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The Shift from Cost Cutting to Value Creation: A Paradigm for Integrating Procurement Strategy in Dufil Company, Port Harcourt

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Abstract

The study examines the shift from cost cutting to value creation through an integrated procurement strategy framework, using Dufil Industries, Port Harcourt as a case context. Procurement strategy was conceptualised through three dimensions, namely strategic sourcing, supplier relationship management, and procurement integration, while value creation was treated as a composite dependent variable. Three hypotheses were formulated and tested using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, given the ordinal nature of the perception-based data obtained through a structured questionnaire administered to 152 staff of the procurement, supply chain, and production departments. Descriptive results showed generally favourable perceptions of procurement practice, with strategic sourcing recording the highest mean score ($M = 3.74$), followed by value creation ($M = 3.68$) and supplier relationship management ($M = 3.61$), while procurement integration recorded the lowest, though still moderately high, mean score ($M = 3.42$). The correlation results showed that strategic sourcing ($rho = 0.612$, $p < 0.05$), supplier relationship management ($rho = 0.587$, $p < 0.05$), and procurement integration ($rho = 0.493$, $p < 0.05$) each had a positive and statistically significant relationship with value creation, leading to the rejection of all three null hypotheses, with strategic sourcing exerting the strongest association and procurement integration the weakest. The study is anchored on the Resource-Based View and Dynamic Capabilities Theory, which jointly explain how procurement-related resources and capabilities can be configured to create and sustain competitive advantage, and the findings are consistent with prior empirical studies linking sourcing, supplier relationships and functional integration to firm performance and value outcomes. The study concludes that procurement strategy, taken as a whole, significantly drives value creation in Dufil Company, Port Harcourt. It is recommended that procurement units in manufacturing firms such as Dufil Company be repositioned from transactional cost centres to strategic value-creating units.

Keywords:

Procurement strategy, strategic sourcing, supplier relationship management, procurement integration, value creation.

1. Introduction

For decades, procurement in many manufacturing organisations was treated as a back-office, transactional function whose primary mandate was to secure inputs at the lowest possible price (van Weele, 2018). Under this cost-cutting paradigm, procurement performance was measured almost exclusively in terms of unit price reduction and budget compliance, with little regard for the broader contribution that the function could make to organisational competitiveness (Lysons & Farrington, 2020). In recent years, however, scholars and practitioners alike have begun to question the adequacy of this narrow orientation, arguing that procurement, when strategically positioned, is capable of generating value well beyond price savings, including innovation, risk mitigation, quality improvement, and supply continuity (Cox, 1999; Monczka et al., 2020). This re-orientation, often described as a shift from cost cutting to value creation, requires procurement to be integrated into the strategic architecture of the firm rather than being treated as an isolated administrative task (Cousins, 2005). The trend in the procurement literature has, as such, moved progressively from studies that examined purchasing largely as a clerical and cost-control activity (Kraljic, 1983) towards studies that frame procurement as a strategic, relationship-based, and cross-functionally integrated capability. Carr and Pearson (2002) found that strategically oriented purchasing practices were significantly related to the financial performance of manufacturing firms, while Chen and Paulraj (2004) demonstrated that collaborative buyer-supplier relationships were associated with improved cost, quality, and delivery outcomes. Narasimhan and Das (2001) extended this line of enquiry by showing that the degree of integration between purchasing and other manufacturing functions had a direct bearing on performance, and within the Nigerian context, Ogbo et al. (2018) found that strategic sourcing and supplier evaluation practices were significantly related to the operational efficiency of manufacturing firms, while cautioning that procurement in many Nigerian organisations remains predominantly cost-focused rather than value-driven.

Despite this growing body of work, comparatively limited attention has been paid to how the dimensions of procurement strategy operate jointly, as a composite construct, to drive a similarly composite value creation outcome within a single Nigerian fast-moving consumer goods firm. It was observed that firms operating in volatile and import-dependent sectors, such as the Nigerian food and edible oil industry, are particularly exposed to the consequences of treating procurement as a cost centre, given their heavy reliance on imported raw materials, fluctuating exchange rates, and an increasingly competitive operating environment (Ogbo et al., 2018). Dufil Industries, the manufacturer of Indomie noodles and other food products with a major production facility in Port Harcourt, operates within this environment and therefore provides a relevant and under-researched context for examining how procurement strategy can be reoriented towards value creation.

It is against this background that this study examines the influence of procurement strategy, the independent variable, on value creation, the dependent variable, in Dufil Company, Port Harcourt. Procurement strategy is conceptualised through three dimensions, namely strategic sourcing, supplier relationship management, and procurement integration, each of which has been associated in prior studies with one or more aspects of organisational value (Carr & Pearson, 2002; Chen & Paulraj, 2004; Narasimhan & Das, 2001), while value creation is treated as a composite outcome reflecting cost efficiency, quality, supply reliability, and competitiveness. Whereas earlier studies have largely examined these dimensions in isolation or within sectors outside Nigeria's fast-moving consumer goods industry, the present study departs from this trend by jointly testing all three dimensions against a single composite value creation construct within Dufil Company, Port Harcourt, using Spearman's rank correlation to determine the strength and direction of each relationship. In doing so, the study aims to provide an empirically grounded basis for repositioning procurement in Dufil Company, and similarly situated manufacturing firms, from a cost-cutting function to a deliberate driver of organisational value.

2. Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Procurement Strategy

Procurement strategy refers to the deliberate, long-term plan through which an organisation acquires the goods, services, and inputs required for its operations in a manner that supports its overall competitive objectives (Monczka et al., 2020). As such, procurement strategy extends beyond the routine act of purchasing to encompass decisions on sourcing structures, supplier engagement, and the alignment of procurement activities with other functional areas of the business. For the purpose of this study, procurement strategy is operationalised through three dimensions, namely strategic sourcing, supplier relationship management, and procurement integration. Gonzalez-Benito (2007) argued that procurement strategy should be understood as a deliberate alignment between purchasing decisions and the competitive priorities of the firm, such as cost, quality, flexibility, and delivery, rather than as a standalone administrative plan disconnected from corporate strategy. It was observed that, viewed in this way, procurement strategy becomes a mechanism through which the firm translates its broader strategic intent into specific sourcing, supplier, and integration choices, and that firms which fail to make this connection tend to default to a narrow, price-driven orientation regardless of how their procurement plans are formally documented (van Weele, 2018). Lysons and Farrington (2020) further distinguished between procurement strategies that are reactive, in which purchasing simply responds to requisitions from other departments, and those that are proactive, in which procurement anticipates future requirements, market shifts, and supply risks well ahead of need. As such, a proactive procurement strategy requires the function to be staffed and structured in a manner that supports forward planning, supplier development, and category management, rather than the processing of purchase orders alone, and it is this proactive orientation that is most closely associated with the value-creation paradigm being examined in this study.

Strategic Sourcing

Strategic sourcing has been described as a systematic, data-driven approach to the procurement of goods and services that goes beyond price negotiation to consider total cost of ownership, supply risk, and the strategic importance of each purchase category (Kraljic, 1983). As such, strategic sourcing involves the segmentation of the supply base, the evaluation of supplier capability, and the continuous review of sourcing decisions in line with changing market conditions. Firms that pursue strategic sourcing are, as such, better positioned to secure favourable terms while also managing supply risk and supporting innovation. Building on Kraljic's (1983) original portfolio matrix, Ellram (1990) emphasised that strategic sourcing also involves a structured supplier selection process in which criteria such as financial stability, technical capability, and capacity for innovation are weighted alongside price, particularly for items classified as strategic or bottleneck in nature. It was observed that this broader evaluative approach allows the buying firm to identify suppliers capable of contributing to product development and continuous improvement, rather than simply those offering the lowest quotation, which in turn positions strategic sourcing as a forward-looking rather than purely defensive procurement activity. Monczka et al. (2020) added that strategic sourcing is most effective when it is organised around cross-functional sourcing teams that bring together procurement, engineering, and quality personnel to jointly define specifications and evaluate supplier offers, as opposed to leaving sourcing decisions solely to buyers acting in isolation. As such, the depth and rigour with which a firm conducts category analysis, market intelligence gathering, and supplier evaluation has been shown to determine the extent to which strategic sourcing translates into tangible cost, quality, and innovation benefits for the organisation.

Supplier Relationship Management

Supplier relationship management (SRM) is concerned with the structured management of interactions with suppliers in order to maximise the value derived from those relationships over time (Cousins, 2005). It was observed that SRM moves procurement away from an adversarial, transaction-by-transaction posture towards a more collaborative orientation in which information sharing, joint problem-solving, and long-term commitment are emphasised. Effective SRM practices have been associated with improved supply continuity, quality consistency, and access to supplier-driven innovation (Chen & Paulraj, 2004). Spekman et al. (1998) classified buyer-supplier relationships along a continuum ranging from purely transactional exchanges, in which price is the dominant consideration, to strategic partnerships, in which both parties commit resources towards shared, longer-term objectives. As such, the authors argued that the benefits typically attributed to SRM, including reduced transaction costs, improved responsiveness, and joint innovation, accrue mainly at the partnership end of this continuum, and that firms which maintain purely transactional relationships with their suppliers are unlikely to realise these benefits regardless of how frequently they interact with those suppliers. Similarly, Zaheer et al. (1998, as cited in Cousins, 2005) found that the level of inter-organisational trust between buyer and supplier firms was a significant predictor of relationship performance, including negotiation efficiency and conflict resolution, suggesting that the relational, rather than purely contractual, dimension of supplier engagement plays an important role in determining the outcomes of SRM. It was observed that this relational emphasis is particularly relevant in supply environments characterised by uncertainty, such as those faced by import-dependent manufacturing firms, where trust-based collaboration can compensate for the limitations of formal contracts in addressing unanticipated supply disruptions.

Procurement Integration

Procurement integration refers to the extent to which the procurement function is connected, both structurally and informationally, with other functions such as production, finance, and marketing, as well as with external supply chain partners (Narasimhan & Das, 2001). As such, an integrated procurement function participates in cross-functional planning and decision-making, rather than operating as an isolated transactional unit. Integration has been argued to reduce information asymmetry, shorten lead times, and enable procurement decisions that reflect organisation-wide priorities rather than narrow cost objectives. Lambert and Cooper (2000) distinguished between internal integration, which concerns the coordination of procurement with other departments within the same firm, and external integration, which concerns the coordination of procurement activities with suppliers and other supply chain partners beyond the firm's boundaries. It was observed that both forms of integration are necessary, since internal integration without corresponding external integration may produce well-coordinated internal plans that nonetheless fail to account for upstream supply constraints, while external integration without internal integration may improve supplier coordination without translating into improved outcomes for the rest of the organisation. Gonzalez-Benito (2007) further noted that the degree of procurement integration is often constrained by the organisational status accorded to the procurement function itself, such that firms in which procurement reports at a senior, strategic level tend to exhibit higher integration with production and finance than firms in which procurement is treated as a subordinate, clerical unit. As such, the structural positioning of procurement within the organisational hierarchy has been identified as both an enabler and a potential barrier to the cross-functional integration emphasised in this study.

Value Creation

Value creation, as used in this study, is treated as a composite outcome reflecting the range of benefits that an organisation derives from its procurement activities beyond price savings, including cost efficiency, quality improvement, supply reliability, and contribution to competitive advantage (Cox, 1999). It was observed that the value-creation paradigm reframes procurement performance as multidimensional, requiring a shift in how procurement contribution is measured and rewarded within the organisation. The notion of value creation in procurement draws conceptually on Porter's (1985) value chain framework, which positioned procurement as one of several support activities capable of either adding to or eroding the margin a firm generates from its primary activities. As such, Porter (1985) argued that the contribution of a support activity such as procurement should be assessed not merely by the cost it incurs, but by the extent to which it enhances the value delivered through the firm's primary activities, a perspective that underlies the present study's treatment of value creation as a composite, multidimensional construct rather than a single cost-based metric. Cox (1999) extended this view by distinguishing between value appropriation, in which one party to an exchange captures value at the expense of the other, typically through aggressive price negotiation, and value creation, in which both buyer and supplier jointly generate additional value that did not previously exist, for instance through process improvement or product innovation. It was observed that this distinction is particularly relevant to the present study, since a procurement function oriented towards value appropriation alone is unlikely to register meaningful gains on the quality, reliability, and innovation-related components of the composite value creation construct examined here, even where it succeeds in reducing unit prices.

Theoretical Review

This study is anchored on the Resource-Based View (RBV) and the Dynamic Capabilities Theory. The RBV, as propounded by Barney (1991), holds that firms can achieve sustained competitive advantage by acquiring and deploying resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable. Applied to procurement, the RBV suggests that sourcing capability, supplier relationships, and integrated procurement processes can themselves constitute valuable organisational resources capable of generating competitive advantage when they are difficult for rivals to replicate.

The Dynamic Capabilities Theory, developed by Teece et al. (1997), complements the RBV by explaining how firms reconfigure their resource base in response to changing environmental conditions. As such, procurement strategy is viewed not as a static set of routines but as a dynamic capability that allows the firm to sense supply market changes, seize opportunities for value creation, and reconfigure sourcing and supplier relationships accordingly. Taken together, these two theories provide a coherent basis for understanding how the dimensions of procurement strategy examined in this study, namely strategic sourcing, supplier relationship management, and procurement integration, can be expected to relate to value creation.

Empirical Review

A number of empirical studies have examined the relationship between procurement-related practices and organisational performance outcomes. Chen and Paulraj (2004) examined buyer-supplier relationships in manufacturing firms and found that collaborative supplier relationships were associated with improved cost, quality, and delivery performance, lending support to the proposition that supplier relationship management contributes to value-related outcomes. Similarly, Narasimhan and Das (2001) investigated the effect of purchasing integration on manufacturing performance and reported that firms with higher levels of cross-functional integration between procurement and production recorded better cost and quality outcomes than firms with low integration. This finding supports the expectation that procurement integration is positively associated with value creation.

In a related study, Carr and Pearson (2002) examined the relationship between strategic purchasing practices and financial performance among manufacturing firms and found a significant positive association, suggesting that sourcing decisions made with strategic intent, rather than purely transactional considerations, translate into measurable performance gains. Within the Nigerian context, Ogbo et al. (2018) studied procurement practices among manufacturing firms and found that strategic sourcing and supplier evaluation practices were significantly related to operational efficiency, while cautioning that many Nigerian manufacturing firms still operate procurement largely as a cost-control rather than value-creating function. Taken together, these empirical findings indicate that the individual dimensions of procurement strategy examined in this study have each been associated with value-related performance outcomes in prior research, although the specific composite conceptualisation of value creation adopted here has received comparatively limited attention, particularly within the Nigerian fast-moving consumer goods sector. This gap provides the empirical justification for the present study.

Hypotheses

Based on the foregoing review, the following null hypotheses are formulated to guide the study:

H01: Strategic sourcing has no significant relationship with value creation in Dufil Company, Port Harcourt.

H02: Supplier relationship management has no significant relationship with value creation in Dufil Company, Port Harcourt.

H03: Procurement integration has no significant relationship with value creation in Dufil Company, Port Harcourt.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design, considered appropriate for capturing perceptions of procurement and value-related outcomes at a single point in time among staff of Dufil Company, Port Harcourt. The population of the study comprised 165 staff drawn from the procurement, supply chain, and production departments of the organisation, given their direct exposure to sourcing, supplier engagement, and integration practices. A structured questionnaire was used to elicit responses on the three dimensions of procurement strategy and on the composite value creation construct, with items measured on a five-point Likert scale.

Given that Likert-scale data of this nature is ordinal rather than interval in strict statistical terms, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was adopted as the appropriate technique for testing the three hypotheses. Spearman's rank correlation is a non-parametric measure of the strength and direction of association between two ranked variables and does not require the assumption of a linear relationship or normally distributed data, making it suitable for the perception-based, ordinal data generated in this study (Sheskin, 2011). For each hypothesis, the rank correlation coefficient (rho) was computed between the relevant dimension of procurement strategy and the composite value creation variable, and the corresponding p-value was used, at the 0.05 level of significance, to determine whether the null hypothesis would be rejected or retained. Reliability of the research instrument was established through Cronbach's alpha, with a threshold of 0.70 adopted as the minimum acceptable level of internal consistency for each construct (Hair et al., 2019). Content validity was ensured through expert review of the questionnaire items prior to administration.

4. Results and Conclusion

Response Rate

A total of 165 copies of the questionnaire were administered to staff of Dufil Company, Port Harcourt drawn from the procurement, supply chain, and production departments. Out of this number, 152 copies were returned and found usable for analysis, representing a response rate of 92.1 percent, which was considered adequate for the analysis that followed.

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	89	58.6
	Female	63	41.4
Age	20–29 years	31	20.4
	30–39 years	64	42.1
	40–49 years	42	27.6
	50 years and above	15	9.9
Educational Qualification	OND/NCE	28	18.4
	HND/BSc	94	61.8
	MSc and above	30	19.7
Work Experience	Below 5 years	47	30.9
	5–10 years	68	44.7
	Above 10 years	37	24.3
Department	Procurement/Supply Chain	81	53.3
	Production	71	46.7

Table 1 present information on demographic profile as we can see majority of respondents (58.6%) were male, while most fell within the 30–39 years age bracket (42.1%), suggesting a reasonably youthful and experienced workforce. As such, a large proportion of respondents (61.8%) held a Higher National Diploma or Bachelor's degree, and a combined 69.0 percent had at least five years of work experience, indicating that respondents possessed sufficient familiarity with the procurement and production processes under examination to provide informed responses.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
Strategic Sourcing	152	3.74	0.681	High
Supplier Relationship Management	152	3.61	0.715	High
Procurement Integration	152	3.42	0.789	Moderate
Value Creation (Composite)	152	3.68	0.652	High

Table 1 present information on descriptive statistics, as we can see strategic sourcing recorded the highest mean score (M = 3.74, SD = 0.681), followed by value creation (M = 3.68, SD = 0.652) and supplier relationship management (M = 3.61, SD = 0.715), while procurement integration recorded the lowest mean (M = 3.42, SD = 0.789), suggesting that cross-functional integration of procurement with other departments was rated comparatively lower than sourcing and supplier-related practices. It was observed that all four variables nonetheless reflected mean scores above the midpoint of 3.0 on the five-point scale, indicating generally favourable perceptions of procurement practice within the organisation.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

H_{01}: Strategic sourcing has no significant relationship with value creation in Dufil Company, Port Harcourt.

Table 3: Spearman's Correlation on Strategic Sourcing and Value Creation

		Strategic sourcing	value creation
Spearman's rho	Strategic sourcing		
	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.612**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	152	152
	value creation		
	Correlation Coefficient	0.612**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	152	152

Table 3 presents the spearman's rank correlation result, as we can see our result showed a coefficient of rho = 0.612, p = 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), indicating a positive and statistically significant relationship between strategic sourcing and value creation. As such, the null hypothesis (H01) is rejected, and it is concluded that strategic sourcing has a significant relationship with value creation in Dufil Company, Port Harcourt. The strength of the coefficient suggests a moderately strong positive association, implying that improvements in strategic sourcing practice are accompanied by corresponding improvements in value creation outcomes.

Hypothesis Two

H_{02}: Supplier relationship management has no significant relationship with value creation in Dufil Company, Port Harcourt.

Table 4: Spearman's Correlation on Supplier relationship management and Value Creation

		Supplier relationship management	value creation
Spearman's rho	Supplier relationship management		
	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.587**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	152	152
	value creation		
	Correlation Coefficient	0.587**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	152	152

Table 4 presents the spearman's rank correlation result, as we can see our result showed a correlation coefficient of rho = 0.587, p = 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), indicating a positive and statistically significant relationship between supplier relationship management and value creation. The null hypothesis (H02) is, as such, rejected, and it is concluded that supplier relationship management has a significant relationship with value creation in Dufil Company, Port Harcourt. This moderately strong positive relationship suggests that collaborative engagement with suppliers contributes meaningfully to the value outcomes derived from procurement.

Hypothesis Three

H_{03}: Procurement integration has no significant relationship with value creation in Dufil Company, Port Harcourt.

Table 5: Spearman's Correlation on Procurement Integration and Value Creation

		Procurement Integration	value creation
Spearman's rho	Procurement Integration		
	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.493**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	152	152
	value creation		
	Correlation Coefficient	0.493**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	152	152

Table 5 presents the spearman's rank correlation result, as we can see our yields rho = 0.493, p = 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), indicating a positive and statistically significant, though comparatively weaker, relationship between procurement integration and value creation relative to the other two dimensions. The null hypothesis (H03) is rejected, and it is concluded that procurement integration has a significant relationship with value creation in Dufil Company, Port Harcourt, even though its association with value creation is less pronounced than that of strategic sourcing and supplier relationship management.

Discussion of Findings

The finding that strategic sourcing has the strongest relationship with value creation (rho = 0.612) is consistent with Carr and Pearson (2002), who found those purchasing decisions made with strategic intent translate into measurable performance gains beyond unit-price savings. It was observed that this finding lends support to the Resource-Based View, in that a well-developed sourcing capability constitutes a valuable, difficult-to-imitate resource capable of generating sustained value for the firm (Barney, 1991).

Similarly, the significant relationship between supplier relationship management and value creation (rho = 0.587) aligns with Chen and Paulraj (2004), who reported that collaborative buyer-supplier relationships were associated with improved cost, quality, and delivery outcomes. This suggests that the move away from adversarial supplier engagement towards collaboration, as practised within Dufil Company, is contributing to value outcomes consistent with the value-creation paradigm being examined in this study.

The comparatively weaker, though still significant, relationship between procurement integration and value creation (rho = 0.493) mirrors the caution raised by Ogbo et al. (2018) regarding the tendency of Nigerian manufacturing firms to retain procurement as a relatively isolated, cost-focused function. As such, while procurement integration was found to matter, its weaker association relative to sourcing and supplier management suggests that cross-functional alignment between procurement and other departments within Dufil Company may still be at a developing stage, in line with the lower descriptive mean recorded for this variable.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has argued that the conventional cost-cutting orientation of procurement is no longer sufficient for organisations operating in dynamic and resource-constrained environments such as the Nigerian fast-moving consumer goods sector. Drawing on the Resource-Based View and Dynamic Capabilities Theory, the study positioned strategic sourcing, supplier relationship management, and procurement integration as the central dimensions through which procurement can be reoriented towards value creation in Dufil Company, Port Harcourt. The Spearman's rank correlation results showed that all three dimensions had a positive and statistically significant relationship with value creation, with strategic sourcing exerting the strongest association (rho = 0.612), followed by supplier relationship management (rho = 0.587), and procurement integration (rho = 0.493). On this basis, all three null hypotheses were rejected, and it is concluded that procurement strategy, through strategic sourcing, supplier relationship management, and procurement integration, significantly drives value creation in Dufil Company, Port Harcourt, with cross-functional integration representing the relatively weaker, and therefore most improvable, link in this relationship. Arising from the findings on each of the three hypotheses tested, the following recommendations are made:

i. Based on the finding that strategic sourcing has the strongest significant relationship with value creation (H01), it is recommended that management of Dufil Company strengthen its strategic sourcing practices by formally segmenting its supply base, evaluating suppliers on total cost of ownership and risk rather than price alone, and routinely reviewing sourcing decisions in line with changing supply market conditions, so as to consolidate and sustain the value already being derived from this dimension.

ii. Based on the finding that supplier relationship management has a significant relationship with value creation (H02), it is recommended that management deepen collaborative engagement with key suppliers through structured information sharing, joint problem-solving, and longer-term relationship commitments, rather than treating supplier interactions as one-off, price-driven transactions, in order to further enhance supply continuity, quality consistency, and innovation derived from the supply base.

iii. Based on the finding that procurement integration has the weakest, though still significant, relationship with value creation (H03), it is recommended that management prioritise the structural and informational integration of the procurement function with production, finance, and marketing, through joint planning meetings, shared performance metrics, and integrated information systems, as this dimension currently contributes the least to value creation and therefore holds the greatest room for improvement.

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