

FACTORS INFLUENCING STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE MOLDOVAN WINE ON THE NEW MARKETS

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Abstract: *In today's competitive business environment, coupled with the economics recession which has left many companies closed and some bankrupt, the organizations that survived the recession are now trying to pull their foot back to status quo. These organizations tend to increase or expand their business, and the only way this could be successful is for them to move from the highly competitive and saturated Western markets and explore new market and opportunities. It is against this background that Stratbull Leaders LTD in Republic of Moldova is trying to expand it sales volumes and profit margin by extending its product to a new market which is Africa (Nigeria). The paper aims to investigate factors that influence strategies to promote Moldovan wine on the Nigerian market.*

Keywords: *strategies, factors, Moldovan wine, markets.*

JEL Classification: *L1, F2, H32.*

1. Introduction

In today's competitive business environment, coupled with the economics recession which has left many companies closed and some bankrupt, the organizations that survived the recession are now trying to pull their foot back to status quo. These organizations tend to increase or expand their business, and the only way this could be successful is for them to move from the highly competitive and saturated Western markets and explore new market and opportunities. It is against this background that *Stratbull Leaders LTD* in Republic of Moldova is trying to expand it sales volumes and profit margin by extending its product to a new market which is Africa (Nigeria).

Considering the fact that doing business in Europe and other Western countries are different from doing business in Africa (Nigeria) as the former has an organized market with comprehensive customer information's, the later does not and this makes it difficult for Western companies to operate in the Nigeria market. Also while planning to do business in Nigeria; it is pertinent that a company views Nigeria from its diverse cultural perspective. Despite the fact that Nigeria is a country that shares same National Anthem, currency etc, it is a multicultural economy where different cultures do not have similarity. Since culture is people's way of life which influences their lifestyle, it means that doing business in Nigeria requires a survey on how to handle or manage different cultural background in Nigeria, as what is good in the South may not be good in the North. The result of the interviews with the 76 participants from wine suppliers in Lagos Island, Nigeria indicates that the common themes include human resources, management and market related factors.

2. Research Methodology

Focusing on last mile wine distribution, the study intends to investigate the last mile distribution practices for wine suppliers in Lagos Island, Nigeria. This research addresses to the following questions: what are the factors that influence the effectiveness of the last mile distribution function? what is the impact of a last mile distribution strategy on company performance? what factors are limiting the transportation of wine supply? what are the strategies employed to improve the effectiveness of last mile distribution? The

main goal is to recommend appropriate improvement strategies for wine suppliers in Lagos Island, Nigeria, in order to minimize their last mile wine distribution challenges.

The mixed research method involves the use of both the quantitative and qualitative research method to complement each other in order to embark on a given research study.

3. The Human Resources Factors

50 of the 76 participants stated that most of the wine distributors in Lagos Nigeria have been able to take effective advantage of their human resources to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their last mile distribution. Furthermore, 50 participants explained that they have also had to directly sell the wine products in a bid to facilitate door to-door-sales and to reach a significant number of local customers at their different locations. Figure 1 illustrates the results of human resources factors impacting last mile distribution.

The participants explained that they recorded improvements in their last mile distribution by employing several truck and van drivers to facilitate the faster movement of freight from terminals, ports, depots and wholesalers to retailers and finally to consumers. Considering that labor costs are generally relatively quite low in Nigeria, 50 participants in 2015 argued that the relatively low human resources costs have not only enabled them to reduce the final prices significantly, but also led to increased speed and efficiency in the delivery of their wine products to the final consumers, while in 2017 about 60 participants share this same opinion. This, along with Laseter et al.'s (2011) views, can be assumed to back the theories of distribution efficiency.

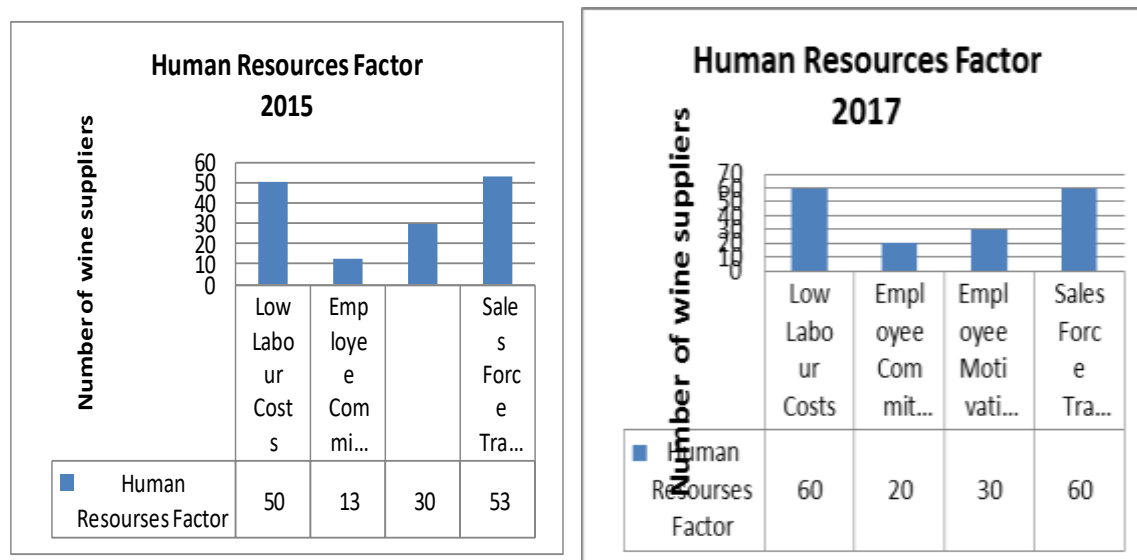


Figure 1. Human Resources Factors Impacting Last Mile Distribution Source

Source: researcher's own construct

In 2015, 13 of the participants noted that the commitment which has been demonstrated by most of their employees also made it possible for them to ensure that products reach the final consumers as fast as possible, while in 2017 about 20 participants share this same opinion. They explained that most of the employed drivers and off-loaders are quite willing to work overtime and night hours to ensure that products are delivered during the times when congestion and heavy traffic on the roads are minimal. In 2015, 30 respondents (illustrated in Figure 1) agreed that the levels of employee motivation have been significant in influencing the effectiveness of last mile distribution.

They stated that in addition to ensuring the efficient movement of freight, the commitment and motivation of employees have resulted in the development of good relationships with the customers.

30 participants noted that the development of good relationships has made it possible for transporters to build trust and manage customers' orders so that they are able to deliver goods after normal work hours, in the event of late deliveries, while in 2017 about 30 participants share this opinion which is the same as 2015. Figure 1 also shows that 53 participants noted that constant investment in training of the sales force has enhanced their skills and performance, while in 2017 about 60 participants share this same opinion. According to 60 of the participants, this made it possible for their salespeople to conclude sales quickly and ensure that significant amounts of products were sold to final consumers.

The overall analysis of the primary findings in this section would imply that human resources factors influence the effectiveness of the last mile distribution. In addition, other themes emerging from the analysis of the interview findings suggest that management-related factors also affect the effectiveness of last mile distribution.

3.1. The Management Factors. The analysis of participants revealed that the management-related factors that affect the effectiveness of the last mile distribution include management commitment, third party logistics providers, door-to-door couriers, partnership with customers, and location decisions during the establishments of depots. Figure 2 illustrates the management factors in last mile distribution. Regarding management commitment, 32 respondents explained that the achievement of an effective last mile distribution involved several factors including investments in trucks, storage facilities and constant research, evaluation and improvement in the general effectiveness of the last mile distribution. Most of the 32 participants explained that quite often, there is a tendency among Nigerian wine suppliers to think that the distribution merely involved a depot and supplying products to retailers. However, distributors who subscribed to such a management approach have been faced with challenges that include defection of drivers, and being outsold by competitors in better locations and those who significantly invested in the acquisition of more vans and trucks.

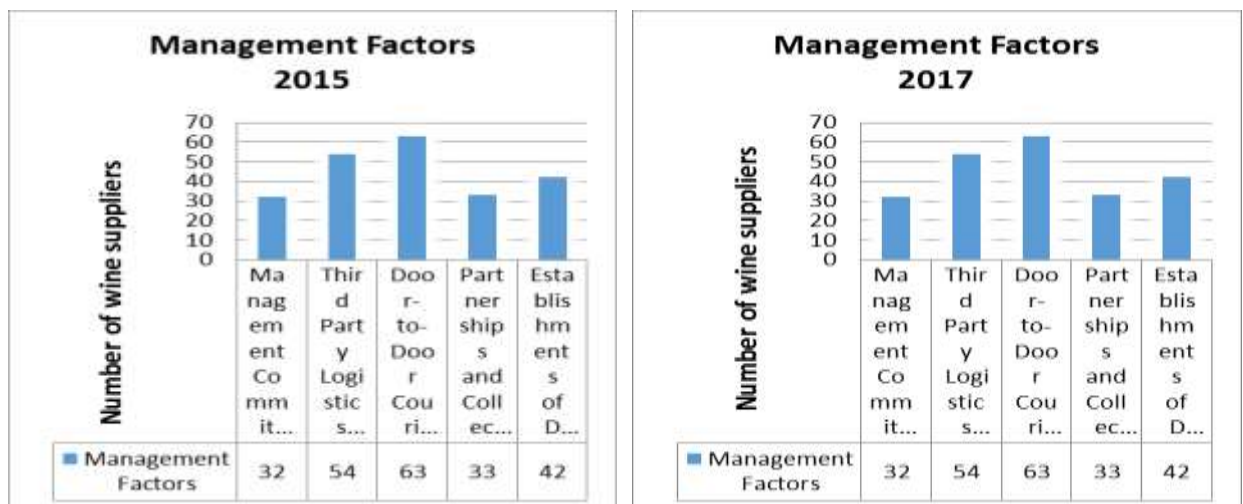


Figure 2. Management Factors in Last Mile Distribution

Source: researcher's own construct

In 2015, 32 participants explained that an effective last mile distribution network requires managers to demonstrate commitment that entails working overtime, constant

evaluation and improvement of the process and making finances readily available in case of need. These respondents also explained that so far, evidence indicates that those managements who are less committed, have faced challenges such as limited trucks and a poorly committed management which result from the manager's failure to ensure that all employees are well remunerated. While in 2017 about 32 participants share this opinion which is the same as 2015. These respondents seem to suggest that even though, as Rodrigue (2013), Silva (2013) and Gunasekaran, Patel and Tirtiroglu (2001) state, the use of the Internet, freight courier companies and the integration of transportation influence the effectiveness of last mile distribution, without management commitment, those strategies may not have a significant impact on the last mile distribution in the Nigerian context.

Besides management commitment, in 2015, 54 participants noted that the extent, to which third party logistics providers are used, is one of the core factors determining the effectiveness of the last mile distribution. While in 2017 about 54 participants also share this opinion which is the same as 2015. 54 participants noted that the decisions on third party logistics providers depend on management commitment and the availability of finances. They explained that at present, the third party logistic providers engaged by the wine suppliers include private van owners running their own businesses, and freight companies. These pointed out that, to a significant extent, the use of these third party logistics providers enabled Nigerian wine companies to reduce their freight workloads, something they cannot achieve with the limited number of trucks and vans that they own. In addition, the 54 participants noted that the use of third party logistics providers has enabled them to reduce costs which could have been incurred in the purchase of trucks and vans.

They further noted that the use of the third party logistics suppliers makes it possible for wine products to reach different locations in Nigeria, since most third party logistics suppliers are specialist transporters who know alternative routes and are able to ensure that products reach different locations even in the event of traffic congestion. Yet, the participants said that most of the third party logistics providers who use their own vans also provide cost benefits as they often take on additional work to cover the costs of van ownership and maintenance, and as such tend not to charge higher prices for the delivery of freight to local customers.

In 2015, 63 participants use door-to-door delivery as a strategy for improving the effectiveness of last mile distribution. While in 2017 about 63, participants also share this opinion which is the same as 2015. This, according to them, improves retailers' satisfaction and loyalty. Also, as Figure 2 shows, that in 2015, 33 participants indicated that they build business partnerships with customers by soliciting for direct collection in exchange for price reductions. While in 2017 about 33 participants also share this opinion which is the same as 2015. These participants noted that this has resulted in better working relationships where most retailers are able to ignore certain weaknesses that may have emerged in the supplier's last mile distribution. Above all, in 2015, 42 participants noted that in a number of instances, they have been careful when determining locations for their depots. Considering the fact that most urban areas in Nigeria are over congested and saturated, while in 2017 about 42 participants also share this opinion which is the same as 2015. The 42 participants said most of them prefer locating depots in rural areas, so that they avoid traffic and congestion in the urban areas, and benefit from proximity to local consumers.

These respondents noted that the location of depots in rural areas has improved the speed, efficiency, and cost at which freight is moved from depots to the final consumers. In conclusion, the overall analysis of the primary findings would suggest that the kinds of management-related factors that influence the effectiveness of last mile distribution include management commitment, third party logistics providers, door-to-door couriers,

partnership with customers, and location decisions during the establishment of depots. Interviewees revealed that through the development of effective last mile distribution, they are able to meet their market-related needs that include the provision of quality freight services, low costs, meeting customers' expectations, and provision of information and communication. While these findings are supported by the arguments of Rodrigue (2013), Silva (2013) and Gunasekaran, Patel and Tirtiroglu (2001), participants also revealed that the effectiveness of last mile distribution is hampered by a number of limitations.

3.2. Factors Limiting the Transportation of Wine. Most participants revealed that the effectiveness of the last mile distribution network is also affected by distribution limitations, management-related limitations, ports and terminal-related limitations, customer-related limitations, and governmental limitations. To a significant degree, these primary findings echo the views of Scott (2009) and Allen (2012) who argue that research on last mile distribution as a supply chain management strategy has become important due to the poor planning of the road infrastructure in most developing countries. Consequently, a significant number of modern business enterprises now face the challenge of distributing or making deliveries in urban areas where the convergence of retailers, restaurants and other merchants contribute to congestion and traffic that slow movement across central districts.

3.3. The Distribution Limitations. Regarding distribution limitations, most participants felt that effective last mile distribution for the Nigerian wine suppliers is hindered by the lack of effective urban/ rural distribution centers, poor usage of the Internet, poor transportation facilities, and a competitive door-to-door delivery market. It is noted in Figure 3 that 55 participants mentioned that a lack of effective distribution centers seems to affect the effectiveness of the last mile distribution. Most wine suppliers in Nigeria tend to operate on smaller scales, with the effect that they only use shops with limited storage facilities. As these respondents explained, limited storage facilities in urban centers limit the amount of consignments that can be ordered, thereby contributing to the problem of inventory management and costs. This means that Nigerian wine suppliers must constantly place orders for wine products from South Africa, Europe and the rest of the world. This constant ordering of smaller wine consignments from different countries results in cost increments and mars the effectiveness of last mile distribution. The respondents explained that limited storage facilities make it impossible for them to stock sufficient products to meet increasing demands for wine consumption in Nigeria. The following figure illustrates the distribution limitation in last mile distribution.

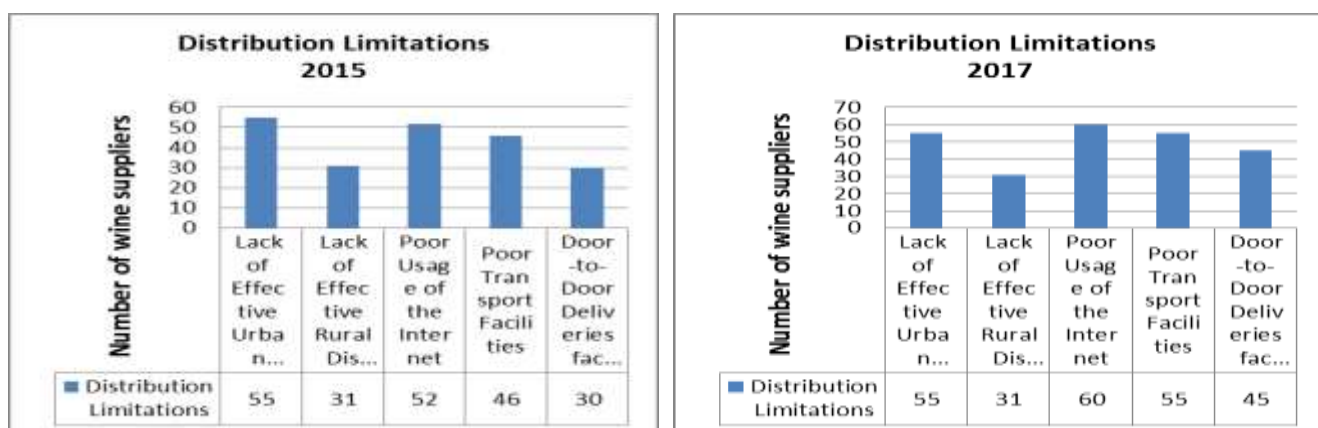


Figure 3. Distribution Limitations in Last Mile Distribution

Source: researcher's own construct

They also state that in the absence of effective large scale urban distribution centers, it will be difficult for them to effectively address the challenges they are facing. In addition to the lack of effective urban distribution centers, in 2015, 55 respondents indicated that due to increasing congestion, traffic and costs that are involved in the establishment of urban distribution centers, most wine distributors in Lagos Island, Nigeria would have considered setting up rural distribution centers. They also explained that distribution centers are increasingly being concentrated in urban centers, a situation that is contributing to the slow process of moving freight from urban centers to rural wine consumers, and that also keeps the centers less proximate to rural customers, while in 2017 about 55 participants also share this opinion which is the same as in 2015. They explained that while it was true that the establishment of the distribution centers enhances the extent to which wine dealers are able to service the significant number of wine consumers in urban centers, they also noted that establishing these centers far away from the larger consumers in rural areas not only affects the efficiency and effectiveness of moving products to final consumers, but also affects sales increment, profitability and competitiveness.

Increasingly, a number of industries are adopting the use of the Internet as a means of improving the effectiveness of last mile distribution. In 2015, 52 participants explained that they, along with final customers, face significant challenges in using the Internet for this purpose. While in 2017 about 60 participants share this opinion. They spoke of the fear of hackers and fraudsters in the use of e-commerce. Despite the fact that there are limitations arising from lack of sufficient funds to invest in information systems, these respondents also expressed concerns that even if e-commerce were used, the process of delivering the actual wine products cannot be accomplished online, but through vans and trucks that can still contribute to congestion and traffic.

Besides the challenges associated with e-commerce, 46 participants revealed that poor roads resulting from poor governmental commitments with regard to road maintenance, also affect the movement of wine consignments from terminals to depots, wholesalers, retailers and final consumers. While in 2017 about 55 participants share this opinion. They noted that most of the roads they use are not tarred or paved and that many have potholes, all of which make movements very difficult especially when it rains and trucks (particularly those which go to rural locations) get stuck. According to these 55 participants, this slows down the process of moving wine consignments in the last mile distribution networks.

Although door-to-door delivery is used by all the wine suppliers, Figure 3 in 2015 indicates that 30 of them stated that this is still hampered by congestion and traffic. They also noted that door-to-door delivery is experiencing challenges associated with the poor planning of urban centers that sometimes make it difficult to locate certain customers in rural locations; while in 2017 about 45 participants share this opinion. The consequence is that the trucks or vans engaged in door-to-door deliveries usually get lost, thereby leading to delays and slowing the processes of moving the wine products to the local customers.

3.4. Management-related Limitations. The thematic evaluations of the results of the interviews indicate that management-related challenges which are limiting the effectiveness of last mile distribution include lack of sufficient funds, poorly skilled managers and employees, poor training of the sales force, high levels of competition, and high marketing costs. Figure 4 in 2015, shows that 40 participants explained that lack of funds limited the extent to which management is able to invest in all the facilities required to facilitate effectiveness. While in 2017 about 50 participants share this opinion. They

also noted that the last mile distribution for the wine products would be improved if there were multiple distribution points in different parts of Nigeria. They explained that this would enable them to bypass several challenges including congestion and traffic. Figure 4 illustrates the results of management-related limitations in last mile distribution.

50 participants also noted that limited funds have hampered investment in a significant number of trucks. In effect, they revealed that most wine distributors tend to subcontract or outsource the delivery of wine to courier companies that are well resourced. However, as they explained, the downside of such a strategy has been that they have been unable to save costs resulting in their not being able to offer their wine products cheaper in order to attain price advantages over other beverage dealers. In line with the revelations of these 40 participants, wine consumption is still viewed by a significant number of Nigerians as the drink for the most affluent due to the premium prices charged.

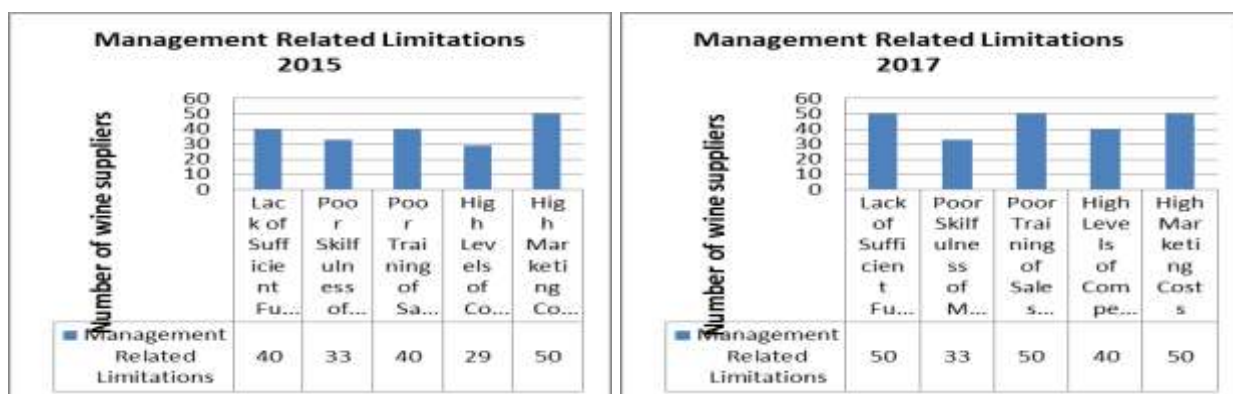


Figure 4. Management Related Limitations in Last Mile Distribution

Source: researcher's own construct

33 participants also noted that the effectiveness of the last mile distribution is limited by the inability of managers and employees to ensure that it is constantly evaluated and improved in accordance with changes in the modern business environment. While in 2017 about 33 participants share this opinion which is the same as in 2015. The poor skills among managers and employees are one of the challenges facing the effectiveness of last mile distribution. Also, from 29 participants in 2015 increased to 40 in 2017; 50 participants in 2015 believed that high marketing costs make it difficult for them to obtain more customers. While in 2017 about 50 participants share this opinion which is the same as 2015. Participants explained that without a significant number of customers, the effective movement of wine products is significantly hampered.

3.5. Ports and Terminal-related Limitations. Interviewees explained that ports and terminal-related limitations that they contend with include slow custom processes, poor services, incompetent officials, limited storage facilities, as well as limited capacity of ports and terminals.

In 2015, 60 participants explained that most customs services are quite slow and do not guarantee the quick clearing of wine consignments ordered from foreign countries for distribution to the customers. While in 2017 about 60 participants share this opinion. According to these 60 participants, these delays of the customs processes slow down the effectiveness of wine distribution. They also attribute poor customs service to the shortage of personnel. Figure 5 illustrates the results of ports and terminal limitation impacting on last mile distribution.

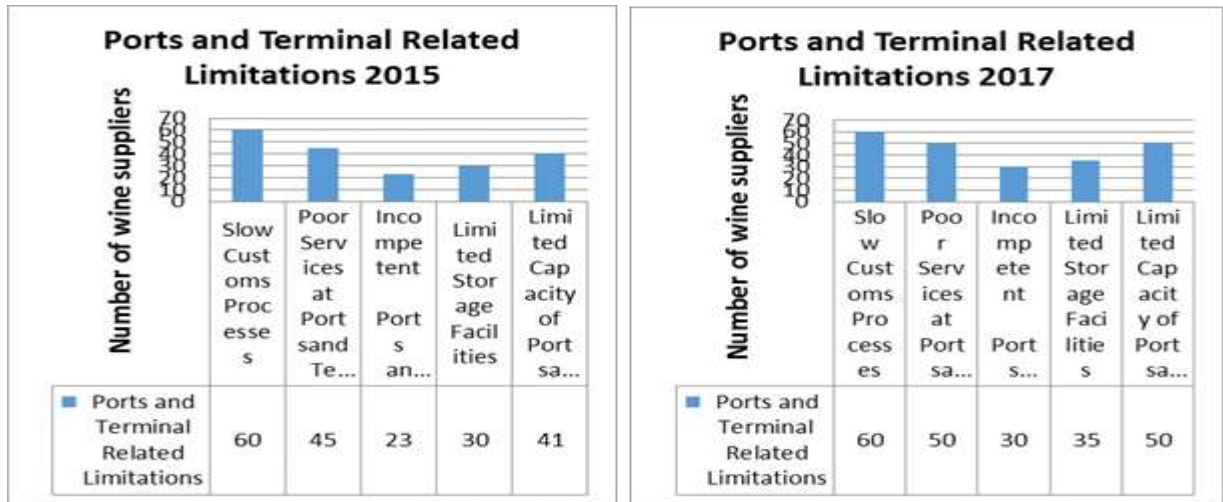


Figure 5. Ports and Terminal Related Limitations impacting on last mile distribution
Source: researcher's own construct

In 2015, 45 participants also pointed out challenges associated with the fact that most companies providing port services have not invested in the upgrading of their equipment to ensure that they use more efficient modern equipment, while in 2017 about 50 participants share this opinion. They explained that a number of the Nigerian ports do not have sufficient capacity and storage facilities, and in effect in a number of cases, arriving cargoes are forced to remain on board until storage space is created. These views are corroborated by 30 other interviewees in 2015 who identified the lack of effective storage facilities at the ports as a problem, while in 2017 about 35 participants share this opinion. Similarly, 41 participants in 2015 noted that lack of adequate capacity limits the ability of the existing terminals and ports to effectively and efficiently handle the workload resulting from the increasing volumes of cargo. While in 2017 about 50 participants share this opinion.

23 participants in 2015 also stated that because most workers at the ports and terminals are incompetent, they are unable to effectively and efficiently accomplish the management of the constant inflow of cargo. This creates conditions that make it difficult for imported wine products to be transported efficiently and speedily to the wholesalers and subsequently to the retailers. While in 2017 about 30 participants share this opinion.

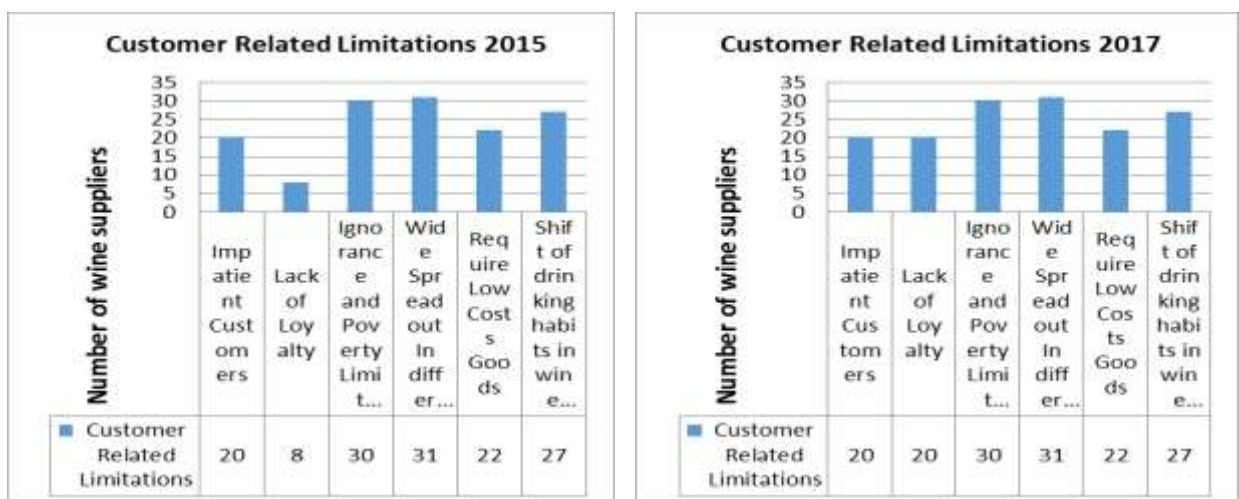


Figure 6. Customer Related Limitations on Last Mile distribution activities
Source: researcher's own construct

Participants include impatient customers, lack of loyalty, ignorance, limited Internet usage, wide ranging scarcity of wine in different remote rural locations, demand for low cost goods, and a gradual shift in drinking habits towards wine consumption. 20 interviewees stated that impatient customers are a problem for the effective accomplishment of last mile activities. While in 2017 about 20 participants also share this opinion which is the same as in 2015. They noted that because there are numerous suppliers, final customers find it easier to switch from one source to another in the event of a delay.

The implication is that the same goods must be reloaded and transported back at the cost of the supplier. These unnecessary costs subsequently add to the general operational costs of managing freight movements. Although building good customer relationships is one of the strategies through which impatient customers can be effectively managed, participants noted that practice has proven that it is possible to deal with impatient customers who are unwilling to compromise their demands for efficient and effective services. The views of these 20 participants suggest that it is not possible to effectively manage the last mile distribution without the cooperation and inclusion of customers as partners in the chain. Figure 6 illustrates the results despite the fact that their views substantiate the opinions of 8 other participants who expressed concerns about lack of customer loyalty, while in 2017 20 participants also share this opinion. In 2015, 30 interviewees stated that ignorance of Internet usage among most Nigerian wine customers has made it impossible for them to use the Internet as a means of reducing challenges in the last mile distribution. While in 2017 about 30 participants also share this opinion which is the same as in 2015. 31 interviewees stated that the wine customers spread out in the different parts of Nigeria also render the transportation of wine from the wholesalers to the retailers difficult and costly. While in 2017 about 31 participants also share this opinion which is the same as in 2015. Yet, as 22 of the participants noted, most wine customers usually require price cuts which cannot be provided in view of increasingly costly last mile distribution processes, while in 2017 about 22 participants also share this opinion which is the same as in 2015. Although in a number of instances, the wholesalers are able to transport wine to retailers effectively. 27 interviewees explained that there is still a significant challenge experienced in convincing consumers to shift their drinking habits in favor of wine, while in 2017 about 27 participants also share this opinion which is the same as in 2015.

According to them, this challenge implies that whereas improvement in the efficiency of last mile distribution would influence the effective movement of wine products to the customers, the customers get stuck with a significant amount of wine. A solution to this problem is proposed by Walsh (2006). He argues that the values that are associated with the improvement in the last mile distribution network will come in handy, especially when accompanied by the applications of the relevant strategies for improving the effectiveness of direct marketing. He also suggests that marketers at the retail levels must apply a marketing framework that involves learning about the available direct and indirect channels, evaluating the essential customers' requirements, matching the distribution strategies to the objectives and customers' needs, and selecting the right channel partners.

3.6. Governmental Limitations. Participants noted that governmental limitations affect the last mile distribution negatively. Issues they highlighted are poor strategic partnerships with government departments, poor road facilities, high levels of congestion and traffic, corruption among government officials, changes in import regulations, and

high import duties. 45 participants felt that there were limited partnerships between ordinary businesses and government. See Figure 7 indicating the results of government limitation on last mile distribution, while in 2017 about 45 participants also share this opinion which is the same as in 2015.

They stated that partnerships between government and business can be achieved through activities such as road improvements and construction, improving the speed of customs services, and the expansion of ports and terminal facilities. 34 interviewees explained that most roads that are presently used are full of pot holes, while in 2017 about 34 participants also share this opinion which is the same as in 2015. Although the improvements of such roads do not fall within the domain of the private sector, strong partnerships between the private sector and government would significantly result in the development of roads. This will in return facilitate the faster and quicker movement of wine products from the wholesalers to the retailers and subsequently to the final consumers.

Their view is supported by Allen and Browne (2012) who note that poor and limited capacity of ports and terminals limit the fast processing of logistic services and slow down the process of moving freight from ports to the distributors, wholesalers, retailers and final customers. They argue that the solution lies in partnerships between freight transport companies and policy makers. According to 67 participants, this has not been forthcoming due to the failure of the Nigerian government to implement regulations that will reduce traffic congestion in urban centers, while in 2017 about 67 participants also share this opinion which is the same as in 2015. They explained that there are only a few of the council bye-laws that have been implemented to regulate and control the movement of freight vans and trucks in urban centers. The uncontrolled movement of heavy duty trucks and numerous delivery vans results in congestion and slow movement of the wine supplies from the wholesalers to the retailers.

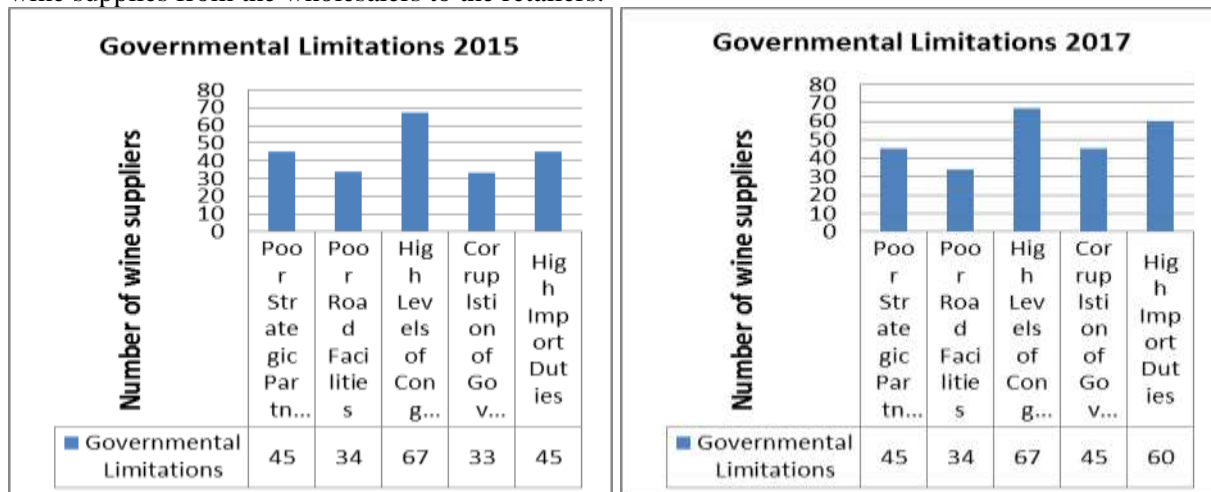


Figure 7. Governmental Limitation Impacts on Last Mile Distribution

Source: researcher's own construct

They also felt that designated lanes for moving freight can ease traffic congestion and allow goods to be moved faster. Although cutting costs is one of the strategic objectives that they seek to achieve. In 2015, 33 participants noted that the increasing corruption and demand for bribes by some Nigerian government officials have resulted into cost escalations. While in 2017 about 45 participants also share this opinion. Furthermore, these 33 participants explained that demands for bribes by government officials make the effective accomplishment of ports and terminal services difficult. They say cargo owned by those who offer bribes are cleared faster than those who refuse. It results in the latter having to wait months before they are cleared. According to them, this affects the speed and efficiency at which the wine consignments are delivered from the

ports to the consumer. Additionally, in 2015 45 suggested that high import duties also increase costs. While in 2017 about 60 participants also share this opinion. In whole, it is quite clear that in terms of the distribution limitations, management limitations, ports and terminal related limitations, customer limitations and governmental limitations are the factors that mar the effectiveness of last mile distribution for the wine suppliers in Lagos Island, Nigeria.

4. Conclusions

Human resources factors influence the effectiveness of the last mile distribution. The themes emerging from the analysis of the interview findings suggest that management-related factors also affect the effectiveness of last mile distribution.

The kinds of management-related factors that influence the effectiveness of last mile distribution include management commitment, third party logistics providers, door-to-door couriers, partnership with customers, and location decisions during the establishment of depots. Interviewees revealed that through the development of effective last mile distribution, they are able to meet their market-related needs that include the provision of quality freight services, low costs, meeting customers' expectations, and provision of information and communication.

Most participants revealed that the effectiveness of the last mile distribution network is also affected by distribution limitations, management-related limitations, ports and terminal-related limitations, customer-related limitations, and governmental limitations. Regarding distribution limitations, most participants felt that effective last mile distribution for the Nigerian wine suppliers is hindered by the lack of effective urban/rural distribution centers, poor usage of the Internet, poor transportation facilities, and a competitive door-to-door delivery market; a lack of effective distribution centers seems to affect the effectiveness of the last mile distribution.

Most wine suppliers in Nigeria tend to operate on smaller scales, with the effect that they only use shops with limited storage facilities. As these respondents explained, limited storage facilities in urban centers limit the amount of consignments that can be ordered, thereby contributing to the problem of inventory management and costs. This means that Nigerian wine suppliers must constantly place orders for wine products from South Africa, Europe and the rest of the world. This constant ordering of smaller wine consignments from different countries results in cost increments and mars the effectiveness of last mile distribution. The respondents explained that limited storage facilities make it impossible for them to stock sufficient products to meet increasing demands for wine consumption in Nigeria.

Participants noted that governmental limitations affect the last mile distribution negatively. Issues they highlighted are poor strategic partnerships with government departments, poor road facilities, high levels of congestion and traffic, corruption among government officials, changes in import regulations, and high import duties.

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