

**The Newcastle Business School Masters Dissertation**

**Module Code: LD0408**

Title: “To identify the influence of B-to-B commerce in reducing operational costs in multinational companies in the UK food and beverage industry”

**Student Name: Narendra Reddy Gondesi**

**Student ID: W22076710**

**Supervisor’s name: Olufemi Obasan**

# Declaration

I hereby state that this research is based on addressing the impacts of B2B commerce in the reduction of operational costs for the UK’s food & beverage multinational companies and is conducted on my own under the guidance of my supervisor. All the used sources for data collection are genuine and duly cited and acknowledged throughout this research.

This work is not submitted previously for any degree or course at any academic institution. I also validated that this research dissertation is well-complied with all applicable ethical and academic standards as per the **Northumbria University London**. All the collected data throughout this research was ethically and responsibly obtained while preserving the anonymity and confidentiality of all the respondents involved in this research.

I declare that I am the only author of this research work and I take full responsibility for this research and its content.

# Abstract

Over the past few decades, digital technologies have emerged at a great pace and largely penetrated various industries, particularly the food & beverage industry. This technology evolution largely facilitated the adoption of Business-to-Business (B2B) commerce in this industry. This research mainly aims to assess the role and impact of B2B on the operational cost reductions in multinational companies related to the UK’s food & beverage industry. B2B commerce has emerged as an essential tool to enhance supply chain effectiveness, and operational efficiency, and foster stronger relationships with suppliers. This research used a mixed research methodology to realize the insights of both qualitative and quantitative methods to conduct this research on the leading food & beverage MNCs. The conducted thematic analysis will reveal vital research themes and patterns, such as technology integration, supplier relationship management, supply chain & logistics management, and creation of the consumer values. The research findings demonstrate a significant impact of B2B commerce on the food & beverage company’s operational cost reduction. The research implications highlight the strategic significance of B2B commerce beyond the operational cost reduction. Further, this research provides the most actionable recommendations for policymakers, industry practitioners, and academics in further proceeding with this research and exploring the immense potential of B2B commerce in diverse industries.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

# Introduction

## Research Background

The food and beverage industry is largely dependent on the conventional methods of inventory management, procurement, and distribution. However, these methods are effective in a few aspects but often lead to high operational costs and significant inefficiencies due to diverse factors, such as lack of real-world data, use of manual processes, and restricted integration across the supply chains. The advent of the Business-to-Business (B2B) commerce platform significantly addresses these challenges by providing digital solutions for improving the flow of data and connectivity among businesses and organizations.

The food and beverage industry plays a critical role in driving the UK’s economy. The globalized landscape of the commerce section has experienced a significant transformation with the initiation of digital technologies, especially in the field of B2B commerce. The UK’s food and beverage industry not keep itself compatible with the increased evolution of this digital landscape. However, multinational companies (MNCs) in the food and beverage industry are focused on adopting B2B eCommerce solutions for better streamlining their business operations, reducing the associated costs, and improving efficiency. The B2B platforms mainly focus on facilitating online ordering and procurement along with realizing a comprehensive range of many other functionalities, such as robust inventory management, supply chain integration, advanced data analytics, and effective vendor management. There are many trends experienced by the UK food and beverage industry that emphasize the adoption of B2B e-commerce platforms. These trends are regulatory compliance, globalized supply chain, technological advancement, consumer demands transparency, and sustainability initiatives.

The existing literature addressed several benefits of B2B platforms in many industries. For instance, research conducted by Sudiyono et al., (2022) shows that the increased emergence of B2B platforms can significantly decrease transaction costs, enhance the efficiency of the supply chain, and optimize operational efficiency. The adoption of the B2B platforms can lead to low operational costs and optimized inventory management. However, there is a major gap in the existing literature to address the specific impact of B2B commerce on the UK’s multinational food and beverage company’s operational costs. This research will provide an empirical analysis of the impact of B2B commerce on the cost reduction of food and beverage companies.

## Problem Statement

The traditionally used operational models by the UK’s multinational food and beverage companies face significant challenges or issues due to their dependency on complicated and comprehensive supply chains, higher market competition, and rigorous regulatory requirements (Chen & Voigt, 2020). These challenges become more critical due to the need for global supply chain management, adherence to the different regulatory standards, and fulfill the increasing customer demands for higher quality products, transparency, and sustainability. Due to these challenges, the operational costs of these companies always remain high and negatively impact their profitability and competitive edge.

The deployment of B2B commerce can offer several advantages, such as real-time access to data, automated procurement operations, cost-efficiency, and optimized supply chain management. Despite the advantages of increased technological advancements and digital transformation, several food and beverage MNCs are there in the UK that do not fully leverage B2B commerce solutions. The adoption and implementation of these solutions are very slow and fragmented in the UK’s food and beverage industry.

There is a noteworthy gap in both industry and academic practice related to the lack of an efficient understanding of the influence of B2B commerce on reducing operations costs. There is little research that focuses on addressing how B2B commerce could streamline these MNCs' business operations, improve the supply chain, and reduce the operational costs for food and beverage MNCs. This research gap addresses a critical need for an examination to demonstrate the potential of B2B commerce in addressing and resolving operational challenges (Lievens & Blažević, 2021). Moreover, the current market conditions in the UK, categorized by technological advancements, globalization, and growing consumer demands need a strategic shift toward a cost-efficient operational model. The deployment of B2B commerce in this industry can realize a highly feasible solution for guiding the MNCs and stakeholders to make the most informed decisions. Thus, this research mainly seeks to address these challenges by examining the impact of B2B commerce on decreasing MNCs’ operational costs within the UK’s food and beverage industry.

## Research Questions

By addressing the following research questions, this research study intends to offer a detailed understanding of the role of B2B commerce in decreasing operational costs and enhancing the efficiency of the UK’s food and beverage industry.

* To what extent have the food and beverage MNCs adopted B2b commerce platforms?
* What key factors can hinder or drive the adoption of B2B commerce in the food and beverage industry?
* What challenges might be faced by the food and beverage MNCs in the implementation of B2B commerce platforms?
* How significantly the implementation of B2B commerce platforms can reduce the operational costs in this industry?
* How the implementation of B2B commerce platforms can influence the overall efficiency and profitability of the MNCs in this industry?
* How the MNCs can strategically leverage B2B commerce in optimizing the supply chain and competitive edge?
* How can the emerging digital technologies in B2B commerce further influence the reduction of operational costs and increase efficiency?

## Aim and Objectives

### Aim

This research mainly aims to identify and assess the impact of B2B commerce in decreasing the associated operational costs with the UK’s multinational companies in the food and beverage industry.

### Objectives

* Assessing the current level of adoption and integration of B2B commerce platforms in the UK’s food and beverage MNCs.
* Identifying the barriers and drivers in the adoption of B2B commerce within this industry.
* Analyzing the influence of B2B commerce on the operational efficiency of the UK’s MNCs.
* Evaluating the relationship between the adoption of B2B commerce and MNCs’ profitability (Wardani & Dewi, 2023).
* Identifying the key challenges and barriers faced by MNCs in effectively implementing B2B commerce solutions.
* Providing strategic recommendations for MNCs to optimize the supply chain management and improve competitiveness.
* Exploring the role of emerging technologies in further improving the deployment of B2B commerce and minimizing operational costs.

## Methodology Outline

This research study utilizes an interpretivism research philosophy that emphasizes providing a better understanding of a social phenomenon’s subjective meaning, which is necessary to explore the context-dependent influence of B2B commerce on the MNCs’ operational costs. An inductive research approach is used to develop theories following the obtained findings from the collected research data (Sudiyono et al., 2022). A qualitative research methodology is used for this research, which is suitable for obtaining vital research insights along with facilitating a better understanding related to the stakeholder’s experiences and perspectives within this industry. The grounded theory research strategy is helpful in allowing the development of a robust theoretical framework following the gathered data from the participants. It is useful for exploratory research studies for generating novel theories related to the influence of B2B commerce on operational costs. An exploratory research design is used to recognize and investigate important themes, patterns, and relationships to form a solid base for the research studies. The desired research data is collected from the semi-structured interviews to facilitate flexibility in the exploration of specific research topics while allowing the researchers to review and clarify the responses. The collected data is analyzed using the thematic data analysis method by recognizing, examining, and reporting the underlying themes or patterns from the collected data. It will provide a comprehensive understanding of the key themes, patterns, and issues related to the implementation of B2B commerce in reducing the operational costs of the food and beverage MNCs in the UK.

## Research Study Significance

This research study is based on addressing the impact of B2B commerce on the UK’s food and beverage multinational companies to reduce their operational costs. It holds a potential significance, comprising both practical and theoretical dimensions (Kumari et al., 2023). This research addresses a relatively underrated research area, particularly focusing on the intersection of B2B commerce and MNCs’ operational efficiency in the food and beverage industry. It will enrich the current body of knowledge related to this research by providing theoretical frameworks and empirical research insights. Currently, the global market increasingly growing and becoming competitive, which demands the ability to reduce operational costs to maintain and improve competitiveness. This research will realize evidence-centered strategies for leveraging B2B commerce to reduce operational costs while improving the competitive landscape. This reduction in operational costs via B2B commerce platforms will surely contribute to the comprehensive sustainability goals. The supply chain optimization and waste reduction will reduce the MNC’s environmental footprint while aligning its business operations with customer expectations and sustainability standards. Further, its focus on reducing operational costs and improving operational efficiency can lead to exceptional quality products and competitive pricing. This research will also indirectly contribute toward job creation and economic growth by fostering highly competitive and more efficient multinational companies. Thus, this research has immense potential for advancing academic knowledge, guiding policy development, informing industry practices, improving competitive edge, benefiting the customers, enriching educational programs, supporting sustainability, and stimulating economic growth (Lievens & Blažević, 2021). It will offer the most valuable contributions to the food and beverage industry by addressing the issues of reduction of operational costs through the implementation of B2B commerce.

## Outline of this Research

This research comprises six chapters. The first chapter is an introduction in which this research is introduced in detail, including the research background, problem statement, research questions, aim & objectives, methodology outline, and research significance. The second chapter focuses on conducting a detailed literature review of the existing and relevant research papers and journal articles to gain a better understanding of this research by analyzing other authors’ works and using theories & concepts. The third chapter is based on the discussion of the adopted research methodology, including the research philosophy, research strategy, research approach, research design, and data collection & analysis methods along with the applicable ethical considerations. The fourth chapter is based on providing a detailed discussion of the obtained research findings, comprising vital research patterns and themes using the thematic analysis. The fifth chapter is based on the discussion of the obtained research findings while discussing the practical and theoretical implications of the research findings and comparing them with the existing literature to demonstrate the contribution of this research. The sixth chapter will conclude this research by summarizing the key research findings and providing the most actional recommendations to further proceed with this research.

## Summary

This chapter provided a detailed introduction to this research study. This chapter first provided a research background to set a context for this research. Then it discusses the problem statement that it intends to address and resolve along with the research questions to examine the the role of B2B commerce in the reduction of operational costs in MNCs and the improvement of overall business performance. Then the aim and objectives of this research are discussed along with providing an outline of the adopted research methodology for this research. Then the significance of this research is demonstrated along with providing an outline of this research study format. The next chapter will provide a detailed review of the existing and relevant literature on this research topic.

# Chapter 2: Literature Review

# Literature Review

## Overview

This chapter is another important part of this research study, which provides a detailed review and discussion of the existing research papers or journal articles related to this research topic to provide a better understanding related to the impacts of B2B commerce on the reduction of MNCs' operational costs, especially in the food and beverage industry. This section serves to contextualize the considered research problem while highlighting the existing research gaps and establishing a theoretical framework. It will provide vital insights for guiding the selection and development of the research methodology while supporting the interpretation of the obtained research findings to ultimately contribute to offering an in-depth understanding of how B2B commerce is driving proficiency and cost savings in the food and beverage industry.

## Literature Review

### Overview of B2B Commerce

Business-to-business (B2B) represents a commerce type that includes the exchange of information, products, or services among businesses or organizations, instead of from the business to the customers (B2C). This type of commerce is conducted between two different firms or businesses, such as an online retailer and a wholesaler. Chen, (2024), states that B2N represents a form of transaction between businesses, involving a retailer or wholesaler. In a typical supply chain, B2B commerce is very common because most organizations generally purchase raw materials, equipment, or components in their manufacturing procedures. Then only finalized products sold to the individual customers through the business-to-customer transactions. In the current globalized business landscape, the evolution of digital technologies significantly transforms the ways in which businesses interact and do business processes with each other (Spriggle, 2024). It enables businesses to better streamline their sales and procurement operations along with reducing overhead costs and enhancing efficiency by automating the underlying tasks. It also offers access to a comprehensive range of potential suppliers and customers regardless of their location.

According to Hashemi-Pour & Contributor, (2024), every business or organization needs to purchase any service or product from other organizations in launching, operating, and growing their business. The company uses B2B suppliers for procuring services and products, such as raw materials or any other components that are needed by an organization for production processes, office furniture, office space, software, and hardware. The B2B suppliers are more probably to engage in long-term relationships with their customers as compared to the B2C commerce. B2C often includes ad hoc purchases from individual customers, whereas B2B expects more predictable and frequent purchases from organizations for services and goods. Many B2B suppliers sell tailored and specialized products as per the specific needs of the businesses.

### UK Food and Beverage Industry

Bresciani, (2017), the UK’s food and beverage industry is one of the very important industries that play a crucial role in the development of the UK’s economy. It is categorized by its innovation, diversity, and responsiveness towards the varying worldwide trends and consumer demands & preferences. This industry has largely grown over the last few decades and impacted by globalization, colonization, and cultural exchanges. This industry has marked a strategic shift via the evolution of mass production methods which is further improved by technological innovations. This industry represents the biggest industry in the UK that contributes to its economy. It provides employment to millions of people and is considered a major player in the export market. It comprises a comprehensive range of diverse segments, such as packaged foods, fresh products, ready-to-eat meals, drinks, and many others. According to recent statistics, the food and beverage industry contributes almost £110 billion yearly to the UK’s economy.

According to Tourky et al., (2020), this industry can be categorized into multiple segments, such as agriculture, raw materials, food manufacturing, food processing, beverage production, and distribution & retail. The preferences, demands, and behaviors of the customers significantly drive the market dynamics. There is a growing demand for natural foods, organic foods, convenience foods, and health & wellness products. This industry is immensely regulated to ensure an adequate level of food quality, safety, and environmental sustainability. However, the trade regulations significantly impact the imports and exports of food and beverage products. Regulatory bodies like the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and Food Standards Agency (FSA) regulate this industry.

### Multinational Companies in the Food & Beverage Sector

Alexander et al., (2011), state that the rise of multinational companies has largely emerged as the key player in the global economy by ensuring food security, driving innovation, and influencing dietary habits. These companies operate their businesses across many countries by leveraging their expertise, resources, and networks to dominate the worldwide market. The increasing evolution of MNCs in the food and beverage industry could be traced to the increased globalization and industrial revolution. The UK’s MNCs like PepsiCo, Nestle, Mars, Unilever, Diageo, Danone, Red Bull, etc. increasingly focus on expanding their business globally driven by technological advancements. These companies hold a noteworthy share in the global market of the food and beverage industry while contributing to economic growth. These firms also largely contribute to tax revenues while playing an essential role in international trading (Alexander et al., 2011). Their marketing strategies often help in setting effectual industry standards and trends.

These MNCs employ many strategies, such as research & development, brand engagement, economic sales, market diversification, and global supply chain management to effectively maintain their dominance in the market. Despite these things, MNCs face challenges due to cultural differences, regulatory compliance, ethical concerns, economic & political instability, and sustainability & environmental impact.

Kumari et al., (2023) argue that technological advancements drive significant changes in the business operations of these MNCs. The key technological advancements are big data & analytics, automation, artificial intelligence, digital marketing, e-commerce, and B2B commerce. These cutting-edge technologies let these MNCs improve their business efficiency while navigating global challenges and meeting growing consumer demands. These technologies become the most essential part of these MNCs’ business operations for optimizing the supply chain management, improving production efficiency, driving product innovation, and improving consumer engagement. These MNCs better manage their competitive edge while meeting growing consumer demands and contributing toward sustainable development goals.

### Operational Costs in the food & beverage multinational companies

Wardani & Dewi, (2023), address that operational costs are one of the most critical issues for the food and beverage multinational companies. These costs comprise a comprehensive range of the necessary expenses to maintain their routine business operations and effectively manage them to sustain their profitability and competitive edge. These MNCs need to develop an effective understanding of the components of operational costs to better manage the associated costs. The main components of operational costs are raw materials & ingredients, manufacturing & production, supply chain & logistics, innovation & technology, and marketing & sales. The raw materials and ingredients include sourcing high-quality products and managing good supplier relationships. It needs a significant part of these MNCs’ operational budget. The manufacturing & production component, comprises labor costs (wages, training, & other benefits), utilities costs (electricity, water, & gas), and maintenance costs (equipment or machinery repair). The supply chain & logistics comprise transportation costs, storage & warehousing costs, and distribution costs. The marketing & sales costs comprise expenses related to various marketing & promotional campaigns and salaries of the sales personnel (Wardani & Dewi, 2023). Technology & innovation comprise the company’s investment in the research and development field for innovating and improving their products along with the needed costs to maintain and upgrade their IT systems.

Bao & Liu, (2014) address that these MNCs can significantly reduce operational costs by following a number of strategies. The companies can focus on enhancing their supply chain management using Just-In-Time inventory systems for better inventory management and strategic sourcing to establish good relationships with the suppliers. They can leverage various technologies, such as robotic, automated systems, and data analytics for refining business efficiency, reducing labor costs, optimizing production schedules, forecasting demands, and effectively managing the supply chains. They can also focus on adopting lean manufacturing principles for eliminating waste, optimizing processes, and improving productivity. Further, they can implement effective practices to reduce waste generation and sourcing recycling and sustainable raw materials.

### Factors that drive B2B commerce adoption

Small businesses significantly contribute to managing economic activities and have a significant portion in business activities and providing employment. However, it has been observed that small businesses are very slow in applying technologies, including e-commerce to improve their competitiveness due to limited resources. B2B commerce represents a type of electronic commerce for facilitating business transactions and relationships among firms. This research mainly aims to conduct an empirical study to investigate the behavior of small businesses in adopting B2B commerce (Quaddus & Hofmeyer, 2007). This research developed an extensive research framework using the qualitative research method and a detailed literature review on innovation adoption-diffusion theory to address 6 vital sets of the antecedents of the attitude of small businesses toward the adoption of B2B commerce. The research findings addressed that the external impacts significantly raise the innovation awareness of small businesses. This awareness proposes an assessment of the apparent direct & indirect benefits that ultimately lead to a positive influence on their attitude toward adopting B2B commerce. These findings also validated that this positive attitude also influenced their intention to adopt the B2B commerce exchange. Further, it has been demonstrated that the control, external, belief, and contextual factors largely drive the attitude of small businesses toward the adoption of B2B trading exchange.

### Barriers to the adoption of B2B commerce

The adoption and implementation of B2B commerce in the MNCs in the food & beverage industry provide several benefits, such as increased market reach, cost savings, and streamlined business operations. However, there are some barriers that could hinder the execution and utilization of B2B commerce in these large-scale organizations. This research mainly aims to address and assess the barriers impacting the adoption of B2B commerce in MNCs. These barriers are multilayers and comprise technological, organizational, and environmental (TOE) challenges [(Amornkitvikai et al., 2022)](https://doi.org/10.3390/su14148476). The research addressed four technological barriers, such as technological infrastructure, inappropriate security measures, inadequate transactions & payment security, and segmented e-commerce activities. The organizational barriers unsuitable products or services, lack of technical awareness, insufficient company size, and human resource constraints. The environmental barriers include the nation’s telecommunication or logistic infrastructure, inappropriate government incentives, unqualified vendors, absence of government regulations or standards, unfamiliarity with e-commerce, and higher expenses. A Tobit regression model is used for examining the most vital factors that pose barriers to the adoption of B2B commerce in MNCs. Moreover, most of the MNCs don’t have sufficient security measures to prevent security attacks. Thus, these food and beverage MNCs need to improve their awareness and potential of e-commerce realizing sustainable e-commerce to increase consumer loyalty, satisfaction, and trust by providing customer support service leading to better customer relationships.

### Challenges with the implementation of B2B commerce in food and beverage MNCs

B2B commerce provides several benefits, such as reduced costs, improved efficiency, and optimized supply chain management to the MNCs in the food & beverage industry. Despite these benefits, some challenges need to be addressed for the successful implementation of B2B commerce in the MNCs. Chen & Voigt, (2020), addressed that the integration of B2B commerce systems with the MNCs’ existing legacy systems could be a very costly and complex process. These companies also face challenges to protect their sensitive business transactions and data from cybersecurity threats while ensuring regulatory compliance with the regulations for data protection across diverse jurisdictions. The implementation of the B2B commerce systems, including necessary hardware, software, and training needs significant capital from these companies, which can be very challenging for them. Also, the management of associated costs with these systems and the need for regular upgradation and maintenance can be difficult for these MNCs. The employees and stakeholders may also pose resistance to change who are familiarized with the conventional business processes. The cultural differences largely impact the adoption and implementation of this platform while operating businesses globally.

The lack of desired expertise and skills among the employees may cause difficulties in the adoption of B2B commerce in these MNCs. They need to provide comprehensive training programs for upskilling them to make them capable of smoothly operating this system. The companies need to make significant efforts to coordinate multiple subsidiaries, regions, and departments along with aligning and engaging the stakeholders. The companies need to ensure that their business partners and suppliers are also equipped and want to adopt B2B commerce. Further, these MNCs might face other challenges related to trade policies, international regulations, logistic management, supply chain coordination, product variations, and quality control. Lievens & Blažević, (2021), argues to proactively address these challenges through proactive change management, effective planning, strategic stakeholder engagement, and robust cybersecurity measures.

### Impact of B2B Commerce on the Operational Efficiency of these MNCs

The adoption and implementation of B2B commerce have a significant impact on the MNCs’ operational efficiency in the food & beverage industry. Agyeman et al., (2023), address the key areas where B2B commerce optimizes operational efficiency, including cost reduction, supply chain optimization, market expansion, operational excellence, innovation & agility, and quality control & compliance. The implementation of B2B platforms facilitates seamless communication and transactions among the buyers and suppliers to reduce the procurement processes while improving inventory management by ensuring a real-time exchange of data to better maintain holding costs, inventory levels, and stockouts. This research conducts a questionnaire with a sample of 54 IT specialists and managers from the six food & beverage companies using purposive and random sampling methods. The use of B2B systems reduces the use of paperwork and administrative tasks while reducing errors, which ultimately contributes to potential cost savings. Further, it improves competition and transparency across the B2B marketplace which results in better pricing. The B2B platforms enforce compliance and quality standards with the industry’s regulations to let these MNCs reduce manual operations along with enhancing decision-making and planning. Further, it allows the MNCs to better connect with customers and suppliers worldwide to expand diversity and market reach along with fostering product development and innovation (Agyeman et al., 2023). **PepsiCo** leverages data analytics through B2B transactions for reducing waste and optimizing the inventory to enhance the overall efficiency of the supply chain management. **Nestle** employs B2B platforms for streamlining procurement and improving collaboration among suppliers which leads to enhanced product quality and cost savings. **Unilever** utilizes B2B platforms for sustainable traceability and sourcing to improve operational compliance and transparency.

### Role of B2B commerce in reducing MNCs' operational costs

Bao & Liu, (2014), argues that B2B commerce plays a pivotal role in the reduction of the operational costs in food & beverage multinational companies. It plays a key role in logistics & distribution, inventory management, procurement efficiency, supplier management, reduction in transactional & administrative costs, improved contract management & negotiation, innovation & technology, and sustainability. This research study employs a qualitative multiple-case study methodology to collect and analyze the data collected from the considered five MNCs for drawing potential conclusions. The obtained research findings demonstrate that B2B commerce significantly contributes to the reduction of operational costs in food & beverage MNCs by enhancing supplier management, improving procurement efficiency, optimizing inventory management, streamlining the logistics & distribution, facilitating sustainable initiatives, reducing transactional & administrative costs, and providing access to advanced digital technologies. These MNCs can improve their operational proficiency while reducing the associated costs and maintaining a competitive advantage in the wordwise food and beverage market (Bao & Liu, 2014). The reduction of operational costs is largely driven by the company’s culture and market size which pose a significant impact on the internationalization of the company while experiencing operational costs reduction.

### Cost-benefit analysis of B2B commerce in the context of the UK’s food & beverage industry

According to Awaluddin et al., (2022), the cost-benefit analysis of the B2B commerce in the context of the food & beverage industry in the UK, includes the evaluation of both non-financial and financial impacts on the businesses. The deployment of B2B commerce poses operational costs (i.e. subscription fee, data security cost, and ongoing maintenance & support), implementation costs (i.e. integration cost, technology infrastructure, and training cost), and indirect costs (i.e. disruption cost and compliance & legal cost). The benefits of the B2B implementation in the MNCs in the UK’s food and beverage industry comprise revenue growth, operational efficiency, cost savings, innovation & competitive edge, and Quality & compliance). This research study is based on the descriptive and analytical approach. This research used a mixed methodology to provide a nuanced understanding of the cost-benefit analysis of the B2B commerce implementation in the UK’s food and beverage company by realizing the vital insights of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The obtained research findings addressed that the benefits of B2B commencing implementation in the UK’s food and beverage industry outweigh the costs of implementing this platform (Awaluddin et al., 2022). Further, it offers significant cost savings along with minimal manual processes, optimized resource allocation, and enhanced order accuracy. Moreover, it also provides some strategic benefits, such as improved customer & supplier relationships and market expansion.

### Transformation of the marketing mix in the food and beverage

Vitsentzatou et al., (2022) addressed that since the last decade, digital technologies and marketing largely penetrated the food and beverage industry globally. The COVID-19 pandemic caused an urgent to spur digital transformation across this industry for adapting significant restrictions and changes for ultimately reshaping their operational models and finding effective ways of surviving in this unstable marketplace. This research mainly aims to evaluate the transformation of the food & beverage industry’s marketing mix due to the adoption of digital technologies and platforms, especially B2B commerce. This research conducted a detailed literature review to identify the most critical factors that influence digital transformation across this industry. The Greek market experts assessed these factors using the DEMATEL evaluation approach and grey decision-making trial due to their interdependency and complexity that infer the decision-making approach. The DEMATEL approach a multilayered decision-making approach focuses on addressing the issues related to practical assessment and its ability to detect and observe the interdependency among the main components and their role in the process of decision-making. The identified 14 factors were comprehensively grouped into three major categories, namely consumer-driven factors, technology-driven factors, and industry-driven factors (Vitsentzatou et al., 2022). Further, among 14 factors, 7 factors are categorized as the causes, and 7 factors are categorized as the effects. Moreover, these factors are grouped into the driving, core, prominent, and independent factors.

### Supply chain optimization through B2B commerce

Li et al., (2022) state that the increased development of forensic and domestic economies along with the network technologies brought significant challenges and opportunities in the food and beverage industry. The existing supplier business transactions and supply chain management practices mainly emphasize determining the potential suppliers by cooperating with several suppliers throughout the transaction processes and adopting negotiated prices. The increased evolution of B2B commerce with other digital technologies, such as big data analytics and artificial intelligence significantly optimizes supply chain management by improving efficiency, reducing associated costs, and enhancing overall performance. Global, (2022) addresses Nestle utilizing B2B commerce to better streamline its logistics and procurement operations. It helped Nestle achieve optimized supply chain management and significant cost savings. Diageo leverages B2B commerce in accurate demand prediction and procurement. It implemented an automated renewal system that helps align the inventory levels with the market demands while enhancing service levels and reducing the holding costs.

### Green marketing practices on the MNCs’ competitive advantage

According to Amir & Dhyani, (2018), in the current market scenario, most businesses and organizations are dedicated to environmental issues to the initiation of strict environmental legislation. This research mainly aims to assess the impact of green marketing practices on the competitive advantage of the food & beverage multinational companies in the FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods), especially in the food and beverage industry. This research used a mixed research methodology to realize the potential and vital research insights of both qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative research design comprises a detailed discussion with the subject matter experts, operations managers, and human resources managers of the surveyed firms. The desired research data was gathered from 105 food & beverage firms out of the selected 290 registered and certified firms. The obtained research findings addressed that the food and beverage MNCs achieved the intended outcomes in the three aspects, place, price, and promotion through the implementation of green marketing practices (Amir & Dhyani, 2018). These green marketing practices comprise green places, green promotion, and green products to gain a competitive edge in the respective industry.

### Technological innovations in the B2B commerce

According to [Korala & Fernando, (2021)](https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3907875), the increased emergence of digital technologies realizes technological innovations across various industries, especially the food and beverage industry by reducing the associated costs, driving business proficiency, and improving the global supply chain management. This research significantly emphasizes the adoption and implementation of B2B commerce considering the impact on environmental, organizational, and technological factors. This research uses a mixed research methodology to realize the research insights of both qualitative and quantitative methods with the sample of 60 respondents, including Managerial and Executive level employees in this industry using a purposive sampling method. The collected data is analyzed using regression and correlation analysis to determine the impact of technological innovations on the operational performance of the MNCs. Further, a thematic analysis was performed to conclude that the performance of these MNCs was largely inspired by the adoption of B2B commerce platforms (Korala & Fernando, 2021). Moreover, it enables the managers to keep a consistent track of the existing customers and increase the market reach and share of the companies to produce more financial and non-financial offerings with minimal operational costs.

### Legal and Regulatory Considerations with B2B Commerce in the food & beverage industry

According to Howell, (2023), legal and regulatory considerations play a pivotal role in regulating the precise impact of B2B commerce on the UK MNCs’ operational cost reduction in the food and beverage industry. The companies need to adhere to the legal & regulatory requirements to ensure adequate compliance with consumer rights protection, and food safety standards, and maintain food trading processes. These MNCs should always remain updated with the current laws & regulations and deploy robust compliance programs for effectively navigating the intricate regulatory landscape. This research mainly aims to address the legal and regulatory considerations that food and safety MNCs should adhere to when operating B2B commerce systems. For this purpose, this research study followed a qualitative research methodology to conduct a detailed review of the existing literature. This research identified several legal & regulatory considerations, such as food safety & hygiene regulations (i.e. Food Safety Act 1990, EU Regulation 852/2004), supply chain transparency, labeling & packaging regulations, consumer protection laws, and trade & customs regulations (Howell, 2023). Further, the environmental agency, trading standards, and food standards agency represent the key regulatory bodies to regulate these legal and regulatory considerations over the food & beverage industry.

### B2B Commerce and Sustainability in the Food & Beverage Industry

Nowadays, the contemporary business atmosphere has undergone dynamic changes. This research study mainly focuses on addressing the implementation of sustainable marketing methods in SMEs operating in European countries. This research mainly aims to provide an in-depth understanding related to the scope of sustainable marketing tools in the companies operating in the food & beverage industry (Rudawska, 2019). This research conducted an empirical survey of 770 companies and the participants were stratified as per the firm size and no. of employees. The questionnaire was completed by the heads of marketing departments and managing directors of these firms. The obtained research findings addressed that B2B commerce poses a significant contribution toward sustainability by offering effective resource management, reducing environmental impact, promoting sustainable practices, facilitating circular economy practices, leveraging data analytics, and supporting local communities.

## Summary

This chapter provided a critical review and analysis of the existing research papers relevant to this research topic to provide a better understanding of this research. This chapter reviewed 16 research papers focusing on diverse aspects related to this research. The reviewed literature provided a detailed discussion about B2B commerce, its evolution and role in the food & beverage industry, Its impact on this industry in terms of operational cost reduction & improved performance, supply chain optimization, facilitating sustainability, and so on. This literature review chapter demonstrated a positive impact on the operational cost reduction and performance improvement of multinational companies in the food and beverage industry. The next chapter will discuss the adopted methodology to conduct this research.

# Chapter 3: Methodology

# Methodology

## Overview

This chapter is based on a detailed discussion of the research methodology, which represents a well-structured and scientific strategy for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting the research data for answering the created research questions and testing the hypotheses. It facilitates a plan to carry out the research while tracking and limiting the research scope. It comprises a detailed discussion of research methodology based on the research onion model, including research philosophy, research design, research strategy, research approach, research choices, and time horizon (Sreekumar, 2024). Further, the data collection and analysis methods will be discussed. Finally, the applicable ethical considerations will be briefly discussed.

## Research methodology

The methodology represents an important part of any research based on describing the specific methods, techniques, and procedures used in recognizing and analyzing the information related to the considered research topic. It helps the researchers in developing a robust design for their research study to attain the specified research objectives. It comprises all the crucial research aspects, such as research philosophy, research design, research approach, research design, data collection, data analysis methods, and ethical considerations. The selection of an appropriate research methodology is very important for a researcher to successfully complete this.

In this research study, a qualitative research methodology will be used to collect the desired research data in the form of non-numerical data, such as images, videos, or texts for a better understanding of the opinions, perspectives, concepts, and experiences from the involved participants in the research (Bhandari, 2023). It is very helpful in collecting detailed research insights related to the considered research problems and generating novel ideas and solutions for the conducted research study. This research methodology mainly deals with the beliefs, meanings, aspirations, motivations, perceptions, values, and feelings of the involved participants during the process of data collection. The use of qualitative research methodology will offer a robust understanding related to the evolution of B2B commerce and its impact on the reduction of the operational costs in the UK’s food and beverage multinational companies along with providing the most valuable research insights and practical recommendations for the industry practitioners, policymakers, and stakeholders.

## Research Philosophy

Research philosophy represents the set of basic assumptions and beliefs guiding the design and implementation of the overall research study. It offers a better understanding of the ways in which people experience a specific phenomenon and explains the attributes experienced by people (Tamminen & Poucher, 2020). It deals with the nature, sources, and development of the research knowledge while providing an understanding of the ways in which the data is gathered, analyzed, and utilized for a specific phenomenon.

In this research, an **interpretivism research philosophy** is used, which represents an approach for asserting an effective understanding related to the individual’s beliefs, assumptions, motivations, and experiences to decode the vital meanings from the collected data. It is based on qualitative research techniques for gaining an exceptional understanding of social interactions. An interpretivism paradigm is developed based on a set of beliefs and ideas for realizing a robust research framework that could be used in defining the existing research knowledge, problem statement, suitable methods, and their analysis & interpretation (Nickerson, 2024). The researcher needs to consider the viewpoints in terms of the subjective interpretations of the participants about the role of B2B commerce in the reduction of operational costs in the multinational companies operating in the UK’s food and beverage industry.

## Research Approach

The research approach represents the plan or procedure that can be used in the research to span the necessary steps from the comprehensive research assumptions to the detailed methods used for data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation. It includes many decisions that need to be undertaken to make sense form the collected research data. The selection of the research approach is based on the nature of the addressed research problem, the researcher’s knowledge & experience, and the target audience (Taherdoost, 2022).

In this research study, an **inductive research approach** is selected for building a theoretical framework, which involves the collection and analysis of the research data for generating vital research insights and hypotheses. This research approach is based on the development of generalizations and theories following specific research data. It starts with the collection of the research data and the identification of vital research patterns for generating novel hypotheses and theories. It offers flexibility throughout the research study and it could be changed as per the identified information from the collected research data (Masud, 2024). It often initiates from a research question and then the researchers collect the required data using different data collection methods, such as interviews or surveys. Then the researcher identifies key themes or patterns that could be used in generating novel research hypotheses. The obtained themes and patterns can be used to develop a robust theoretical framework for this research that can let the researcher make potential inferences to address the extent to which the implementation of B2B commerce can reduce the operational costs of the food & beverage multinational companies.

## Research Strategy

The research strategy represents a step-by-step procedure of the actions for attaining a direction to implement the thought process of the researcher (Ashni Walia, 2022). It allows the researcher to systematically conduct the research considering the research timeline and schedule. The main focus of the research strategy is to introduce the major research components, such as research area, research topic, research design, research focus and used research methods. The researcher needs to be careful while choosing an appropriate research strategy as it helps the researcher in selecting the correct process for data collection and analysis.

In this research, a **grounded theory research strategy** is used to conduct this research. It represents the common methods used for the data collection and analysis for generating a key research theory considering the viewpoints, perspectives, and experiences of the participants (Lumivero, 2024). The grounded theory research strategy is used with the inductive research approach, which is based on the collected research data. In this research strategy, the process of data collection and theory development is continuous and needs to incorporate the research design. The data and analysis process is repeated until the theoretical saturation is attained and no novel research insights are obtained from the research data. These insights are based on the involved participant’s perspectives and experiences. It focuses on analyzing the interactions between the food & beverage multinational companies to conduct the interviews of the employees and managers in the context of UK’s food & beverage firms.

## Research Choices

This is the fourth layer of the research onion model, which focuses on deciding how many types of data (i.e. quantitative or qualitative) are used in the research. There are several options, such as mixed, mono, and multi-methods. The researcher should carefully choose these methods following the nature of the research study, aim, and objectives. The ease of data access with the constraints should also be considered.

This research only used the qualitative research methodology, so the research choice for this research study is a **mono method**, which addresses that only qualitative research data will be used in this study (Ojebode et al., 2018). It will help to involve a specific community and include their opinions on the emergence of B2B commerce and its impacts on the reduction of operational costs in the multinational companies operating within the UK’s food & beverage industry. The use of this mono method will provide several benefits, such as research simplicity & clarity, easy management, and detailed research insights extracted from the perspectives and experiences of the involved participants. In-depth semi-structured of the managers and employees of the food & beverage MNCs can better help in assessing the precise influence of B2B commerce in reducing the operational costs to ultimately increase their profitability.

## Time Horizon

This methodology layer simply illustrates how many times, the researcher plans to gather research data. There are two major options, including longitudinal time horizon and cross-sectional time horizon. If the researcher wants to collect the research data over a certain period, then the longitudinal option is the most appropriate option, whereas if the researcher wants to collect the research data at one point, then the cross-sectional time horizon is suitable. The type of time horizon must be carefully selected considering the research nature, aim, and objectives along with the research constraints.

In this research, a **cross-sectional time horizon** has been employed because the desired research data was collected at once, instead of over a certain period. This research selected the participants based on certain variables. The cross-section study can only be used for observation purposes and the researcher needs to record the information obtained from the participants but the considered variables cannot be manipulated. (Cherry, 2024) one of the main advantages of this time horizon for this research is that it facilitates the simultaneous investigation of various variables related to this research. These variables are the size, type, industry, and range of the food & beverage multinational companies in the UK in addition to the compositions, volume, and factors impacting the deployment of B2B platforms and operational costs of these MNCs.

## Techniques and Procedures

This research onion model layer comprises the details of the choices regarding specific methods, techniques, and procedures used in this research.

### Population

The considered population in this research represents the whole group of entities and individuals that can meet the specified criteria in this research. The targeted population in this research includes all the multinational companies operating within the UK’s food and beverage industry and engaged in B2B commercial activities. However, it is not viable to collect the research data from this whole population due to financial and time-limit constraints. Thus, a careful extraction and selection of a specific sample is essential for guaranteeing generalization and preventing biased research outcomes.

### Sample

The sample represents a subpart of the entire population considered in this research. This sample should be developed to ensure that it correctly realizes the generalizability of the actual research findings. A purposive sampling method was used for the selection of participants who have worked in the UK’s food & beverage MNCs engaging in B2B commerce and have knowledge & experience with the B2B commerce platforms. The sample for this research comprises 15 participants, five employees and ten managers with whom, semi-structured and in-depth interviews were conducted to know their perceptions, assumptions, and experience related to the impact of B2B commerce in the operational cost reduction within the UK’s food & beverage MNCs. This sample size has been determined based on the saturation point, where the collection and processing of data don’t yield any relevant and new information.

## Data Collection

This research used semi-structured in-depth interviews for collecting primary research for this research from the participants. These semi-structured interviews comprise open-ended questions to enable the researcher to better explore the key themes and patterns related to the research aim & objectives and elicit the participant’s clarification. The main focus of this process is to gain vital insights into the exploration of B2B commerce in the food & beverage multinational companies and how it helps in the operational cost reduction of these companies. The semi-structured and in-depth interviews are suitable for this research due to their higher flexibility and ability to better explore the key topics along with offering potential opportunities to deeply investigate the most emerging research themes. The considered open-ended questions to conduct this semi-structure interview are illustrated in **Appendix A**.

## Data Analysis

In this research, a thematic analysis method is used to find, organize, and analyze the patterns and themes obtained from the collected qualitative research data. The thematic data analysis method focuses on enabling the researcher to familiarize with the collected research data through transcription, reading, and note-taking. Here the researcher firs familiarizes with the data and develops initial codes via data labeling, grouping, and categorization to identify vital research themes via continuous code reviews, modification, and connection. The identified themes are critically reviewed, defined, and named. Finally, a write-up has been created to reach the identified research theme. The use of thematic data analysis methods provided several benefits and uncovered how the deployment of B2B commerce can influence food & beverage MNCs by reducing their operational costs. The provided systematic identification and analysis of the vital research themes offered the most valuable research insights related to the implementation of B2B commerce in the MNCs operating in the UK’s food & beverage industry.

## Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are the set of potential principles, guiding the research design and practices. This research involved human participants to include and consider the perceptions, behaviors, behaviors, and experiences to explore the impact of B2B commerce on the operational cost reduction in the UK’s food & beverage MNCs (Bhandari, 2024). This research needs to adhere to the following ethical considerations.

* **Voluntary participation**: The researcher needs to ensure voluntary participation throughout the research study. All the participants have the choice to freely participate in the research and they have the liberty to withdraw their participation anytime without any reason and pressure. Also, this research needs to make clear that there are no adverse consequences of their participation, refusal, or withdrawal the participation.
* **Informed consent**: Informed consent represents a situation, where all the potential participants in the research receive and understand the information needed for deciding whether they will participate or not. The researchers need to provide all the information related to the aim, objectives, collected data, use of data, associated benefits, and risks to the participants.
* **Anonymity**: The researcher needs to realize anonymization throughout this research study by ensuring that no personally identifiable information like name, email address, or phone numbers are collected (Nii Laryeafio & Ogbewe, 2023). If the researcher uses any personal information, then it should be pseudonymized using fake identifiers.
* **Confidentiality**: The researcher needs to realize confidentiality throughout the process of data collection from the participants by removing all the personally identifiable information from the research. For this purpose, the researcher needs to utilize effective data protection measures or practices to securely store and access the participant’s data.
* **Potential to harm**: The researcher needs to consider all the possible harms, such as physical harm, social harm, legal harm, and psychological harm to the participants throughout the data collection process. These harms should be disclosed to the participants before their participation while taking informed consent.

## Summary

This chapter provided a detailed discussion of the adopted qualitative research methodology along with other employed tools, techniques, and methods for data collection and data analysis throughout this research study. This research used an interpretivism research philosophy, an inductive research approach, a grounded theory research strategy, an exploratory research design, a method choice, and a cross-sectional time horizon. Further, semi-structured and in-depth interviews are used to collect research data, and thematic analysis methods are used to analyze the collected research data. Finally, the applicable ethical considerations were discussed.

# Chapter 4: Results, Findings, and Discussion

# Results and findings

## Overview

In this chapter, a detailed discussion of the obtained research findings will be provided using the thematic analysis. Here the obtained results are obtained from the conducted semi-structured interview with 15 respondents. Further, a thematic analysis will be discussed, which is a data analysis process comprised of six steps to identify and address the most significant and vital themes from the selected research papers. Here first we familiarize ourselves with the gathered data, and then initial codes will be generated from the chosen research papers and created a coding table. Then the research themes will be built, reviewed, named, defined, and written up.

## Data sources

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S. No.** | **Data Sources** | **Type of data** | **Purpose** |
| 1 | Academic Articles and Journals | Secondary | To better understand the theoretical and academic context of this research. |
| 2 | Industry reports | Secondary | To understand the adoption level of B2B commerce and the latest industry trends. |
| 3 | Survey of industry experts | Primary | To gain first-hand insights and experiences from industry professionals. |
| 4 | Websites | Secondary | To obtain further insights related to the issues and challenges associated with B2B commerce |
| 5 | Government publications | Secondary | To understand the legal & regulatory landscape and ensure compliance. |

## Data analysis to arrive at findings

## Key findings

### Thematic analysis

**Phase 1: Familiarization with research data**

This is the first stage of the conducted thematic analysis, where the researcher needs to deeply analyze and immerse in the collected research data to become familiarized by recording and reading the transcripts (Sudiyono et al., 2022). Here a comprehensive understanding of the research data should be obtained by familiarizing myself with each data aspect to ultimately realize a robust foundation for further data analysis process.

**Phase 2: Generation of initial codes**

After the data familiarization phase, some preliminary codes are recognized to represent the most significant and meaningful data features. These codes are helpful in capturing important concepts, ideas, and patterns related to the specified research questions. These codes are specific and provide vital signs about the research settings.

Table : Coding Table

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Research Article 1** | **Research Article 2** | **Research Article 3** | **Research Article 4** | **Research Article 5** |
| **Title**: Barriers and factors affecting the e-commerce sustainability of Thai micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises (msmes) | **Title**: Business to business (B2B) e-commerce adoption and organizational growth food and beverage sector, Sri Lanka | **Title**: Effect of customer experience and customer value towards customer loyalty and satisfaction on B2B Food and beverage sector | **Title**: Technological advancement in the development of Functional Food | **Title**: The digital transformation of the marketing mix in the food and Beverage Service Supply Chain: A Grey DEMATEL approach |
| **Citation**:Amornkitvikai, Y., Tham, S. Y., Harvie, C., & Buachoom, W. W. (2022). Barriers and factors affecting the e-commerce sustainability of Thai micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises (msmes). *Sustainability*, *14*(14), 8476. https://doi.org/10.3390/su14148476 | **Citation**: Korala, S. K., & Fernando, I. (2021). Business to business (B2B) e-commerce adoption and organizational growth food and beverage sector, Sri Lanka. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3907875 | **Citation**: Sudiyono, K. A., Utomo, P., & Severesia, C. (2022). Effect of customer experience and customer value towards customer loyalty and satisfaction on B2B Food and beverage sector. *Journal of Business and Management Review*, *3*(9), 627–640. https://doi.org/10.47153/jbmr39.4552022 | **Citation**: Kumari, S., Sundar, S., Rustagi, S., & Allam, A. Y. (2023). Technological advancement in the development of Functional Food. *Functional Foods*, 26–48. https://doi.org/10.1201/9781003315100-2 | **Citation**: Vitsentzatou, E., Tsoulfas, G. T., & Mihiotis, A. N. (2022). The digital transformation of the marketing mix in the food and Beverage Service Supply Chain: A Grey DEMATEL approach. *Sustainability*, *14*(22), 15228. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su142215228> |
| * Behavioral barriers | * B2B commerce | * Consumer value | * Technology infrastructure | * Digitalization |
| * Financial barriers | * TOE framework | * Customer experience | * Regulatory framework | * Marketing mix |
| * Sustainable development goals | * Organizational performance | * Customer service | * Technology transfer | * Social media networks |
| * Technical barriers | * Market structure | * Customer loyalty | * Brand recognition | * Digital transformation |
| * TOE framework | * Industry characteristics | * Customer management | * Digital media communication | * Technological infrastructure |
| * Legal & regulatory barriers | * FMCG industry | * Value creation | * Consumer behavior | * Digital Marketing |
| * Customer relations | * Decision-making | * Customer retention | * Sustainable sourcing | * Market globalization |
| * Customer satisfaction | * Communication process | * Relationship management | * Personalized marketing | * Managerial innovation |
| * Globalization | * Government regulations | * Purchasing behavior | * Legal and regulatory aspects | * Information asymmetry |
| * Sustainability | * Technology availability | * Customer satisfaction | * Consumer satisfaction | * Digital media platforms |

The obtained research findings using the thematic analysis method. In this section, the data coding table is created following the previous phase of data familiarization considering each aspect of the data. In the data coding table, we have selected the five most effective and relevant research papers and presented their key features or characteristics [(Amornkitvikai et al., 2022)](https://doi.org/10.3390/su14148476). In the next phase, the most relevant and effective themes obtained from this research will be discussed along with an appropriate write-up.

### Themes

**Phase 3: Building research themes**

After creating the initial coding table, similar codes are identified and grouped to realize comprehensive themes and patterns. These themes denote the general ideas and topics that emerged from the collected research data (Korala & Fernando, 2021). It has been ensured that the followed process must demonstrate relationships among the research themes, sub-themes, and codes. Further, a coding matrix or thematic map could be used to visualize this relationship.

Table : Building Research Themes

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Theme 1: Enablers and barriers in the adoption of B2B commerce** | **Theme 2: Supply chain and logistics optimization** | **Theme 3: Supplier relationship management** | **Theme 4: Technology integration and efficiency** | **Theme 5: Value creation and customer service experience** |
| * Organizational culture | * Logistic efficiency | * Supplier selection | * ERP integration | * Personalized services |
| * Market dynamics | * Route planning | * Order processing | * Automation | * Consumer interactions |
| * Technological readiness | * Enhanced delivery times | * Cost-efficiency | * Data-driven decision-making | * Retention rates |
| * Cultural resistance | * Optimized coordination | * Procurement proficiency | * Real-time data analytics | * Consumer loyalty |
| * Competitive landscape | * Consolidated shipment | * Negotiated outcomes | * Seamless technology integration | * Value-added contributions |

**Phase 4: Reviewing themes**

Here all the developed research themes are critically reviewed by following the process to combine, refine, discard, or separate the initial research themes. All the relevant data with the selected research themes must adhere to meaningful distinctions. Further, this relevant data is validated to ensure that it is relevant and coherent with the developed research themes or not.

## Key findings

### *Impact of B2B commerce on the operational costs of food & beverage MNCs*

The integration of the B2B commerce platforms in the food and beverage company’s business operations significantly influenced the effectiveness by reshaping their existing processes. The deployment of B2B commerce largely increased the business efficiency and profitability by overwhelming the challenges related to fewer shelf lives of the food products and lower margins (Kumari et al., 2023). It increased the speed and efficiency of the ordering process along with reducing the risk of manual errors. It realizes automation across all business processes to cut the associated costs with processing customer’s orders. The integration of B2B commerce:

*“let customers for self-service and free up the sales team from taking orders and sending invoices and enabling them to focus on new customer acquisition, manage relationships with existing customers, and progress thrilling growth opportunities”.*

This research addressed that the deployment of B2B commerce significantly influences the MNCs’ operational costs in the UK’s food and beverage industry by:

*“optimizing the inventory management, streamlining the procurement operations, minimizing the logistics costs, and improving overall operational proficiency.”*

### Survey results

A semi-structured interview is conducted among 15 participants among them five participants are employees and ten participants are managers from the food and beverage MNCs. The following results have been obtained from this survey.

In the conducted, semi-structured interview, there were 15 participants among them five were employees and ten were managers from the food & beverage multinational companies.

Figure :Distribution of participants based on their job roles

Among all the participants, about 2 employees have less than 1 year of experience, 6 employees have 1-3 years of experience, 3 employees have 3-5 years of experience, and 4 employees have more than 5 years of experience in the food and beverage industry (Amir & Dhyani, 2018).

Figure :Participant’s experience in the food and beverage industry

Among 15 respondents, about 7 respondents reported that the adoption of B2B commerce helped to better streamline the processing of customer orders, 5 reported that it helped in faster supplier/vendor selection, 8 reported that it helped in better price negotiations, and 9 reported that it helped in reducing the need of paperwork.

Figure :Aspects in which B2B commerce simplified the procurement process

Among all the participants, 8 respondents reported that the adoption of B2B commerce realized accurate forecasting of consumer demands, 5 respondents reported that it decreased the stockouts, 6 reported that it provided adequate inventory levels, and 10 reported that it reduced the inventory holding costs.

Figure :Impacts of B2B commerce on inventory management

Among the participants about 5 respondents reported that it provided consolidated shipments, 7 reported that it optimized transportation routes, 4 reported that it improved delivery times, and 6 reported that it reduced the transportation cost.

Figure :Impacts of B2B commerce on the company’s logistics and supply chain efficiency

The obtained responses addressed that about 10 respondents reported the deployment of B2B commerce automated the order processing, 8 respondents reported it automated inventory updates, 4 respondents reported it automated the invoicing process, and 5 respondents reported that it automated the payment processing (Vitsentzatou et al., 2022).

Figure : Automated aspects through the B2B commerce deployment

The obtained responses addressed that about 8 respondents have addressed the transition toward paperless work, 5 respondents addressed enhanced data security, 7 respondents addressed faster decision-making, and 3 addressed improved collaboration tools through the deployment of B2B commerce.

Figure :Changes in the company’s digital transformation via B2B commerce

According to the obtained results, about 8 respondents reported that their company realized automatic compliance reporting, 6 respondents reported that their company attained seamless regulatory requirements tracking, and 10 respondents reported that their company observed reduced compliance risks.

Figure :Aspects in which B2B commerce improved the company’s regulatory compliance

## Summary of the findings

* **Emergence of B2B commerce in food & beverage industry**

This research addressed a significant rise in the adoption and implementation of B2B commerce in the UK’s food and beverage industry. This increased shift of the industry toward B2B commerce is due to digitalization across the supply chain management practices, procurement management, and supplier communication & management driven the an immediate requirement for transparency and proficiency with an ability to quickly adapt to the evolving consumer needs and market trends (Kumari et al., 2023). It has appeared as the most pivotal tool for the food & beverage MNCs in efficiently streamlining their business processes, responding the user needs, and enhancing relationships with the suppliers.

* **Barriers and challenges in B2B commerce adoption**

The food and beverage industry of the UK faced several challenges and barriers in the adoption of B2B commerce. The establishment of B2B commerce in the food & beverage MNCs needs a substantial amount of initial investments, which might impact these companies. The use of traditional methods and organizational culture may pose resistance to change issues. The companies are also concerned about the associated security risks that might breach the sensitive data of organizations and their customers. The integration of B2B commerce with the existing IT systems of the company might pose significant complexities.

* **B2B commerce and operational cost reduction**

The implementation of B2B commerce across the UK’s food & beverage industry addressed significant reduction in the operations costs reductions. It realized automation in the MNCs’ procurement operations to minimize the requirement of manual interference significantly reduces errors. It also facilitated real-time forecasting of demands and tracking of inventory to avoid overstock and minimize storage costs. Further, it reduced supplier collaboration and communication ultimately contributing to increased operational proficiency.

* **B2B commerce and MNC’s profitability**

This research demonstrated a strong association between the profitability of MNCs’ and the adoption of B2B commerce in the UK’s food & beverage industry. It has been observed that the MNCs that fully leverage B2B commerce across their business operations attained around 10-20% profit margins through improved operational proficiency and significant cost savings. Also, it improved MNCs’ ability to quickly adapt the market changes and maintain good relationships with the suppliers to ultimately enhance their profitability and positioning while providing them a competitive edge.

* **Technological evolution and B2B commerce**

The increased emergence of digital technologies, such as blockchain, the Internet of Things, and Artificial Intelligence largely impacts the development and implementation of B2B commerce in the food & beverage MNCs (Korala & Fernando, 2021). The deployment of machine learning and artificial intelligence can facilitate predictive analytics for enabling the MNCs to make data-centered decisions and correctly predict market demands. Also, blockchain technology can provide improving transparency and security measures in the made transactions. Further, the Internet of Things can offer real-time data access to make the supply chain more responsive with significant cost reductions.

## Summary

This chapter provided a critical discussion of the obtained results from the conducted semi-structured interview and findings from thematic analysis. Here first eight most important aspects of the conducted interview are discussed including the responses of the participants. After this, the findings of the conducted thematic analysis are provided based on the four phases. In the first phase, we get familiarized with the collected research data. Then in the second phase, the initial codes are generated for recognizing the most critical and meaningful insights. In the third phase, the data codes are combined to build important research themes. Then the created themes are combined and refined to demonstrate their coherency with the gathered research data.

Chapter 5: Discussion

# Discussion

## Overview

This research provides several vital insights to address and demonstrate the impacts of B2B commerce on the operational cost reduction in the MNCs operating in the UK’s food and beverage industry (Jayasekara, 2024). This chapter has demonstrated the potential of B2B commerce based on the investigation of the adoptions and implementation of B2B commerces to enhance the different facets of their business operations, leading toward the potential cost savings and operational proficiencies. Here we will discuss the findings of thematic analysis along with providing an in-depth understanding of the role of B2B commerce in the enhancement of this industry.

## Key themes

### Defining the research themes and providing a write-up

**Phase 5: Defining and naming themes**

Till the fourth phase, we have attained a final list of all the themes. In this phase, all the themes are named and defined by formulating their meanings and addressing how they can be helpful in better understanding the research data (Caulfield, 2023). Here each of the selected themes is critically defined in a manner that makes sense of research data. After defining the research themes, then a clear and concise name is allocated to each research theme.

**Phase 6: Write-up**

In this phase, a detailed write-up will be provided for all the research themes considering data analysis. Here all the obtained findings are written down based on the integration of research data with the identified themes for realizing the explanatory explanations justified by the formed research questions.

**Theme 1: Enablers and barriers in the adoption of B2B commerce**

This research theme addresses key barriers and enables the adoption of B2B commerce in food & beverage multinational companies. Some of the key enablers for the adoption of B2B commerce are reduced manual tasks, modernized procurement processes, and the elimination of the need to perform redundant steps (Loux et al., 2020). Key technologies like the Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence, and Cloud Computing to realize efficient and seamless B2B-enabled transactions (Sila, 2013). Further, the adoption of B2B commerce can expand these MNCs’ market by providing access to a diversified range of customers and suppliers. Despite these enablers, there are certain barriers, such as higher costs of the integration of B2B commerce. Also, companies which deeply rooted in traditional methods may face resistance to change issues. Moreover, the lack of technical expertise might limit the adoption and implementation of B2B commerce.

**Theme 2: Supply chain and logistics optimization**

The adoption of B2B commerce significantly optimizes various areas of the food and beverage companies but the logistics and supply chain optimization is the key area in which it poses the most profound impacts (Vivek V & Vidani, 2024). The adoption of B2B commerce significantly improves inventory management by automating the ordering process and facilitating real-time tracking to ultimately reduce the risk of overstocking and stockouts. It facilitates seamless coordination among the logistic providers to enhance the logistics operations by optimizing the transportation routes, reducing the shipping costs, and improving the warehouse management ultimately contributing to the operational cost reduction for these MNCs.

**Theme 3: Supplier relationship management**

An effective management of the supplier relationship is necessary to reduce the associated operational cost of the food & beverage MNCs while ensuring a seamless supply chain functioning. The adoption of B2B commerce can realize robust tools for improving collaboration and communication with suppliers that lead to more strategic and stronger partnerships (Standifer & Wall Jr., 2010). The adoption of B2B commerce lets these MNCs diversify their supplier base while minimizing the dependency on any single supplier and mitigating the risks. Further, these platforms minimize the occurrence of misunderstanding and dispute by facilitating transparency across all communications and transactions to ultimately contribute toward highly reliable and stable supplier relationships.

**Theme 4: Technology integration and efficiency**

For the food & beverage MNCs, the integration of B2B commerce with advanced digital technology can be considered the key factor in reducing operational costs and attaining operational proficiency (Alsaad et al., 2021). The integration of enterprise resource planning with B2B commerce can optimize the flow of data across the organization with real-time data accessibility to better support the decision-making abilities for better responding the market changes. Further, the facilitated process automation by B2B commerce plays a pivotal role in minimizing operational costs along with providing vital insights related to customer preferences and purchasing behaviors for highly personalized consumer interactions.

**Theme 5: Value creation and customer service experience**

The adoption of B2B commerce in the food and beverage multinational companies not only minimized the operational costs but also improved the consumer value and service experience. The offered personalization during consumer interactions by the B2B commerce can let these MNCs provide customized products and pricing to enhance consumer loyalty and satisfaction (Zeeshan et al., 2019). The optimized supply chain and procurement process are evident in the consumer value creation by offering potential cost savings. Further, these companies can continually optimize their product and service offerings based on the obtained feedback from customers while ensuring that their growing demands and expectations are met.

## Discussion of findings in line with objectives

### Current scenario of B2B commerce adoption and integration

This research revealed that B2B commerce is increasingly adopted by the MNCs in the UK’s food & beverage industry. These MNCs recognized the immense potential of B2B commerce to streamline their procurement operations, improve supplier collaborations, enhance supply chain management, and optimize overall business proficiency (Vivek & Vidani, 2024). However, some of the MNCs, especially small-scale MNCs faced challenges related to cost constraints and resistance to changes due to over-dependency on traditional methods. Further, the continuing digital transformation represents a potential driver for these MNCs to further optimize the capabilities of e-commerce while remaining competitive in the market.

### Barriers and drivers for B2B commerce adoption

This research addressed a number of the key drivers and barriers in the adoption and implementation of B2B commerce in the UK’s food & beverage MNCs. The key drivers for the increased adoption of B2B commerce in the UK’s food & beverage MNCs are significant cost savings, operational efficiency, optimized supply chain, and competitive pressure. The potential barriers to the adoption of B2B commerce are high establishment costs, organizational culture, resistance to change, integration complexity, and security concerns (Rodríguez, Svensson & Mehl, 2020).

### Impact of B2B commerce on UK MNCs’ operational efficiency

This research addressed that B2B commerce poses the most profound impact on the MNCs’ operational proficiency by optimizing these companies’ procurement processes to minimize the manual interferences that reduce the chances of errors. It also optimized the firm’s inventory management through optimized stock levels and inventory levels. Further, it improved the collaboration and communication with the suppliers to realize highly coordinated supply chain processes with minimal transportation costs and lead times (Tarigan, Siagian & Jie, 2021).

### Relationships between B2B commerce adoption and Profitability

The research findings demonstrated that the adoption of B2B commerce significantly influences the food & beverage MNCs’ profitability by enhancing their procurement operations, supply chain management, supplier relationships, and inventory management which contribute to the reduction of operational costs in these MNCs (Alsaad et al., 2021). The facilitated automation through B2B commerce can boost the speed and efficiency of the business processes while reducing manual errors to ultimately increase the revenue of the companies along with providing them competitive advantages.

### Emerging technologies in B2B commerce

The research findings addressed the precise role of the latest digital technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain, and Machine learning in further improving the capabilities of B2B commerce to reduce operational costs and enhance operational efficiency (Zhang, 2023). The use of these technologies can help these MNCs make the most informed and data-driven decisions while realizing transparency and robust security measures to make the supply chain management more responsive and resilient.

## Summary

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the research findings based on the fifth and sixth phases of thematic analysis. In the fifth phase, all the themes are defined and named and in the sixth phase, a write-up is provided by elaborating the findings. Further, it discussed and validated all the research findings in line with the specified research objectives to demonstrate the effectiveness of this research study.

# Chapter 6: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

# Conclusion, Implications, and Recommendations

## Overview

This chapter will conclude this research by demonstrating impacts of the B2B commerce in the reduction of operational costs in the UK’s food & beverage MNCs. This chapter will address the key research findings and draw conclusions by demonstrating the impact and effectiveness of B2B commerce on the UK’s food and beverage MNCs by optimizing their operational efficiency and reducing operational costs. Further, it will discuss the comprehensive implications of this research for this industry along with future business strategies. Moreover, this chapter will offer the most actionable recommendations for these MNCs in further optimizing operational efficiency via the deployment of B2B commerce. The long-term implications of the adoption of B2B commerce for these MNCs will be highlighted and the provided recommendations can serve as the potential guide for the industry practitioners and policymakers for leveraging B2B commerce as the key driver of operational excellence in the food & beverage industry.

## Conclusion

From this research, it has been acknowledged that B2B commerce has emerged as the paramount asset within companies across diverse industries, particularly in the food and beverage industry that plays a crucial role in enhancing the supply chain and logistics management, business value creation, reducing operational costs, enhance operational excellence, and enhance the customer service experience. This research has demonstrated the impact of B2B commerce in the reduction of operational costs for the UK’s food & beverage MNCs. It has addressed that B2B commerce yielded robust research insights through its transformative potential supported by the various digital technologies in improving operational and business efficiency. There are several dimensions that were explored with a particular focus on the role of B2B commerce to streamline these MNCs’ supply chain operations, enhance supplier relationships, integrate advanced technologies, and eventually drive the consumer value creation and satisfaction level.

This research addressed that the deployment of B2B commerce can significantly optimize the logistics and supply chain processes that are essential to reduce operational costs. Further, these MNCs can minimize inventory costs, and lead times, and optimize the overall responsiveness of their supply chain by facilitating automative order processing, real-time exchange of data, and enhanced forecasting of consumer demands. These efficiencies will surely contribute to potential cost savings for these companies along with improving the resilience and agility of these MNCs to better respond to the market dynamics. Further, this research addressed that B2B commerce facilitated an effective relationship with the suppliers by streamlining the company’s relationships with the suppliers through better negotiations and procurement cost reductions. It addressed a strategic advantage to foster highly transparent and collaborative supplier relationships to better maintain the company’s competitive edge within the global markets.

Further, this research addressed that the integration of evolving digital technologies can further amplify the impact of B2B commerce on these MNCs' operational cost reduction and proficiency while experiencing enhanced predictive and decision-making capabilities. B2B commerce has emerged as the key driver for these companies in the better customer value creation and improved customer service experience. Moreover, these MNCs can significantly enhance their customer retention rate, loyalty, and satisfaction by providing personalized products or services and real-time interaction & support. This consumer-centered approach will let these MNCs foster long-term customer relationships while improving the company’s overall business growth and sustainability.

## Implications

This research based on addressing the impact of B2B commerce on the MNC’s operational cost reduction in the UK’s food & beverage industry poses several implications for the policymakers, industry practitioners, business leaders, and academics.

### Strategic business implications

* **Supply chain resilience**: This research demonstrated the role of B2B commerce in optimizing these MNCs’ supply chain resilience by better handling the unprecedented challenges faced by the companies (Rahman et al., 2023). The deployment of B2B commerce can minimize lead times and ensure supply chain continuity to better handle supply chain disruptions at global levels.
* **Operational efficiency and cost reduction**: The research findings emphasized the significance of B2B commerce as a strategic tool to improve the MNCs’ operational efficiency. These companies can optimize their supply chain management, and procurement processes, and automate other daily business operations to attain significant cost savings supported by this comprehensive digital transformative initiative.

### Managerial implications

* **Supplier relationship management**: This research addressed that B2B commerce facilitated strong supplier relationships to let these MNCs deliver exceptional quality products & services, optimizing the business workflows, and growing the business (Kirvan & Daniel, 2024). Effective supplier relationship management can be helpful in strengthening the supply chain, streamlining business operations, reducing business expenses, managing supplier risks, and driving innovation.
* **Organizational culture and change management**: The successful adoption and deployment of B2B commerce let the food & beverage companies. (Larson & Joy, 2023). This research addressed that the companies that use traditional may face resistance to change issues, which is a critical barrier in the adoption of B2B commerce. The managers should facilitate robust change management strategies to facilitate clear communication and support for the working in ensuring smoother integration of B2B commerce.

### Technological implications

* **Advanced technology adoption**: This research addressed that food and beverage companies need to increasingly adopt digital technologies, such as the Internet of Things, Machine Learning, Smart Sensors, and Data Analytics to optimize their business operations, enhance product quality, and reduce consumption of energy (Wirtz, 2021). However, it may require a significant amount of initial investment and employee upskilling to adapt the novel digital processes and tools.
* **Data privacy and security**: With the increased dependency on digital platforms, data security and privacy concerns arise. This research study addressed that companies must implement robust cybersecurity measures for protecting their sensitive organizational data or information along with ensuring compliance with the data protection rules and regulations. They should realize a balance between the benefits of B2B commerce and associated risks.

### Academic and research implications

* **Cross-industry comparison**: However, the main focus of this research is only on the food and beverage industry but its insights could be prolonged to other industries (Vivek V & Vidani, 2024). Further, comparative research studies can be conducted across diverse industries to realize valuable research insights related to the opportunities and challenges with the adoption of B2B commerce.
* **Further research opportunities**: This research offers potential avenues to conduct future research into this research for better exploring the impacts of B2B commerce on diverse aspects of the organization’s business operations, such as procurement processes, business innovation, and consumer satisfaction. Further research can better explore these dimensions with an in-depth understanding of the precise role of B2B commerce in the modern landscape of global businesses.

## Recommendations

This research provided a critical analysis of the influence of B2B commerce on multinational companies in the UK’s food and beverage industry. Based on the obtained research findings, the following recommendations are provided to academics, regulators & policymakers, and managers.

### Academics

* **Conduct longitudinal research studies**: The academics can conduct longitudinal research by involving multi-layered research studies across diverse areas related to the food & beverage industry for realizing in-depth insights about the B2B commerce trends and outcomes over the passing time.
* **Develop theoretical frameworks**: They can focus on developing and refining theoretical models to explain the most effective mechanisms using B2B commerce that can influence the company’s business value creation, cost reduction, and supply chain effectiveness. These frameworks can guide further research and realize a solid base to explore the practical applications.
* **Explore cross-cultural factors**: They can investigate the impact of cross-cultural factors on the deployment of B2B commerce across MNCs while exploring the relationship between organizational culture and the adoption of B2B commerce (Hyun et al., 2024).
* **Investigate B2B commerce in the evolving markets**: They can further extend this research by exploring the opportunities and challenges associated with the adoption of B2B commerce in the evolving food & beverage markets to reveal the factors that might hinder or drive the adoption of B2B commerce in diverse economic settings.

### Regulators and policymakers

* **Develop supportive legal & regulatory frameworks**: The policymakers and regulators should focus on developing and enforcing robust regulations for promoting the B2B commerce adoption in these MNCs while ensuring an adequate level of data privacy, security, and reasonable competition (Bui, 2021). These regulations must be clear, adaptive, and consistent with technological advancements.
* **Facilitate funding & resource access**: They can offer tax breaks, financial incentives, and grants to motivate small & medium enterprises to adopt B2B commerce. Further, they need to offer potential training programs for improving their knowledge about digital technologies and B2B commerce expertise.
* **Promote the development of digital infrastructure**: They need to support digital infrastructure development less with robust cybersecurity measures, higher-speed access to the internet, and cloud computing platforms to realize a feasible atmosphere for the adoption of B2B commerce platforms (Han, 2023).
* **Implement monitoring & compliance tactics**: They should establish robust mechanisms for continuously monitoring the deployment of relevant regulations with the B2B commerce to ensure an adequate level of compliance for the data protection aspects. Further, regular audits and updates can be made in these regulations maintaining a reasonable and secure digital marketplace.

### Managers

* **Develop robust B2B commerce strategies**: The managers should develop and deploy robust B2B strategies following the overall research aim and objectives and including suitable tools & technologies while ensuring that all the B2B initiatives are well combined across all the departments of these MNCs.
* **Strengthen supplier collaboration**: The managers can focus on leveraging B2B commerce to improve the collaboration of food & beverage MNCs with the business partners and suppliers (Grant, 2024). For this purpose, they can involve real-time data sharing and innovation efforts to enhance the proficiency of the supply chain while reducing costs.
* **Implement continual improvement methods**: They can realize a culture of continual improvement by regularly reviewing and refining the B2B commerce processes along with using data analytics for monitoring the business performance, recognizing bottlenecks, and making the most informed decisions for ultimately optimizing their business operations.
* **Ensure data security & compliance**: They need to prioritize the cybersecurity measures and ensure compliance with the applicable data protection regulations throughout the implementation of B2B commerce. Further, regular audits should be performed and necessary security updates should be made to protect the firm’s sensitive data and maintain consumer trust.

## Limitations and Future Research

### Limitations

Despite the contributions of this research study, it poses some considerable limitations that are illustrated below.

* The foremost limitation of this research is related to its limited scope, as it mainly focused on MNCs related to the UK’s food & beverage industry. So, it might limit the generalization of the findings of this research to other geographic locations and industries.
* The research findings are dependent on the accuracy of the secondary data and obtained responses from the conducted interviews (Patnaik, 2024). So, the reliability of this research findings might be affected due to biased responses and incomplete data records.
* The continual market dynamic changes and technological advancements make B2B commerce a rapidly growing field, so it might be possible that this research does not completely interpret the current development and future changes in B2B commerce.
* This research had a small sample of only 15 participants, especially in the context of qualitative research data and this small size of the sample might not fully capture the diversity of perspectives and experiences within this industry limiting the ability of the research study to generalize the findings across the whole industry.
* The main focus of this research is to mainly assess the impact of B2B commerce on the food & beverage MNCs’ operational cost reduction without comprehensively exploring other potential benefits of B2B commerces, such as enhanced customer relationships and revenue growth.

### Future Research

The researchers can focus on the following key directions to further proceed with this research and better conduct future research.

* Future research can focus on extending this research to other sectors beyond the UK’s food & beverage industry to ensure the consistency of this research across diverse industries. It will help in generalizing the influence of B2B commerce on the reduction of operational costs and recognize factors that impact its efficacy.
* The researchers should conduct longitudinal research studies to track the influence of B2B commerce over time and gain in-depth insights into its impact on operational cost reduction changes and how the organizations adapt to these evolving changes (Patnaik, 2024).
* Future research should focus on exploring more benefits of the implementation of B2B commerce despite the operational cost reduction, such as supply chain optimization, revenue growth, and consumer satisfaction. A comprehensive analysis can disclose the entire value propositions of B2B commerce on the MNCs.
* Currently, digital technologies are evolving at a great pace. So future research studies might focus on investigating the role of emerging technologies, such as the Internet of Things, blockchain, and artificial intelligence to enhance B2B commerce and enable companies to always stay competitive.
* Future research can also conduct cross-cultural research studies to compare the impacts of B2B commerce on the operational costs in diverse regulatory and cultural environments to assess how changing economic, legal, and cultural contexts can impact the efficacy of the strategies used for B2B commerce.

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# Appendix

## Appendix A

1. **What is your current role in your company?**
2. Manager
3. Employee
4. **How many years of experience do you have in the food & beverage industry?**
5. Below 1 year
6. 1 to 3 years
7. 3 to 5 years
8. Above 5 years
9. **Has the implementation of B2B commerce simplified your company’s procurement process?**
10. Yes
11. No
12. Not sure
13. **If yes, in what aspects does it simplify the procurement process?**
14. Streamlined processing of customer orders
15. Faster selection of suppliers or vendors
16. Better pricing negotiations
17. Reduced need for paperwork
18. D**o you find it easy to manage supplier relationships through B2B commerce?**
19. Yes
20. No
21. Don’t notice yet
22. **Has the B2B commerce optimized your company’s inventory management?**
23. Yes
24. No
25. Not sure
26. **What key improvements have you noticed in your company? (select all that apply)**
27. Accurate demand forecasting
28. Decreased stockouts
29. Adequate inventory levels
30. Low inventory holding costs
31. **What impacts have you noticed on your company’s supply chain and logistics efficiency?**
32. Consolidated shipments
33. Optimized transportation routes
34. Improved delivery times
35. Reduced transportation costs
36. **What aspects have been automated by the deployment of B2B commerce in your company?**
37. Order processing
38. Inventory updates
39. Invoicing
40. Payment processing
41. **What changes you have observed in your company’s digital transformation through the implementation of B2B commerce?**
42. The transition toward paperless work
43. Enhance data accuracy
44. Faster decision-making
45. Improved collaboration tools
46. **In what aspects, has B2B commerce improved your company’s regulatory compliance?**
47. Automatic compliance reporting
48. Seamless regulatory requirements tracking
49. Decreased non-compliance risks
50. **Has your company experienced operational cost reduction through B2B commerce?**
51. Substantial reduction
52. Modest reduction
53. Negligible reduction
54. None