rather than relying exclusively on purchase price.

The study further concludes that purchasing efficiency and organizational profitability are closely connected because purchasing decisions influence a significant portion of the resources committed to manufacturing operations. Ineffective supplier selection can increase production costs through poor-quality inputs, delayed deliveries, supply interruptions, emergency procurement, and other avoidable expenses. Conversely, systematic supplier evaluation can improve value for money, production continuity, and operational efficiency. Evidence from the Nigerian manufacturing sector indicates that strategic procurement practices, including supplier integration and improved procurement information systems, can enhance organizational performance.

Recommendation

1. Establish transparent supplier-selection criteria that assess cost, quality, delivery reliability, capacity, financial stability, technical competence, sustainability, and supply-chain risk.
2. Employ qualified procurement professionals with competencies in supplier evaluation, negotiation, competitive bidding, contract management, risk assessment, and supplier relationship management.
3. Strengthen competitive bidding and negotiation practices by evaluating suppliers objectively on overall value, quality, reliability, delivery, service, and risk rather than relying solely on the lowest price.
4. Adopt digital procurement and supplier-monitoring systems to improve information sharing, transparency, procurement efficiency, supplier performance tracking, and decision-making.
5. Integrate supplier selection into strategic procurement management to enhance cost efficiency, supply-chain resilience, competitive advantage, and long-term profitability.

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