

Charting New Waters: A Systematic Literature Review Of BOS And Supply Chain Management Models For The Birth And Growth Of African Firms

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses the transformation of African firms through the integration of BOS within supply chain management models. BOS focuses on creating uncontested market spaces by making competition irrelevant through innovation, a strategy that can be particularly beneficial for African firms facing infrastructure, technology, and logistical challenges. The purpose of this study is to conduct a systematic review to explore how BOS can improve the growth and competitive positioning of African firms by improving their supply chain practices. A systematic literature review, guided by the PRISMA framework, was employed to gather and analyze relevant literature published between 2018 and 2023. The review included a comprehensive search of databases, rigorous screening for eligibility, and thematic analysis to identify key themes related to the integration of BOS in supply chain management for African firms. The findings reveal that integrating BOS into supply chain management enables African firms to address operational challenges, improve competitive positioning, and promote sustainable growth. The strategic alignment of BOS principles with supply chain practices encourages innovation, operational efficiency, and the creation of new market spaces. Key themes identified include collaboration, competitive advantage, supply chain resilience, and sustainable practices. The study concludes that BOS integration into supply chain management can significantly improve the operational efficiency and competitive advantage of African firms. This approach not only addresses the unique challenges faced by these firms but also opens new avenues for market growth and sustainability. The insights gained from this review provide valuable guidance for both academics and practitioners aiming to optimize supply chain operations and achieve sustainable development in the African context.

KEYWORDS: Blue Ocean Strategy; Supply Chain Management; African Firms; Innovation; Competitive Advantage; Sustainable Growth.

ABBREVIATIONS: BOS: Blue Ocean Strategy; RBV: Resource-Based View; SCM: Supply Chain Management; PRISMA: Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses; SME: Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

BOS is a concept that focuses on creating uncontested market spaces by making competition irrelevant through innovation [1]. When applied to supply chain management, this strategy involves exploring new market opportunities and creating value for customers in ways that stand out from traditional industry practices [1]. Through the integration of BOS into supply chain management models, African firms are able to benefit from increased market share, reduced competition, and improved customer value propositions [2].

African firms face various challenges in supply chain management, including inadequate infrastructure, limited access to technology, poor transportation networks, and inefficient logistics systems [3]. These challenges often lead to delays, increased costs, and difficulties in meeting customer demands [3]. Additionally, political instability, regulatory issues, and lack of skilled labor further compound the challenges faced by African firms in managing their supply chains [3].

Integrating BOS into supply chain management models is able to benefit African firms by enabling them to differentiate themselves from competitors, attract new customers, and create innovative solutions to address supply chain challenges [4]. Through the adoption of this approach, African firms are able to develop unique value propositions, optimize their supply chain processes, and improve their overall competitiveness in the market [5].

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Although there is increasing interest in using innovative business strategies and supply chain management models to improve the growth and competitiveness of African firms, there is a significant lack of research on the implementation of BOS in the context of supply chain management in Africa [6]. Although the BOS has gained significant recognition for its effectiveness in developing new market opportunities and encouraging business expansion, its implementation in supply chain management methods, specifically in the African setting, has not been thoroughly investigated [7]. The magnitude of this gap is significant, considering that supply chain management plays a key role in helping African companies negotiate the intricacies of global marketplaces, improve operational effectiveness, and attain sustainable growth.

The current body of research primarily concentrates on using BOS in product and market development, with minimal understanding of its potential to efficiently improve supply chain management to support the establishment and expansion of African companies.

This study aims to fill this gap by conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the existing literature on BOS and supply chain management models. The specific focus of this analysis is to examine how these models can be applied and their potential influence on the growth trajectory of African companies.

This systematic literature review seeks to examine and consolidate the current knowledge on incorporating BOS into supply chain management models, specifically focusing on its implementation and consequences for the establishment and expansion of African companies. The researcher prioritized this integration due to the lack of research on effectively incorporating innovative techniques like BOS to improve competitive positioning and operational efficiency in the African setting, despite the key importance of supply chain management in the performance of enterprises. This difference is especially noteworthy as African companies traverse intricate global marketplaces and aim for sustainable expansion. Although there have been some studies that have briefly discussed certain features of BOS in supply chain contexts, there is a need for a thorough examination that explicitly focuses on its significance and implementation in African companies [8]. The integration of BOS into supply chain management methods and models has the capacity to bring about significant changes, such as discovering untapped markets, generating value innovation, and improving the strength of the supply chain. This review aims to identify novel strategies and optimal methods in the implementation of BOS in supply chain management that are relevant to the distinct difficulties and possibilities encountered by African companies.

The structure of the article is organized as follows: Section 2 provides an overview of BOS and its relevance to supply chain management. Section 3 details the methodology employed, specifically a systematic literature review conducted through a literature search on the integration of BOS with supply chain management models for African firms, followed by the results of this search. Section 4 discusses the results from the thematic analysis of the identified literature. Section 5 includes a discussion of the findings and their implications for both theoretical advancement and practical application. Finally, Section 6 concludes the article with a summary of findings, presents the limitations of the study, and outlines prospects for future research.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objective of this systematic literature review is to explore and synthesize the existing body of knowledge on the integration of BOS into supply chain management models, with a particular emphasis on its application and implications for the birth and growth of African firms. The study aims to examine how BOS has been integrated into supply chain management practices and models, with a focus on identifying innovative approaches and best practices relevant to African firms.

Research Question: How does the integration of BOS into supply chain management models impact the birth and growth of African firms, and what are the implications for their competitive positioning and operational efficiency?

The introduction section presents a concise overview of the organization and progression of the work, serving as a roadmap for the reader as they navigate the next sections. After the Introduction, the paper proceeds to a thorough Literature Review that offers a meticulous analysis of the current research relevant to the study's topic, facilitating a profound comprehension of the field. The Research Methodology section provides a detailed account of the methodology, design, and procedures used to gather and analyze data, which ensures the credibility of the research findings. Subsequently, the research findings are presented, and a thorough analysis of these results is conducted within the framework of the previously stated hypothesized correlations or research questions. The next sections discuss the practical consequences of the findings, providing valuable insights and recommendations for managers and policymakers. The report finishes by providing a concise overview of the findings, analyzing the study's theoretical and practical significance, acknowledging any limits discovered, and suggesting potential directions for further research. This framework guarantees a coherent progression that reinforces the study's goals and findings.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 RELEVANCE TO BUSINESS MODEL INNOVATION

BOS has gained significant attention across various industries due to its innovative approach to creating new market spaces and driving business growth [9]. The strategy focuses on the creation of uncontested market spaces where competition becomes irrelevant, enabling firms to generate demand rather than compete for existing market share [9]. Through an emphasis on value innovation and differentiation, BOS allows companies to explore new opportunities and address unmet customer needs, leading to sustainable growth and competitive advantage [9].

In the manufacturing industry, the adoption of Industry 4.0 principles aligns with the strategic framework provided by BOS, emphasizing technological advancements and design principles to facilitate the transition process [10]. Similarly, in the realm of remanufacturing and refurbishment, the implementation of life extension strategies illustrates the potential

for BOS to be applied across industries such as aerospace, energy, and automotive, showcasing its versatility and impact on business sustainability.

The integration of BOS in social inclusion initiatives demonstrates its adaptability beyond traditional business contexts, highlighting its role in encouraging innovation and addressing societal challenges [7]. The utilization of BOS in the tourism sector further accentuates its economic significance and potential for creating new market opportunities [9]. Additionally, within the food industry, the adoption of BOS has proven instrumental in maintaining competitive advantage and driving growth [6].

2.2 TRADITIONAL AND EMERGING MODELS IN THE CONTEXT OF AFRICAN FIRMS

African enterprises are able to improve their operational efficiency and competitiveness by studying emerging supply chain management strategies. The concept of dynamic supply chain capabilities is a model that focuses on adaptation and risk management within the supply chain [11]. This approach, which was evaluated in manufacturing enterprises in Pakistan, emphasizes the significance of adaptability and promptness in meeting the changing demands of the market. Another pertinent approach involves incorporating knowledge management capabilities to improve supply chain agility and gain a competitive edge in pharmaceutical companies [12]. This model highlights the need to use knowledge resources and promote inter-functional integration to achieve operational excellence and stand out in the business.

Emerging models are addressing the important feature of supply chain visibility, as evidenced in the study on conflict minerals declarations by Swift *et al.* [13]. Improving visibility in the supply chain results in operational and commercial advantages, emphasizing the significance of transparency and information exchange in optimizing supply chain performance. Consequently, the concept of supply chain resilience has become increasingly important, particularly in the context of anticipating and managing disruptions that go beyond crises such as COVID-19 [14]. By taking proactive actions and collaborating with partners, African enterprises can strengthen their resilience in managing uncertainty by anticipating and minimizing supply chain interruptions. The use of environmentally friendly supply chain processes and innovative practices offers enterprises the chance to improve their performance and sustainability [15]. By incorporating ecologically sustainable practices into their supply chains, companies can improve their competitiveness while also making a positive impact on environmental conservation initiatives.

2.2.1 RESOURCE-BASED VIEW THEORY

The RBV theory is a fundamental framework in strategic management that highlights the significance of a company's internal resources and capabilities as the main catalysts for gaining a competitive edge and achieving superior performance. This viewpoint suggests that companies can attain long-term competitive advantages by efficiently overseeing resources that possess the qualities of being valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and not easily replaceable (VRIN) [16]. The RBV has important implications for comprehending how African firms can exploit their distinct resources within the framework of SCM and the BOS.

Within the framework of African companies, the RBV emphasizes the importance of recognizing and harnessing distinctive resources that can set these companies apart in the market. Small and micro-sized firms in Africa may encounter resource limitations that impede their ability to enter competitive markets [17]. Nevertheless, by implementing the RBV, these companies can concentrate on their unique abilities, such as localized expertise, community connections, and innovative methods, to establish specialized positions within the supply chain. This is consistent with the research conducted by [18], who highlight the importance of effective resource management in improving customer satisfaction and market value for companies.

Furthermore, the RBV is especially pertinent when analyzing the ever-changing contexts in which African firms function. Efficiently adapting and managing resources is essential for successfully dealing with challenges like supply chain disruptions and market volatility [19]. For instance, the research conducted by Dubey *et al.* [20] demonstrates how improving visibility and resource management in supply chains can reduce risks and improve the overall performance of organizations. This is especially relevant for African companies that may be operating in less stable economic circumstances. However, the integration of the Business Operating System into SCM models can be improved by the RBV, as it motivates companies to foster innovation and generate value in ways that are not exclusively reliant on competing within established market boundaries. African firms can utilize their distinct resources to explore untapped market opportunities and create inventive supply chain strategies that are in line with their capabilities [21]. This approach promotes growth and improves the overall resilience of these firms to external pressures.

2.3 SYNERGIES AND GAPS IN LITERATURE

The Intersection of BOS and Supply Chain Management presents a fertile field of research that seeks to uncover the harmonies and discrepancies within the current body of knowledge. The BOS, known for its ability to create unique market spaces and drive value creation, offers a strategy framework that has the potential to transform conventional supply chain management practices [8]. By redefining the limits of the industry and prioritizing uniqueness instead of rivalry, companies are able to investigate fresh market prospects and improve their competitive standing within the supply chain ecosystem [8]. Studies indicate that integrating BOS ideas into supply chain management models is beneficial and able to improve

operational efficiency and customer value propositions and expand market share [8]. By strategically aligning their operations, companies can distinguish themselves from competitors, improve innovation in their supply chain procedures, and eventually attain long-term growth and prosperity [8].

Although there are potential benefits from combining BOS and Supply Chain Management, there are still areas in the existing research that need to be investigated more thoroughly. There is a lack of extensive research on how BOS is practically applied in African enterprises' supply chain operations [22]. Therefore, it is important to understand how African companies may efficiently employ BOS to tackle the distinct difficulties and opportunities in their supply chains. This understanding is key for unleashing growth potential and improving competitiveness in the global market [22].

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

In order to examine and combine the current knowledge on how BOS can be integrated into supply chain management models, with a specific focus on its impact on the establishment and expansion of African businesses, this study utilized the PRISMA framework. The article selection and rejection process for the literature review was guided by the PRISMA framework, which ensured a systematic and transparent approach to identifying and analyzing relevant literature on the integration of BOS into supply chain management practices and models. The review specifically focused on innovative approaches and best practices that are relevant to African firms. The application of the PRISMA framework in this study is illustrated in Figure 1.

The PRISMA framework comprises three distinct stages: identification, screening, and inclusion. The identification stage involves determining the specific keywords that will be utilised for the literature search and the source or sources where the search will be conducted. The screening stage involves specifying the criteria that will be employed to choose the most exceptional publications from the extensive search. The third stage, known as the included stage, provides a report on the precise final literature that has been included in the study after excluding others.

3.2 IDENTIFICATION STAGE

Following the PRISMA framework, during the identification stage, we decided to use the Scopus database as the source for the literature search. The Scopus database was chosen because the researchers have access to the database via their institution (university). During the identification stage, the following keywords and their various combinations were considered for the search: BOS, Supply Chain Management Models, and African firms. An initial search was conducted using the keywords "BOS," "supply chain management," and "supply chain" to provide an idea of the overall view of publications that included these terms. A total of 144 articles were obtained. The identification stage requires that the output is screened before the actual screening stage. To achieve this, the papers published before 2018 were removed because according to our assessment, there was a sharp rise in the number of studies on BOS and Supply Chain Management from 2018. Finally, in terms of this preliminary screening, articles published in 2024 were removed because we were interested in full-year data only. Figure 2 illustrates the number of papers on BOS and Supply Chain Management published globally between 2018 and 2023.

Figure 1 displays a line graph of the total number of research papers gathered for the study year. The study's goal was to collect papers from 2018 to 2023. After finding just three papers in 2018, none could be found in 2019. Then, in 2020 and 2021, there was an increase to four papers per year, indicating a high level of research activity during those years. In 2022, the quantity significantly decreased to no papers; however, in 2023, it somewhat increased to three papers.

3.3 SCREENING STAGE

According to PRISMA, screening is the second stage, and in this stage, the final query in Table 1 was used. The query is explained as follows: papers on BOS, published between 2018 and 2023, business management and accounting, articles and reviews, English, journal, publication stage: final, open access.

3.4 INCLUDED STAGE

Following the screening stage, the included stage was performed. In this stage, the 14 articles obtained during the screening stage by executing the search query were analyzed. These 14 articles were exported to a CSV file format for further cleaning and analysis in Microsoft Excel. In Excel, we looked for duplicate articles and articles that were in the "In Press" publication stage. None of the papers were deleted as they did not meet the criteria for deletion. Further analysis in Excel was conducted using the total number of citations. Table 2 shows the details of the citation analysis for each of the 14 articles.

3.5 SELECTION CRITERIA: OUTLINING INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA FOR STUDIES

3.5.1 INCLUSION CRITERIA

Following the screening stage, the included stage was performed. In this stage, the 14 articles obtained during the screening stage by executing the search query were analyzed. These 14 articles were exported to a CSV file format for further cleaning and analysis in Microsoft Excel. In Excel, we looked for duplicate articles and articles that were in the "In Press" publication

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3.5.2 EXCLUSION CRITERIA

The exclusion criteria were thoroughly implemented as well. No documents were excluded during the initial search process. 18 documents were eliminated due to being published before 2018. Twenty-nine documents were excluded from consideration due to not being aligned with the stated fields within the scope of the topic area. Furthermore, 42 documents were eliminated due to being books, book chapters, or conference papers. No papers were rejected based on language criteria, as all documents in the first search were in English. Six papers were omitted from publication due to being articles in the press, while 10 were deleted for having terms irrelevant to the title. Twenty-five documents were removed due to being unretrievable, as it was one of the criteria. A total of 100 reports were omitted from the analysis.

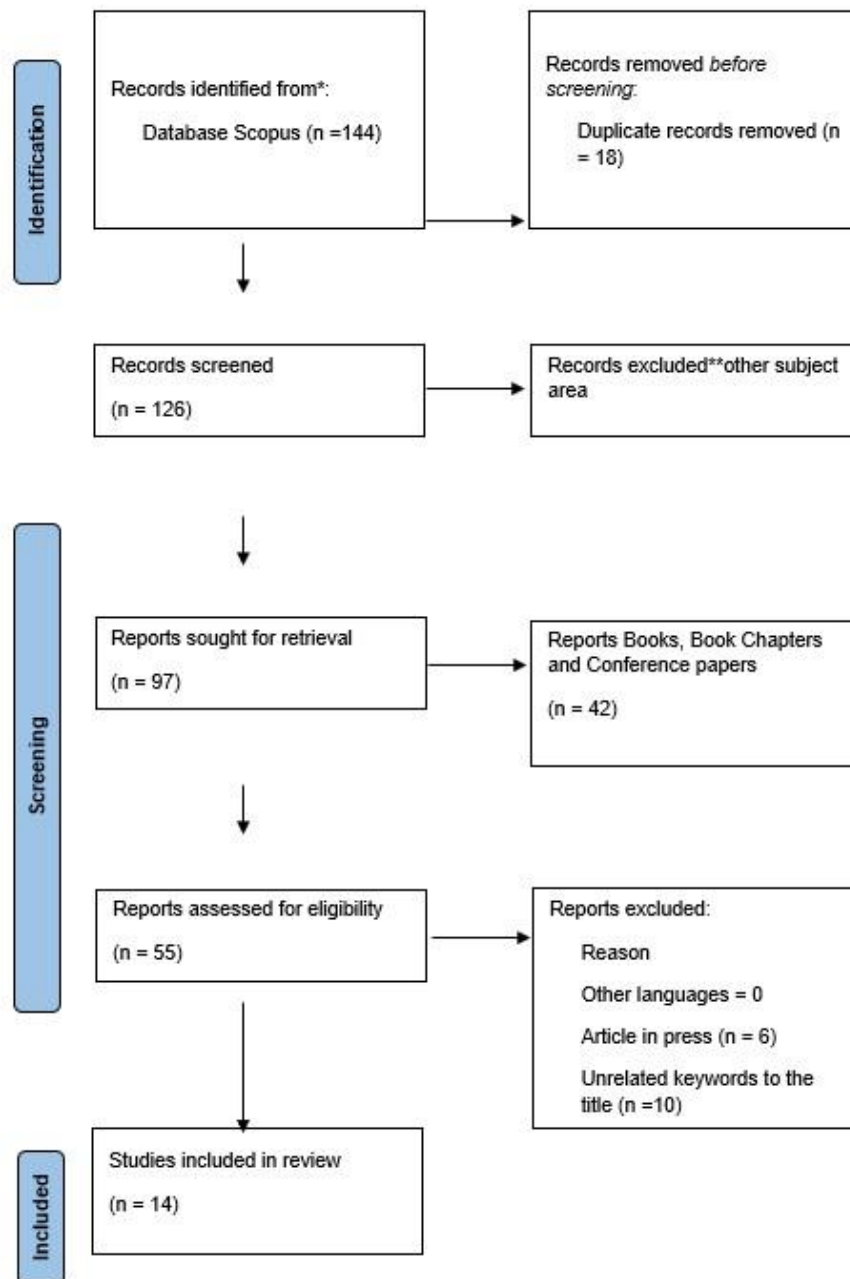
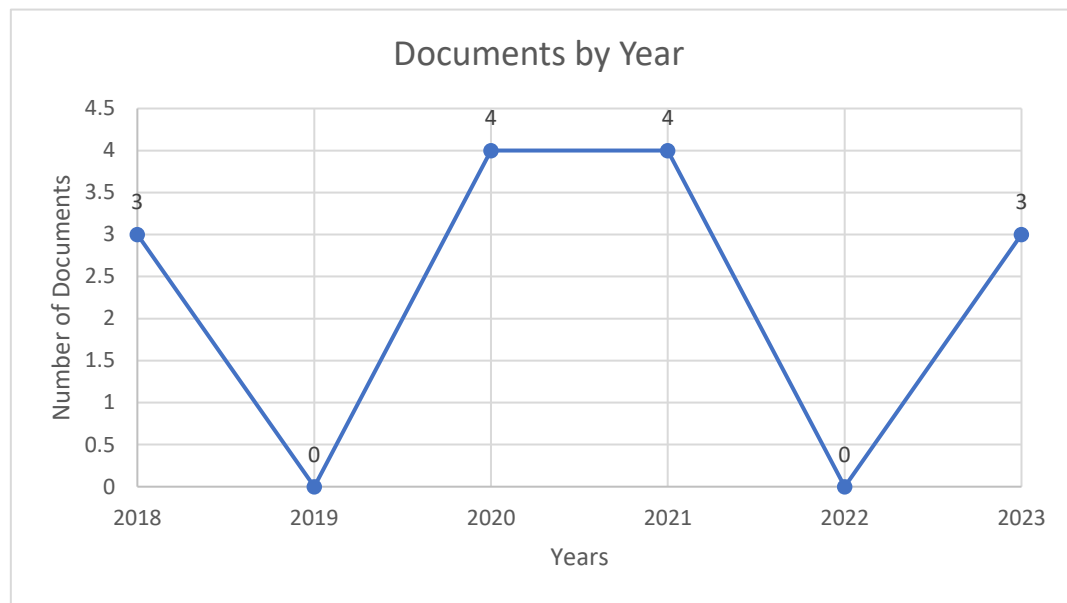


Figure 1: PRISMA framework

Figure 2: Documents by year.



Source: Author's construction

Table 1: Search string and results obtained.

Query Search String	Total articles included after applying the full search string
("BOS" AND ("supply chain management" OR "supply chain" OR "logistics") AND ("African firms" OR Africa OR "emerging markets") AND ("growth" OR "development" OR "competitive advantage" OR "operational efficiency" OR "business model" OR "innovation")) AND PUBYEAR > 2012 AND PUBYEAR < 2024 AND PUBYEAR > 2017 AND PUBYEAR < 2024 AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE , "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO (OA , "all")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE , "final")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "BUSI")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "re")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English"))	14

Source: Author's construction

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

The thematic analysis method was employed to analyze the 14 articles. The study utilized the thematic analysis procedure, as outlined by Danielle (2020), which consists of five key steps for qualitative thematic data analysis: text familiarisation, coding of the data, revision of the codes, creation of the themes, and revision of the final themes. The process of conducting the systematic literature review involved following these steps to analyze and report on the main themes extracted from the 14 publications that met the criteria for inclusion.

4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1 OVERVIEW OF SELECTED STUDIES

This study examined 14 scholarly publications selected based on stringent inclusion criteria to guarantee relevance and academic rigor. The articles covered a range of industries and geographies, with particular emphasis on emerging markets, particularly in Africa. These regions present a setting for the distinct problems and possibilities that these enterprises encounter, including issues related to infrastructure and the ever-changing market conditions.

An important discovery made in the studies is the creative use of BOS in many industries, including as manufacturing, services, and technology. These cases demonstrate how BOS enables companies to move beyond traditional competitive markets and establish new market areas, thereby improving their market position and operational effectiveness. The recurring discussion revolves around the integration of the Business Operating System with SCM, emphasizing the potential benefits of this strategic alignment. By aligning SCM plans with the BOS framework, organizations can improve operational efficiency, stimulate innovation, and gain a competitive edge.

The chosen studies analyze the effects of BOS integration on company performance, observing significant improvements in market positioning, customer satisfaction, and business expansion. The articles utilize a range of methodologies, including empirical analyses and qualitative case studies, to provide a thorough understanding of the impacts and applications of BOS in SCM.

These studies further improve theoretical discussions in the domains of SCM and strategic management. They suggest that BOS might be a potent instrument for companies operating in difficult conditions to encourage innovation and growth. Our overview not only summarises the extensive current research but also establishes the fundamental background for our review, which seeks to examine customized methods and successful implementations of BOS in the distinct environments of African enterprises.

4.2 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Table 2: Citation analysis by article title.

Article	Authors	Title	Year	Cited by
DO1	Li X.	How emerging market resource-poor firms compete and outcompete advanced country resource-rich rivals: An asymmetry reversing theory	2018	9
DO2	Park S.-B.	Bringing strategy back in: Corporate sustainability and firm performance	2023	10
DO3	Khwaja M.G.; Mahmood S.; Jusoh A.	The impacts of quality management on customer focus in the beverages industry	2020	7
DO4	Pati R.K.; Nandakumar M.K.; Ghobadian A.; Ireland R.D.; O'Regan N.	Business model design–performance relationship under external and internal contingencies: Evidence from SMEs in an emerging economy	2018	89
DO5	Nithisathian K.; Takala J.; Srisuk T.; Cai Y.; Goerlich M.; Daengrasmisopon T.	The black ocean strategy in Thailand's logistic industry the case study of the used car sector	2020	0
DO6	Johansson M.T.; Broberg S.; Ottosson M.	Energy strategies in the pulp and paper industry in Sweden: Interactions between efficient resource utilization and increased product diversification	2021	14
DO7	Breunig K.J.; Skjølsvik T.	Understanding the strategy-innovation link in an era of disruptions	2020	3
DO8	González-Cruz T.F.; Roig-Tierno N.; Botella-Carrubí D.	Quality management as a driver of innovation in the service industry	2018	22
DO9	Suandi E.; Herri; Yuliharsi; Syafrizal	Evaluating the relationship between entrepreneurial marketing, competitive advantage, and Islamic banks performance	2023	0
DO10	Setiawanta Y.; Utomo D.; Ghozali I.; Jumanto J.	Financial performance, exchange rate, and firm value: The Indonesian public companies case	2021	8
DO11	Menet G.; Szarucki M.	Impact of Value Co-Creation on International Customer Satisfaction in the Airsoft Industry: Does Country of Origin Matter?	2020	4
DO12	Stone P.; Thomas P.; Goldman G.	It joins all – Synchronicity: How technology is reshaping our understanding of collaboration	2023	0
DO13	Knizkov S.; Arlinghaus J.C.	Frugal Processes: An Empirical Investigation into the Operations of Resource-Constrained Firms	2021	15
DO14	Lewandowska A.	Interactions between investments in innovation and SME competitiveness in the peripheral regions	2021	18

Source: Author's construction

It is advisable to exclude research that has never been referenced. However, due to the limited number of publications that met our search criteria, it was determined not to exclude articles that had not been referenced. The next section presents the findings of the topic analysis conducted on the 14 articles.

4.2.1 TEXT FAMILIARIZATION

In the text familiarization step, the papers were analyzed, and the recurring keywords that emerged when discussing the BOS and Supply Chain Management Models for the Birth and Growth of African Firms were found. Figure 4 shows the word cloud generated by the Atlas.ti analytic software, illustrating the recurring keywords that were identified from the 14 articles.

Figure 4: Keywords used to explain the BOS and Supply Chain Management Models for the Birth and Growth of African Firms.



Source: Author's construction

Figure 4 shows a word cloud that was created based on a comprehensive literature assessment of scholarly articles and business reports spanning the years 2018 to 2023. The central "Theme" of 'Business Operations' represents its fundamental function in the growth and progress of organizations in the African setting, while 'Market Dynamics' and 'Business and Innovation' highlight the key areas of concentration for companies operating in unfamiliar market territories. A range of interconnected concepts accompanies these key themes. 'Financial Analysis' and 'Business Strategy' demonstrate the underlying economic factors. 'Quality Management' emphasises the emphasis on operational excellence. 'Emerging Markets' provides insight into the geographical and economic context of the firms being studied. The presence of 'SMEs', 'Co-creation', 'Sustainable Operations', and 'Business Complexity' highlights the complex nature of African business, which is marked by unique difficulties and the use of inventive approaches to address them. The diagram represents the complex challenges encountered by African businesses and emphasizes the significance of using integrated and creative methods to attain sustainable growth and gain a competitive edge.

4.2.2 CODING OF THE DATA

The publications identified keywords that described the main objective of the studies. The words mentioned were recorded and identified as the main codes used in the coding process of the thematic analysis and are defined in Table 3.

4.2.3 REVISION OF THE CODES

Each of the 14 identified articles addressed the aim of this study, highlighting various perspectives utilising the coded keywords. Table 3 shows the categories of the articles and their frequency in using the keywords to describe how BOS and Supply Chain Management Models can improve practices for the Birth and Growth of African Firms.

Table 3 is divided into various themes that mirror the multifaceted nature of integrating BOS in supply chain management. The codes under the "Business and Innovation" theme, with a frequency of occurrences ranging from two to three, capture the essence of innovation through collaborative efforts and competitive advantage. For instance, the code "Investments in Innovation" with three occurrences signifies a recurrent theme that innovation activities differ across enterprises (D14), impacting SME competitiveness and indicating a possible path for African firms to differentiate and carve a niche in the market.

Under “Business Complexity,” codes like “Competitiveness” and “Environmental Dynamism” with two occurrences each point towards the agility and adaptability needed in dynamic environments. References D14 and D01 reflect on the importance of innovation for SME competitiveness and suggest that African firms must navigate and adapt to environmental changes to thrive. In “Business Operations,” codes such as “Supply Chain” and “Quality Management,” with frequencies of three and two, respectively, highlight the operational challenges and opportunities within supply chains (D13, D12) and the role of quality management in improving customer focus and innovation capability (D03, D09). This implies that efficient supply chain management integrated with BOS can be a significant growth lever for African firms.

“Financial Analysis” brings forth the financial aspects with codes “Firm Performance” and “Firm Value” having a frequency of two and three, respectively. These suggest a direct link between financial strategies and organizational value (D11, D04, D02), indicating that the financial solidity of African firms can influence their ability to adopt and benefit from BOS. “Market Dynamics” addresses the broader market forces with the codes “Strategy” and “Market Influence,” each with a frequency of two. The changing market dynamics (D06, D01) and the evolving interplay of innovation and strategy (D08, D13) underline the importance for African firms to stay ahead in competitive and innovative practices.

Table 3: Main themes, codes, quotes, references and frequency.

Main Theme	Code	Quotes	References	Frequency
Business and Innovation	Investments in Innovation	“Innovation activities differ across enterprises.” (D14) “Type of investment influences SME competitiveness.” (D14)	D14	3
	Collaboration	“Collaboration reshapes supply chains.” (D12). “Technology drives new collaboration opportunities.” (D12)	D12	3
	Competitive Advantage	“Entrepreneurial marketing influences performance.” (D10) “Competitive advantage impacts bank performance.” (D10)	D10	2
Business Complexity	Competitiveness	“SME competitiveness hinges on innovation.” (D14) “Competitive dynamics involve reversing asymmetries.” (D01)	D14, D01	2
	Environmental Dynamism	“Novelty benefits younger SMEs more.” (D04) “Environmental dynamism affects performance relationships.” (D04)	D04	2
Business Operations	Supply Chain	“Firms adapt supply chains to resource constraints.” (D13) “Supply chain effectiveness linked to collaboration.” (D12)	D13, D12	3
	Quality Management	“Quality management drives customer focus.” (D03) “Quality management philosophy impacts innovation capability.” (D09)	D03, D09	2
Financial Analysis	Firm Performance	“Financial performance tied to firm value.” (D11) “Firm age affects benefit from business model designs.” (D04)	D11, D04	2
	Firm Value	“Capital structure proxies financial performance.” (D11) “Different strategies relate to firm performance.” (D02)	D11, D02	3
Market Dynamics	Strategy	“Strategies must adapt to market dynamics.” (D06) “Asymmetry reversing shapes competition.” (D01)	D06, D01	2
	Market Influence	“Innovation and strategy theories are converging.” (D08) “Emerging markets prompt innovation in strategy.” (D13)	D08, D13	2

4.2.4 CREATION OF THE THEMES

Within the framework of “Business Complexity,” concepts such as “Competitiveness” and “Environmental Dynamism” were formulated. These factors demonstrate the complex equilibrium that companies must uphold to not only be competitive but also to flexibly adjust to changing environmental variables. Competitiveness is not assessed independently but rather in connection with the capacity to adapt and develop in reaction to external pressures. This is a key part of sustaining growth within the unique African market context.

The “Business Operations” theme comprises codes that pertain to the routine and practical aspects of managing and operating a business. The codes “Supply Chain” and “Quality Management” are indicative of operational strategies that businesses need to improve. Efficient supply chain management and strict quality control are of the utmost importance for African enterprises seeking to succeed in unfamiliar territory effectively. These factors are the foundation of operational excellence. The theme of “Financial Analysis” is emphasized by financial-focused concepts such as “Firm Performance” and “Firm Value,” highlighting the importance of financial well-being and value creation in the implementation and achievement of BOS in African companies. Financial analysis is a crucial component of the strategic review, emphasizing the need for strong financial planning and performance monitoring in promoting business expansion. “Market Dynamics” comprises the principles associated with the wider market influences, such as “Strategy” and “Market Influence.”

This theme highlights the need for African companies to be adaptable and quick to respond to the fast-paced changes in the market. By utilising BOS, these businesses will be able to build unique market spaces and, as a result, promote their growth and advancement. The codes were grouped according to the key themes and are discussed next.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Integrating BOS into supply chain management can have significant implications for African firms. BOS focuses on creating uncontested market space by making competition irrelevant through value innovation, which involves simultaneously pursuing differentiation and low cost. By integrating this strategy into supply chain management, African firms can address operational challenges, improve competitive positioning, and encourage sustainable growth.

5.1 ADDRESSING OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES

Supply chain integration plays a crucial role in addressing operational challenges within firms [23]. It enables firms to gain superior supply chain performance by improving relationship commitment and customer integration [23]. Additionally, the integration of green innovation strategies and circular supply chain practices can help in improving overall supply chain performance [24]. By incorporating green supply chain management practices, such as reverse logistics and adherence to regulations, African firms can improve environmental performance, which positively impacts supply chain performance [25]. One key aspect where BOS integration can aid in addressing operational challenges is through the improvement of supply chain resilience. The study by Um and Han [26] emphasizes the importance of mitigating strategies in managing global supply chain risks to improve supply chain resilience. By adopting BOS principles, firms can proactively identify and address risks, thereby improving their resilience to unexpected events and disruptions in the supply chain. Furthermore, the study by Mashiloane and Mafini [27] highlights the impact of supply chain dynamism and information sharing on supply chain performance in the manufacturing sector. By integrating BOS, African firms can streamline information-sharing processes and adapt to dynamic supply chain environments, thus improving operational efficiency and responsiveness to market changes. However, the integration of green supply chain management practices, as discussed by [25] can also help address operational challenges within African firms. By integrating sustainability initiatives into the supply chain, firms can improve not only environmental performance but also overall operational efficiency and performance.

5.2 IMPROVING COMPETITIVE POSITIONING

Integrating supply chain agility and innovativeness can improve firms' competitive advantage [28]. Focusing on IT integration and trust among supply chain members can lead to increased agility and innovativeness, which are key to staying competitive in the market. Furthermore, leveraging blockchain technology in supply chain management can improve integration capabilities and reduce carbon emissions, thereby improving competitive positioning [29]. One key implication of integrating BOS into supply chain management is the potential improvement of supply chain innovation capabilities.

The study by Wang *et al.* [29] emphasizes that logistics innovation capability may play a crucial role in mitigating supply chain risks and improving overall supply chain performance. By leveraging BOS to drive innovation within the supply chain, African firms may aim to stay ahead of the competition and adapt to changing market dynamics effectively. However, the study by Wang and Liu [30] highlights the potential importance of green innovation strategies in contributing to firm performance under supply chain risk. By integrating green innovation practices into their supply chains, African firms may aim to improve their environmental sustainability and potentially gain a competitive edge in the market. This integration may lead to improved operational efficiency and differentiation, potentially positioning firms favorably against competitors. Additionally, the study by Baah and Acquah [31] emphasizes the significance of supply chain collaboration in potentially improving supply chain visibility, stakeholder trust, and overall performance. By integrating BOS principles into supply chain collaboration efforts, African firms may aim to strengthen relationships with supply chain partners, improve visibility across the supply chain, and potentially improve their competitive positioning in the industry.

5.3 ADOPTING SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Sustainable growth can be achieved through the integration of sustainable practices in the supply chain. Implementing sustainable supply chain risk management practices can positively impact firms' financial performance [32]. However, improving enterprise resource planning (ERP) through green supply chain management can contribute to improved firm performance [33]. By adopting sustainability initiatives and integrating them into their supply chains, firms can navigate

environmental uncertainties and drive sustainable growth [34]. Integrating green supply chain management practices, such as eco-design and green purchasing, can improve sustainability practices within the supply chain for African firms. Chinomona and Mahlatsi [35] emphasize the positive impact of these practices on supply chain performance in South Africa's beverage industry. By incorporating green initiatives, firms can improve their environmental sustainability and contribute to sustainable growth. Furthermore, Sun and Sarfraz [36] discuss the importance of aligning supply chain strategies with sustainability objectives to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. The study suggests that management support and strategic alignment are crucial for encouraging sustainable growth. By integrating sustainable practices into their supply chains, African firms can create a competitive edge while promoting sustainability. Epoh and Mafini [25] also highlight the benefits of incorporating green supply chain management practices, including reverse logistics and compliance with legislation, on overall supply chain performance. By adopting these practices, African firms can improve environmental performance and operational efficiency and drive sustainable growth.

5.4 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The integration of BOS with SCM posits significant managerial implications for African firms, providing a strategic blueprint for navigating complex market dynamics and improving organizational resilience and innovation. The literature underlines a transformative approach whereby managers can leverage BOS not just as a market strategy but as a comprehensive operational framework to redefine industry boundaries and create new value propositions. Firstly, adopting BOS requires managers to adopt a mindset oriented towards exploring untapped markets and creating demand where none previously existed. This strategic shift involves reevaluating the firm's value chain to identify non-traditional partners and suppliers that could lead to cost reductions or improve product differentiation. For example, by partnering with local artisans or smaller enterprises, firms can create unique products that appeal to niche markets, thus avoiding direct competition with larger, established companies. This approach not only diversifies the firm's supply base but also injects innovation into its product offerings. Furthermore, managers must consider the integration of BOS principles into their supply chain logistics to streamline operations and improve efficiency. This could involve adopting innovative technologies that facilitate better data management and improve operational transparency. Such technologies could be pivotal in improving forecasting accuracy, optimizing inventory management, and reducing lead times, which are critical factors in improving the supply chain's responsiveness to market changes. Additionally, BOS encourages managers to rethink customer engagement and service delivery mechanisms. In the African context, where market conditions vary significantly across regions, managers can employ BOS to tailor products and services to meet local needs more effectively. For instance, creating decentralized supply chain models can help firms overcome geographical and infrastructural barriers, thereby improving access to new and underserved markets. Such models could leverage local distribution networks or mobile technology platforms to deliver services directly to end-users, thereby improving the customer experience and satisfaction. Managerial focus on building resilience through BOS also involves cultivating an organizational culture that encourages experimentation and tolerates failure. This cultural shift is key for encouraging an environment where innovative ideas can be tested without fear of repercussion, allowing firms to discover and refine new strategies that align with BOS principles. Managers play a critical role in championing this cultural transformation by setting clear expectations, providing the necessary resources for innovation, and actively participating in idea generation and development processes.

6. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The integration of BOS with SCM has emerged as a potent catalyst for encouraging the growth and development of African firms, as evidenced by the findings from the systematic literature review. This integration is instrumental in enabling these firms to navigate the competitive landscape by innovating beyond traditional competitive and operational tactics, thereby uncovering new market opportunities and improving their overall sustainability. The key conclusion from the systematic literature review is that BOS, when integrated with SCM, effectively drives the creation of new market spaces that are unexploited and free from the intense competition that characterizes existing markets. This strategy allows African firms to redefine market boundaries, avoiding competition and creating higher value for both customers and the firms themselves. The literature highlights several case studies where firms have successfully applied BOS within their supply chains to differentiate their offerings, reduce costs, and improve service delivery, thereby achieving sustainable competitive advantages. Additionally, the review illuminates how BOS encourages firms to rethink their supply chain operations from a strategic perspective. This involves adopting innovative practices such as just-in-time production, leveraging technology for better market analysis and customer engagement, and implementing sustainable practices that appeal to a growing segment of environmentally conscious consumers. These innovations are particularly pertinent in the African context, where supply chain disruptions are common and often exacerbated by infrastructural deficiencies and regulatory inconsistencies. However, the findings underline the importance of aligning BOS with local contextual needs. African firms that tailor BOS principles to address specific regional challenges—such as logistical constraints, limited market data, and diverse consumer preferences—tend to experience more profound growth and resilience. This localized approach improves market penetration and encourages stronger relationships with local stakeholders, which is crucial for long-term success. The systematic literature review also contributes significantly to the existing body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence on the

effectiveness of BOS integrated with SCM in the unique context of African markets. It expands the theoretical framework of BOS by illustrating how its principles can be applied beyond traditional Western markets and adapted to the challenges and opportunities present in emerging markets. This adaptation is critical for theory development in international business and supply chain management, as it provides a nuanced understanding of how innovative strategies can be contextualized to maximize their impact.

The current research on BOS integrated with supply chain management as applied to African firms exhibits several methodological limitations that could affect the reliability of conclusions. Firstly, much of the existing literature is conceptual rather than empirical, relying heavily on theoretical frameworks and anecdotal evidence, which may not adequately capture the complex, real-world scenarios African firms face. Secondly, there is a notable scarcity of longitudinal studies, which restricts understanding of the long-term impacts and sustainability of BOS within diverse African markets, potentially leading to an overestimation of its effectiveness based on short-term outcomes.

Future research on BOS and supply chain management for African firms should explore these strategies' long-term sustainability and scalability within various African economies, assessing their adaptability to the socio-economic and infrastructural challenges prevalent across the continent. Studies could also investigate the role of digital transformation in improving the implementation of the BOS in supply chains, specifically, how technology can facilitate or hinder the creation of new market spaces. Additionally, comparative studies between sectors within African markets could provide deeper insights into sector-specific barriers and opportunities for effectively applying the BOS.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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