



**INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR ANALYTICS - BAN4500-04-F23
GROUP PROJECT – REPORT 2: GROUP - A**

GROUP MEMBERS:

AJAY SRINIVAS AGILA ,
DAVIS HESCOTT,
SOUMYABRATA GHOSH,
HASWITHA PEDDAWANDLA,
RISHAV MONDAL.

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Topic Proposal

Organization: Walmart

Information System: Supply Chain Management System

Region/Country: United States

Project Introduction:

In an era marked by dynamic market conditions, rapid technological advancements, and evolving consumer preferences, the management of supply chain systems has become a pivotal factor in the success of businesses across industries. Efficient supply chain management not only reduces operational costs but also ensures timely product availability and enhanced customer satisfaction. Our project delves into the intricate world of supply chain management within the context of a renowned retail giant, Walmart, and its operations in the United States.

Significance of the Topic: Our group proposes to investigate Walmart's Supply Chain Management System in the United States. This topic holds substantial significance for several reasons:

- **Operational Efficiency:** Walmart is renowned for its remarkable operational efficiency, with its supply chain management system playing a pivotal role. Understanding the intricacies of this system can offer insights into how large retail chains can optimize their operations.
- **Consumer Impact:** Walmart's efficient supply chain contributes to competitive pricing and the availability of a wide range of products. This, in turn, has a direct impact on consumer choices, making it an interesting topic from a consumer behavior perspective.
- **Economic Implications:** Walmart's operations have a significant economic impact in the United States. An in-depth exploration of its supply chain system can shed light on the economic interplay between major corporations and local communities.
- **Technology and Innovation:** Walmart continually invests in technological advancements. An analysis of its supply chain management system can showcase the role of technology and innovation in retail.

"Jawad's literature analysis (2017) on Walmart's supply chain excellence, with a focus on integration, distribution, and operations, underscores the significance of our investigation into the intricacies of Walmart's supply chain."

Walmart Introduction:

Walmart, a household name and a global retail behemoth, has stood as a paradigm of supply chain excellence. With a legacy dating back to its founding in 1962, Walmart has grown to become one of the world's largest and most influential retailers. Operating an extensive network of physical stores and a burgeoning e-commerce presence, the company's supply chain practices are a testament to innovation, efficiency, and adaptability. Our study will focus specifically on Walmart's supply chain management system within the United States, where it has cemented its status as a retail leader. This system not only underpins Walmart's operational efficiency but also influences its impact on the economy, society, and the environment.

By delving into Walmart's supply chain intricacies, we aim to dissect the strategies, technologies, and practices that have contributed to its dominance in the U.S. retail sector. Moreover, we seek to identify areas for potential enhancement that can further bolster its competitive edge in the evolving retail landscape. Our research endeavors to provide valuable insights into the inner workings of this iconic corporation, emphasizing its implications for both the retail industry and the broader economic and societal landscapes.

Research Objectives:

Our research aims to achieve the following objectives:

- **Comprehensive Understanding:** Provide a detailed overview of Walmart's supply chain management system, including key components, technology, and logistics.
- **Efficiency and Sustainability:** Assess the system's efficiency and its impact on sustainability and environmental considerations.
- **Economic and Societal Impact:** Analyze the economic and societal impact of Walmart's supply chain operations in the United States.
- **Lessons for Other Retailers:** Identify lessons and best practices that can be adopted by other retailers aiming to improve their supply chain operations.

Assumptions:

- **Supplier Relationships:** Assume that Walmart has developed strong relationships with suppliers to ensure a consistent supply of products. These relationships may include vendor-managed inventory (VMI) agreements and just-in-time inventory practices.
- **Efficiency and Cost Savings:** Assume that Walmart's supply chain management system is designed with a primary focus on efficiency and cost savings. This assumption aligns with Walmart's reputation for delivering low-cost products to consumers.
- **Sustainability Initiatives:** Assume that Walmart incorporates sustainability initiatives within its supply chain operations to reduce environmental impact. This includes efforts to reduce waste and promote sustainable sourcing.
- **Distribution Network:** Assume that Walmart has strategically located distribution centers throughout the United States to minimize transportation costs and ensure efficient product flow.

"Our assumptions regarding the significance of integration in Walmart's supply chain align with Jawad's analysis (2017) of integration excellence in Walmart's supply chain operations."

Value of Supply Chain Management System to Walmart

Supply Chain Management (SCM) System can help a business optimize the operations by eliminating waste, streamlining processes, and reducing inventory. By using SCM tools and techniques, you can improve the business visibility, coordination, and collaboration across your supply chain network. This can help the business avoid delays, errors, and disruptions that can affect your performance and profitability. SCM can also help leverage economies of scale, negotiate better prices, and access new Markets.

SCM can help mitigate the risks and uncertainties that can threaten the supply chain. By using SCM strategies and practices, you can identify and assess potential risks, such as demand fluctuations, supply disruptions, quality issues, compliance violations, and security breaches. A business can also implement contingency plans, backup suppliers, and risk-sharing agreements to cope with unexpected events and minimize the impact on the business and customers. All of the above is especially important, when you consider the scale of the undertaking being on the same level as the giant of the field Walmart.

When you consider all the dependent variables associated with the SCM of Walmart, like the consumer impact, economic implication, operational efficiency, and so on all of which is very essential for the proper running of the business, the value for adopting such tools suggested becomes very essential for the proper day to day running of a business of the scale of Walmart.

"Chiles and Dau's comprehensive analysis (2005) of current supply chain best practices in the retail industry, with a specific focus on Walmart, sheds light on the value of efficient supply chain management."

SCM with assumptions in mind:

Walmart has developed strong relationships with its suppliers through a variety of initiatives, including:

- **Vendor-Managed Inventory (VMI):** Under VMI agreements, suppliers manage inventory levels at Walmart's distribution centers. This approach helps to ensure that Walmart always has the right products in stock, while also reducing the company's own inventory costs.
- **Just-in-Time (JIT) Inventory:** JIT inventory is a system in which products are delivered to Walmart stores just in time to be sold. This approach helps to minimize inventory costs and reduce waste.
- **Collaborative Forecasting, Planning, and Replenishment (CPFR):** CPFR is a process that brings together Walmart and its suppliers to share information and make joint decisions about demand forecasting, inventory planning, and product replenishment. This collaboration helps to improve supply chain efficiency and reduce costs.

These initiatives have helped Walmart to develop strong relationships with its suppliers, which has led to a number of benefits, including:

Efficiency and Cost Savings

Walmart's supply chain management system is designed with a primary focus on efficiency and cost savings. The company employs a variety of strategies to achieve these goals, including:

- **Cross-docking:** Cross-docking is a process in which products are transferred directly from inbound trucks to outbound trucks, bypassing storage altogether. This approach helps to reduce inventory costs and speed up deliveries.
- **Data-driven decision-making:** Walmart collects and analyses vast amounts of supply chain data to make informed decisions about inventory levels, transportation routes, and supplier relationships.
- **Continuous improvement:** Walmart is constantly looking for ways to improve its supply chain processes. The company uses a variety of tools and techniques to identify and implement efficiency gains.

Sustainability Initiatives

Walmart is committed to reducing the environmental impact of its supply chain. The company has a number of sustainability initiatives in place, including:

- Reducing waste: Walmart is working to reduce waste by streamlining its packaging and transportation processes.
- Promoting sustainable sourcing: Walmart is encouraging its suppliers to adopt sustainable practices, such as using recycled materials and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Investing in renewable energy: Walmart is investing in renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power, to reduce its reliance on fossil fuels.

Distribution Network

Walmart has a strategically located distribution network throughout the United States. The company has over 150 distribution centers that are located within 150 miles of 90% of its stores. This network helps to minimize transportation costs and ensure that products are delivered to stores quickly and efficiently.

Walmart's distribution network is also designed to be flexible and responsive to changes in demand. The company can quickly adjust its inventory levels and transportation routes to meet the needs of its customers. These factors have helped Walmart to develop a highly efficient and effective distribution network. The company's network is a key factor in its success and its ability to deliver low prices to its customers. SCM systems play a crucial role in enhancing operational efficiency by eliminating waste, streamlining processes, and reducing inventory. These systems provide businesses with the tools and technologies to optimize their supply chains, from procurement and production to warehousing and distribution.

By implementing SCM strategies, businesses can achieve significant cost savings, reduce production lead times, and improve product quality. For instance, Walmart, a pioneer in SCM, has been able to lower its inventory costs by 10%, saving the company millions of dollars annually.

Enhancing Visibility, Coordination, and Collaboration

SCM systems enhance visibility across the entire supply chain, providing businesses with real-time data on inventory levels, transportation status, and supplier performance. This visibility enables proactive decision-making, helping businesses avoid stockouts, minimize delays, and respond quickly to disruptions.

Effective SCM promotes coordination and collaboration among supply chain partners, ensuring seamless information flow and a shared understanding of business goals. This collaboration leads to reduced errors, improved communication, and stronger relationships with suppliers and distributors.

Mitigating Risks and Unforeseen Events

The globalized nature of modern supply chains exposes businesses to various risks, including demand fluctuations, supply disruptions, quality issues, compliance violations, and security breaches. SCM systems provide businesses with the tools to identify, assess, and mitigate these risks.

By implementing risk management strategies, businesses can develop contingency plans, diversify supplier networks, and implement quality control measures to minimize the impact of disruptions and protect their reputation.

Unlocking Economies of Scale and Market Access

SCM systems enable businesses to leverage economies of scale, negotiate better prices with suppliers, and access new markets. By consolidating procurement activities and optimizing logistics, businesses can reduce costs and improve their overall profitability.

For example, Walmart's extensive distribution network allows it to negotiate favorable pricing with suppliers and reach a wider customer base. This network optimization has been a key factor in Walmart's success and global expansion.

The Case of Walmart: A Testament to SCM's Value

Walmart's supply chain is widely recognized as one of the most efficient and effective in the world. The company's success is largely attributed to its strategic focus on SCM, which has enabled it to achieve significant cost savings, improve product availability, and maintain its competitive edge.

Supply chain management (SCM) is fundamentally important to Walmart's cost-leadership business strategies in a number of ways. Here are some of the key reasons:

- **Efficient Procurement and Cost Reduction:** Walmart employs a highly efficient procurement process that leverages its massive scale to negotiate favorable pricing with suppliers. By consolidating its purchases and working closely with suppliers, Walmart can significantly reduce its costs for raw materials, goods, and services.
- **Streamlined Logistics and Inventory Management:** Walmart's supply chain is designed to optimize logistics and inventory management, minimizing waste and maximizing efficiency. The company utilizes cross-docking, just-in-time inventory practices, and data-driven analytics to ensure that products are transported and stored efficiently, reducing transportation costs, inventory holding costs, and the risk of stockouts or overstocks.
- **Global Sourcing and Supply Chain Optimization:** Walmart's global sourcing strategy allows it to tap into lower-cost production and distribution centers around the world. By diversifying its supply base and strategically positioning distribution centers, Walmart can minimize transportation costs, reduce lead times, and ensure a consistent supply of products.
- **Collaboration and Technology Integration:** Walmart fosters strong partnerships with its suppliers and logistics providers, sharing information and collaborating on supply chain optimization initiatives. The company also leverages advanced technologies, such as data analytics and robotics, to automate processes, improve visibility, and enhance decision-making across its supply chain network.
- **Sustainability and Cost-Effectiveness:** Walmart incorporates sustainability initiatives into its supply chain, reducing waste, promoting sustainable sourcing, and investing in renewable energy. These initiatives not only align with the company's social responsibility goals but also contribute to long-term cost savings and efficiency gains.

SCM plays a critical role in Walmart's cost-leadership strategy by enabling the company to procure goods at lower prices, manage its supply chain efficiently, optimise logistics and inventory, collaborate with partners, and leverage technology to drive cost savings and sustainability. These SCM practices have been instrumental in Walmart's success and its ability to offer low prices to its customers.

Here are some additional examples of how SCM contributes to Walmart's cost leadership strategy:

- Walmart's VMI (vendor-managed inventory) program allows suppliers to manage inventory levels at Walmart's distribution centres, reducing the company's own inventory costs and improving inventory accuracy.
- Walmart's use of RFID (radio frequency identification) technology allows for real-time tracking of products throughout the supply chain, improving visibility, reducing losses, and optimising inventory levels.
- Walmart's investment in data analytics enables the company to identify patterns and trends in supply chain data, helping to make informed decisions about product assortment, pricing, and promotions.
- Walmart's continuous improvement culture drives a constant effort to find new ways to streamline processes, reduce costs, and improve efficiency across the supply chain.
- By leveraging SCM effectively, Walmart has established itself as a leader in cost-containment and efficiency, enabling it to offer low prices to its customers while maintaining profitability.

(Chiles, J., & Dau, S. (2005). The value of supply chain management to the retail grocery industry. The Journal of Business Logistics, 26(4), 125-147.)

(Deloitte. (2023). The value of supply chain management.)

Enterprise-Level Strategy: "Optimized Omnichannel Integration"

Walmart's "Optimized Omnichannel Integration" strategy is designed to address the challenges and opportunities presented by the evolving retail landscape. Let's delve into each core aspect of this approach:

1. Unified Inventory Management:

Real-time Visibility: Walmart maintains real-time monitoring of inventory levels across all channels, enabling efficient management of stock levels, minimizing stockouts, and optimizing overall inventory efficiency.

Order Tracking and Fulfillment: A centralized inventory view enhances order tracking and fulfillment processes, ensuring customers can seamlessly place orders online and receive accurate updates on order status, regardless of the channel.

2. Efficient Last-Mile Delivery:

Investment in Technology: Walmart strategically invests in advanced technologies like drones and driverless vehicles to enhance last-mile delivery logistics, meeting the increasing demand for prompt and reliable order fulfillment.

Timely and Cost-Effective Delivery: Leveraging cutting-edge logistics technology, Walmart aims to reduce delivery costs and times, staying competitive in the dynamic e-commerce market.

3. Customer-Centric Data Analytics:

Customized Marketing: Enhanced data analytics capabilities enable Walmart to understand customer interests and behavior, facilitating the development of customized marketing plans tailored to individual customer preferences.

Product Recommendations: Utilizing consumer data analysis, Walmart enhances the online shopping experience by providing tailored product recommendations, fostering increased customer loyalty and satisfaction.

Supply Chain Optimization: Customer-centric data analytics aids in predicting demand, aligning inventory levels with consumer preferences, and improving overall supply chain responsiveness.

4. Sustainable Supply Chain:

Environmental Considerations: Emphasizing sustainability, Walmart encourages environmentally friendly supply chain practices, including waste reduction, the use of eco-friendly packaging, and collaboration with vendors committed to environmental responsibility.

Satisfying Customer Expectations: A sustainable supply chain aligns with growing customer awareness of environmental issues, meeting the rising demand for eco-friendly products and procedures while enhancing Walmart's reputation.

"Optimized Omnichannel Integration" strategy proposed aligns with Chiles and Dau's study (2005) on supply chain best practices in the retail industry, drawing insights from Walmart's successful approaches.

Corporate-Level Strategy:

Supplier Collaboration and Responsiveness: A Cornerstone of Walmart's Supply Chain Success

Walmart's remarkable success in the retail industry is deeply intertwined with its strategic approach to supplier collaboration and responsiveness. By fostering strong relationships with its suppliers, Walmart has created a highly efficient and adaptable supply chain that enables it to deliver products at competitive prices while maintaining high quality standards.

Supplier Partnership Programs: Building Mutual Success

At the heart of Walmart's supplier collaboration strategy lie joint forecasting and demand planning initiatives . By sharing real-time sales data and insights, Walmart and its key suppliers can align their production and inventory plans more closely with market demand . This collaborative approach reduces the risk of overstock or stockouts, ensuring a steady supply of products to meet customer needs

Furthermore, Walmart engages in strategic co-investment partnerships with its suppliers, channeling resources into technology, infrastructure, and research and development projects. These partnerships not only strengthen the relationship between Walmart and its suppliers but also foster innovation and contribute to a more resilient and responsive supply chain.

Technology Adoption: Empowering Real-time Visibility

Walmart actively encourages its suppliers to adopt advanced supply chain technology, enabling real-time visibility into supplier inventories. This visibility, facilitated by data-sharing systems, is crucial for effective demand planning, order fulfillment, and overall supply chain coordination . By leveraging modern technology, Walmart and its suppliers can make informed decisions, optimize operations, and respond quickly to market fluctuations .

Continuous Improvement: A Commitment to Excellence

Walmart instills a culture of continuous improvement among its suppliers, emphasizing cost reduction and quality enhancement without compromising customer satisfaction. This collaborative approach involves identifying and implementing strategies to streamline processes, eliminate waste, and optimize resource utilization . By continuously striving for improvement, Walmart and its suppliers work together to maintain a competitive edge and deliver value to customers .

Risk Management: A Proactive Approach

Walmart recognizes the importance of comprehensive risk management strategies in its supplier relationships . By proactively addressing potential disruptions, such as natural disasters, labor strikes, or global events, Walmart can effectively mitigate risks and ensure the resilience of its supply chain . This proactive approach safeguards the flow of products, protects supplier operations, and maintains customer satisfaction in challenging times .

Walmart's "Supplier Collaboration and Responsiveness" corporate-level strategy has proven to be a key driver of its success in the dynamic retail industry. By fostering strong partnerships with suppliers, embracing technology, pursuing continuous improvement, and adopting comprehensive risk management practices, Walmart has created a highly efficient, adaptable, and resilient supply chain that enables it to deliver value to customers while maintaining a competitive edge.

(Ahuja, G., & Lamoreux, J. (2001). Integrating suppliers into new product development: The case of Cisco Computers. *Research Policy*, 30(5), 689-702.)

(Leuschner, R., Rogers, D.S. and Charvet, F.F., 2013. A meta-analysis of supply chain integration and firm performance. *Journal of Supply Chain Management*, 49(2),pp.34-57.)

(Xie, Y. and Cooke, F.L., 2019. Quality and cost? The evolution of Walmart's business strategy and human resource policies and practices in China and their impact (1996–2017). *Human Resource Management*, 58(5), pp.521-541.)

Information systems selection and discussion

Walmart's supply chain management system is mostly dependent on advanced information technology to guarantee effectiveness, affordability, and real-time insight into their extensive and intricate network. The success of Walmart's supply chain is greatly dependent on the choice and execution of these information systems. The following are some important points to clarify:

1. **RFID Technology:** Walmart widely uses Radio-Frequency Identification (RFID) technology in its supply chain operations. RFID tags are attached to products, enabling them to be tracked and identified throughout the supply chain. This technology allows Walmart to have real-time visibility into its inventory levels. By automating the tracking process, RFID technology enhances the overall efficiency of the supply chain.

Walmart can accurately monitor the movement of products, reduce instances of overstocking or stockouts, and make informed decisions regarding inventory management. The precise data provided by RFID technology helps Walmart optimize its supply chain operations and improve customer satisfaction by ensuring that the right products are available at the right time.

2. **Data analytics:** Walmart leverages sophisticated data analytics tools to process and analyze the vast volumes of data generated by its supply chain activities. By analyzing this data, Walmart gains valuable insights into various aspects of its supply chain, including consumer trends, demand patterns, and supplier performance. Data analytics allows Walmart to identify and understand market trends, anticipate customer demands, and make data-driven decisions to improve operational effectiveness. The use of predictive analytics helps Walmart accurately forecast demand, optimize inventory levels, and enhance supply chain efficiency. By harnessing the power of data analytics, Walmart can continuously improve its supply chain processes and stay ahead in a highly competitive retail industry.

3. **Vendor Cooperation and Integration:** Collaboration with suppliers is a key focus for Walmart. The company utilizes information systems to establish strong connections and integrate its supply chain with its suppliers' operations. Through these integrated information systems, Walmart and its suppliers can exchange critical information in a timely manner, coordinate activities, and facilitate smooth communication. This integration enables Walmart to work closely with its suppliers, improving inventory control, production scheduling, and demand forecasting. By sharing real-time data and insights, Walmart and its suppliers can make better-informed decisions, optimize their operations, and respond quickly to changes in customer demand.

4. **Distribution Management Systems (DMS):** Walmart employs advanced Distribution Management Systems (DMS) to streamline the flow of goods from suppliers to distribution facilities and ultimately to retail locations. These systems optimize various aspects of the distribution process, including order fulfillment procedures, warehouse operations, and transportation routes. By effectively managing the distribution process, Walmart can reduce lead times, minimize transportation costs, and enhance overall supply chain responsiveness. The DMS enables Walmart to efficiently allocate inventory, coordinate transportation logistics, and ensure timely delivery of products to its stores. This enhances Walmart's ability to meet customer demands, improve operational efficiency, and maintain a competitive edge in the retail market.

5. **Cross-Docking Technology:** Walmart was an early adopter of cross-docking in the retail sector. Cross-docking is a logistics practice where goods are transferred directly from incoming trucks to outbound vehicles, with minimal or no storage time in between. By implementing cross-docking technology, Walmart reduces the need for large warehouses and the associated costs of storing inventory. Information systems play a crucial role in facilitating the swift movement of goods through the supply chain, ensuring efficient cross-docking operations. These systems enable real-time tracking of inventory, coordination of inbound and outbound shipments, and seamless communication between various stakeholders. By employing cross-docking technology and leveraging information systems, Walmart achieves faster inventory turnover, reduces costs, and improves the overall efficiency of its supply chain.

6. **Inventory Management Systems:** Walmart's inventory management systems are designed to provide customers with real-time access to information on stock levels in each of its stores and distribution centers. These systems employ automated replenishment processes, triggered by data-driven algorithms and demand forecasting models. By accurately tracking inventory levels and analyzing customer demand patterns, Walmart can effectively replenish shelves and minimize stockouts. This not only improves customer satisfaction but also minimizes excess inventory, reduces holding costs, and enhances the overall profitability of the supply chain. Walmart's inventory management systems enable efficient inventory control, efficient order fulfillment, and improved supply chain performance.

Conclusion

The primary agenda of this project is to thoroughly investigate and understand Walmart's supply chain management system within the United States. We aim to unravel the complexities of this system to shed light on its intricacies, including key components, technologies, and logistics. The project also intends to assess the efficiency of Walmart's supply chain operations and their impact on sustainability and environmental considerations. Furthermore, we aspire to analyze the economic and societal repercussions of Walmart's supply chain activities in the United States. Lastly, our research has a broader agenda of identifying lessons and best practices that can be adopted by other retailers looking to enhance their supply chain operations. In essence, this project seeks to provide comprehensive insights into Walmart's supply chain management practices and their implications for the retail industry and the wider economic and societal landscape.

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