

E-Procurement and Marketing Performance in Corporate Organizations in Nigeria

N. Gladson Nwokak, Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Nigeria
juglad@yahoo.co.uk

Henry Ozuru, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Elizabeth I Ugoji, Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Nigeria

This paper is aimed at assessing the influence of e-procurement on the marketing performance of corporate organizations in Nigeria. The paper adopted a descriptive methodology in describing e-procurement and marketing performance of corporate organizations in Nigeria. The paper finds that not many companies in Nigeria have adopted the e-procurement practices and as such it is difficult to empirically assess the impact of e-procurement and marketing performance. Two major implications are identified in this paper, one to scholars on the investigation of the link between e-procurement and marketing performance further study could empirically investigate the relationship between e-procurement and marketing performance using our proposed conceptual frame work. To managers, this will no doubt help to provide knowledge and understanding of the reason for and consequences of any particular marketing decision.

INTRODUCTION

Manually searching for sellers in order to find and compare suppliers and products sometimes can be really very sluggish and costly. As a solution, large buyers can open their own marketplaces, and then invite sellers to fulfill orders. Traditionally, the term procurement is used to refer to the purchase of goods and services for organizations. It is normally done by *purchasing agents*, also known as corporate buyers (Martin et al 2001). In this 21st century, the internet and internet-based technologies are impacting business in several ways. These new technologies are promising to save costs, to improve customer and supplier relationships, business processes, and performance, and to open new business opportunities. These technologies allow organizations to respond better to existing challenges and improve the anticipation of future developments. As with the case with earlier innovations, rich multi-faceted interactions are occurring between developments in the marketplace, global business environment, work environments, and technical innovations (Thompson and Cats-Baril 2003). One area that has recently and significantly gained attention is the *Business-to-Business* (B2B) procurement that encompasses the purchasing of goods and services as well as higher-level management tasks and logistics. A variety of systems have emerged that promised significant benefits to buying firms, such as streamlining purchasing processes, increasing contract buying and improving the leverage of organizational buying power.

In classical economics, a market is described as a virtual place where supply meets demand (Colander 2001). Electronic markets fulfill the same purpose. Their distinctive feature is that they do so by employing information and communication technology. According to Turban et al. (2006), markets play a central role in the economy, facilitating the exchange of information, goods and services and payments. In the process, they create economic value for buyers, sellers, market intermediaries as well as the society at large. Markets (electronic or otherwise) have three main functions: (1) Matching buyers and sellers (2) facilitating the exchange of information, goods and services and payments associated with market transactions, and (3) providing an institutional infrastructure, such as legal and regulatory framework, which enable the efficient functioning of the market (Zwass 2003). In recent years, markets have witnessed a dramatic increase in the use of Information Technology and Electronic Commerce (Turban et

al. 2006). The emergence of **electronic marketplace** also called e-marketplaces or market spaces especially internet-based ones, changed several of the processes used in trading and supply chain. These changes, driven by information technology resulted in: in greater information richness of transactional and relational environment; lowering of information search costs for buyers; greater temporal separation between time of purchase and time of possession of *physical products* in the e-marketplace; greater temporal proximity between time of purchase and time of possession of *digital products* purchased in the e-marketplace; the ability of buyers and sellers to be in different locations. Therefore, an **electronic market system** is an inter-organizational information system that allows the participating buyers and sellers to exchange information about prices and product offerings (Bakos 1991). Also, electronic B2B marketplaces are known as Information Technology (IT) systems that bring together several business buyers and several business and facilitate the transaction process by using the internet (Turban et al 2006).

THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF PROCUREMENT

Procurement Methods: Different methods are employed to procure goods and services by companies depending on what and where they buy, the quantities needed, how much money is involved, and more. The major procurement methods including the following:

- Conduct bidding or tendering (a reverse auction) in a system in which suppliers compete against each other. This method is used for large-ticket items or large quantities.
- Buy directly from manufacturers, wholesalers, or retailers from their catalogues and possibly by negotiation. Frequently, a contract implements such a purchase.
- Buy from the catalogue of an intermediary (e-distributor) that aggregates seller's catalogues.
- To buy from an internal buyer's catalogue in which company-approved vendor's catalogues, including agreed upon prices, are aggregated. This approach is used for the implementation of desktop purchasing, which allows the requisiteness to order directly from vendors, bypassing the procurement department.
- To buy at private or public auction sites in which the organization participates as one of the buyers.
- Join a group-purchasing system that aggregates participants demand, creating a large volume. Then, the group may negotiate prices or initiate a tendering process.
- Collaborate with suppliers to share information about sales and inventory, as to reduce inventory and stock –outs and enhance just-in-time delivery (Turban et al 2006).

Direct Vs Indirect Procurement

Based on the purpose of the acquired goods, procurement activities are often divided into **direct, production-related** and **indirect, non-production related** procurement (Zenz1994). **Direct Procurement** (production oriented/procurement). This form of procurement occurs in manufacturing settings only, and encompasses all items that are part of finished products, such as raw materials, components and parts. Concepts and practices such as Material Resource Planning (MRP), supply chain management and Computer Integrated Manufacturing gained much attention in this form of procurement process. However, significant efforts in research and management practices resulted in the emergence of innovative methods in logistics, capacity planning, and inventory management as well as sophisticated systems to span corporate organizational boundaries thereby supporting replenishment and logistics (Gebaver and Seger 2005).

Indirect procurement (non-production oriented):- this involves activities that concern all items and services that are not directly part of a finished product compared to production – oriented procurement; the picture of indirect procurement is usually much more diverse. Purchasing is done by non-purchasing experts, as well as by the central purchasing unit. Purchases include a broad variety of items, ranging from “simple” office products to parts for maintenance, repair, and operations (MRO) such as lubricants

or spare parts, to complex construction related items and to various services. Purchases usually occur on an infrequent basis and demand is difficult, if not impossible, to predict. In recent years, corporations have been discovering the potential of indirect purchasing as an area that can help achieve cost cutting goals and improve competitiveness. In particular, since the early 1990s, business process analysis propagated a change from clerical and transaction-oriented to a more strategic one (Keough1993, Monczka 1995). It was not until recently, however, that supporting technologies became available that could help make this shift feasible and economically worth while on a broader basis.

Figure 1. Direct Vs Indirect Procurement Items.

Direct, Production-Related Material	Indirect, non-production related items and services
Scheduled	Not scheduled
Production items	Miscellaneous items
Usually no shelf items	Usually shelf items
Inventory accounts	Expense and asset accounts
Buyers' desktop only	Everybody's desktops
No approvals	Approvals required
Bill of materials	Aggregated catalogues

Source: Adapted from Hough and Ashlay (1992) *Handbook of Buying and Purchasing Management*, Englewood Cliff, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Types of E-Procurement: There are six main types of e-procurement that corporate organizations must apply in order to enhance business performance. These e-procurement types include;

- i. Web-based ERP (Electronic Resource Planning):* This form of web-based site makes it possible for corporations to create, approve purchasing requisitions, place purchase orders, and receive goods and services by using a software system based on Internet Technology.
- ii. E-MRO (Maintenance, Repair and Operating):* The same are web-based ERP except that the goods and services ordered are non-product related Maintenance, Repair and Operations (MRO) supplies.
- iii. E-sourcing:* When implementing an e-procurement activity, companies must evaluate e-sourcing. E-sourcing is the process and tools that electronically enable any activity in the sourcing process, such as quotation, tendering submittance and response, e-auctions, online negotiations and spending analysis. E-sourcing is the automation of strategic sourcing. **Strategic sourcing** is the process of identifying opportunities, evaluating potential sources, negotiating contracts, and managing supplier relationships to achieve corporate goals, such as cost reductions and increased quality and service.
- iv. E-Tendering:* This involves sending requests for information and prices to suppliers and receiving the responses of suppliers using internet suppliers. Here, a buyer requests electronically to would-be sellers to submit bids, the lowest bidder wins.
- v. E-reverse auctioning:* Using internet technology to buy goods and services from a number of known and unknown suppliers. The buyer places an item for bid (tender) on a request for quote (RFQ) system, potential suppliers bid on the job, with the price reducing sequentially and the lowest bid wins; primarily through a B2B or G2B mechanism.
- vi. E-informing:* Gathering and purchasing information both from and to internal and external parties using internet technology (Turban et al 2006).

Inefficiencies in Traditional Procurement Management

Procurement Management: Refers to the coordination of all the activities pertaining to the purchasing of goods and services necessary to accomplish the mission of an enterprise. Precisely 80 percent of an organization' purchased items, mostly Maintenance, Repair and Operating items (MROs), constitute 20-

25 percent of the total purchase value. Furthermore, a portion of corporate buyers' time is spent on non-value-added activities such data entry, correcting errors in paper work, expediting delivery or solving quality problems. For high-value items, purchasing personal spend a great deal of time and effort on procurement activities. These activities include qualifying suppliers, negotiating prices and terms, building rapport with strategic suppliers, as well as carrying out supplier evaluation and certification. If buyers are busy with details of the smaller items (usually MROs), they do not have enough time to properly deal with the purchase of the high –value items. Other inefficiencies also may occur in conventional procurement. These range from delays to paying too much for rush orders. One procurement inefficiency is *maverick buying*, (unplanned purchase of items needed quickly, often at non-pre-negotiated high prices. The traditional procurement process, as discussed above, often is considered inefficient. In order to correct this situation, companies resort to reengineering their procurement systems, implementation of new purchasing models and in particular, introduce *e-procurement*. At this juncture, we will look at what e-procurement is in a B2B marketplace.

Electronic Procurement (e-procurement) is purchasing or order release communicated over the internet via approved online vendor catalogues (Heizer and Render 2001). Turban et al. (2006), defined e-procurement as the electronic acquisition of goods and services for organization. Also in simpler term e-procurement is the process of acquiring goods and services through electronic device for an organization. In Nigeria, most oil and Gas Industries including Federal Express Plc (Fedex), United Parcel Service, Plc., (Ups) etc are practicing e-procurement in material purchasing. This is so because the industries have advanced in the usage of e-procurement keeping up with information age. Further, e-procurement or supplier exchange is the business-to-business (B2B) or business-to-consumer (B2C) purchase and sale of supplies and services through the internet as well as other information and networking systems, such as Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) and Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP). Typically, e-procurement websites allow qualified and registered users to look for buyers or sellers of goods and services. Depending on the approach, buyers or sellers may specify costs or invite bids. Transactions can be initiated and completed. On going purchases may qualify customers for volume discounts or special offers. E-procurement software makes it possible to automate some buying and selling. Corporations participating expect to be able to control parts inventories more effectively, reduce purchasing agent overhead, and improve manufacturing cycles. Today corporations are moving to e-procurement in order to expedite purchasing, save on item administrative costs, and gain better control over the purchasing processes.

Goals and Benefits of E-Procurement

For decades, improvements to procurement have been attempted, usually by using information technologies. The actual opportunity for improvement today lies in the use of e-procurement, the electronic process of obtaining goods and services for organizations. The general e-procurement process is depicted in figure 13 provided above. By automating and streamlining the rigorous and laborious routines of the purchasing function, purchasing professionals have the opportunity to focus, on more strategic purchases, thereby achieving the following goals:

- Increasing the productivity of purchasing agents (providing them with more time and reducing job pressure)
- Lowering purchase prices through product standardization, reverse auctions, volume discounts, as well as consolidation of purchases.
- Improving information flow and management (e.g. suppliers' information and pricing information).
- Minimizing the purchases made from noncontract vendors, thereby eliminating maverick buying
- Improving the payment process and savings due to expedited payments (for sellers)
- Ensuring on time delivery at all times
- Slashing order-fulfillment and processing times by leveraging automation
- Reducing the skill requirements and training needs of purchasing agents

- Reducing the number of suppliers
- Streamlining the purchasing process, making it simple and fast (may involve authorizing requirements to perform purchases from their desktops, bypassing the procurement department.
- Streamlining invoice reconciliation and dispute resolution
- Reducing the administrative processing cost per order as much as 90 percent
- Finding new suppliers and vendors that can provide goods and services faster and more so, cheaper resulting to improved sourcing
- Integrating budgetary controls into the procurement process.
- Minimization of human errors in the buying or shipping process
- Monitoring and regulating buying behaviour.

In general, in e-procurement, channel conflicts usually does not occur and also resistance to change becomes very minimal. In addition, wide selections of e-procurement software packages as well as other infrastructure are within users reach at an affordable cost. Further, all existing manual processes of requisition creation, request for quotation, and invitation to tender, purchase order issuance, receiving goods, and making payments can be streamlined and automated. However, in order to most effectively implement this automation support, users involved in procurement must collaborate with the suppliers along the supply chain.

E-Procurement Implementation

Having the buying department of an organization such as the Nigeria Stock exchange on the internet is the easy part of e-procurement. The more difficult part is how to effectively implement it.

Therefore, the following are some of the major implementation issues that companies must consider and adopt when planning e-procurement activities.

(i) Fitting e-procurement into the corporations EC strategy.

For instance, suppose Dufil Foods (Indomie) Nigeria strategy is outsourcing, its e-procurement can be done in an exchange, or the customer can buy at the sellers' web sites.

(ii) Receiving and Changing the Procurement Process itself

E-procurement may affect the number of purchasing agents, where they are located, and how purchases are approved. The degree of purchasing centralization may also be affected.

(iii) Coordinating the buyer's information system with that of the sellers. Sellers always have many potential buyers. For instance, some major suppliers, such as Rivers Vegetable Oil Company (RIVOC) may develop an integration-oriented procurement system for its buyers (Dufil foods Nigeria Plc). The Rivoc information system should be designed to make it easier for the procurement systems of others (notably the distributors in other countries) that buy the company's vegetable oils to interface with the RIVOC System. The RIVOC system will allow distributors to gain real-time technical information on the products, as well as details concerning products availability, delivery times and commercial terms and conditions.

(iv) Consolidating the number of regular suppliers and integrating with their information systems, and if possible, with their business process. Having few suppliers minimizes the number of connectivity issues that need to be resolved and will lower expenses. In addition, with fewer suppliers, the company will buy more from each supplier, allowing the company to achieve quantity discount. Collaboration with each supplier will also be enhanced.

(v) ***Providing interfaces between e-procurement and integrated enterprise wide information system.*** If the company does not have such systems, it may be necessary to do some restructuring before venturing into e-procurement.

Also, when implementing e-procurement, companies should evaluate ***e-sourcing***, the processes and tools that electronically enable any activity in the procurement process, like quotation/tender requests and responses, e-auctions, online negotiations, and spending analysis. E-sourcing is the automation of strategic sourcing, ***Strategic sourcing*** is the process of identifying opportunities, evaluating potential sources, negotiating contracts, and managing supplier relationships to achieve corporate goals, such as cost reductions and increased quality and service.

Management of E-Procurement

When properly implemented as discussed in this chapter, not only can e-procurement system be used for making online purchases, but also to connect companies and their business processes directly with suppliers at the same time managing the interactions between them. This includes management of correspondences, bids, questions and answers, previous pricing, and e-mail sent out to multiple participants.

A good procurement system helps a company organize its interactions with its most important suppliers. It provides users a set of built-in monitoring tools to help control costs and ensure maximization of supplier performance. In addition it provides an organized system to help keep lines of communication open with potential suppliers during the business process. The system also allows managers to confirm previous pricing and leverage agreement to make certain that each new price quote is more competitive than the previous one quoted. The decision-making process is enhanced by e-procurement since relevant information is neatly organized and time-stamped. Template driven e-procurement solutions guarantee that all transactions are standardized and traceable. This therefore improves a company's ability to keep track of all bids, thereby allowing it to leverage its knowledge to obtain better pricing and to focus on its most lucrative trading partners and contracts. E-procurement system that allows multiple access levels and permissions help managers organize administrative users by roles, groups, or tasks. Thus, procurement managers are exposed to software systems that are standardized and easy to learn in the management of e-procurement processes.

Marketing performance

In recent years, increased attention has focused on marketing performance in sub-Saharan Africa developing nations (Appiah – Adu, 1998). This emerging body of empirical evidence indicates that there is an increase in the performance of marketing activities among both domestic and foreign organizations. The growing academic and practitioner interest in marketing activities in these economics can be attributed to two factors: namely, the changes and market opportunities which the International Monetary Funds (IMF), Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) have created in many developing markets; and the renewed organizational involvement in marketing practice in these countries (Appiah – Adu, 1998:436)

The purpose of performance measurement is ultimately an improvement in the financial outcome in a commercial organization. However, measuring financial outcomes alone does not provide sufficient information of the kind to help direct the decision making that will achieve the performance improvement (Woodburn, 2004). Organizations need to measure several factors in order to get a real idea of how the organization is performing and where they might intervene. Recently, Kokkinaki and Ambler (1997) have summarized marketing metrics in six categories: financial, competitive market, consumer behavior, and customer intermediate, direct customer and innovativeness measures. Financial performance measures are hardly obsolete (Woodburn, 2004). They can offer a total performance measurement (Tangen, 2003) by reducing numerous inputs and outputs to the same currency. As long as financial

profits are the goal of most organizations, then decisions need to be validated in financial terms. Financial evaluations probably have more power to drive change than any other performance measure; even though they are poor indicators of what changes should be made. Woodburn (2004:70) adds that marketing also has an impact as financial performance through its income generating capacity. Of course, in most situations, financial assessment will involve income as well as expenditure. Ambler (2000) argues that financial metrics are usually the first type to be employed to evaluate marketing performance. The financial measures include turnover, contribution margin and profit.

Competitive market measures define the extent to which an organization acquires market share over competitors, advertising and promotional share of the market. Nwokah and Maclayton (2006) have used market share as an indicator of business performance in assessing the extent of customer focus on business performance of the food and beverages organizations in Nigeria. They argue that market share is often used to describe the position of an organization within its industrial sector. The implication is usually that the bigger the market share, the more successful the organization. Gray et al (1998) suggest that market share can be an important determinant of profitability in the medium to long term. They state that large market share is both a reward for providing better value and a means of realizing lower costs. Consumer behavior measures define an organization's penetration of consumers, gain of consumer loyalty and a better customer gain. Customer intermediate measures define brand recognition, satisfaction and purchase intention. The direct customer measure defines distribution level, profitability of intermediaries and service quality. Finally, innovativeness defines the frequency to which an organization launches new products and their revenue achieved thereof.

DISCUSSION

It is obvious that the use of Information Technology (IT) has quite some tradition in purchasing. It supports or automates transactional operations within purchasing departments of a corporation. For instance, the Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) systems support communication beyond organizational boundaries and automate the exchange of structured messages between independent computer applications. This no doubt will enhance the marketing performance of corporate organizations in their competitive market.

ELECTRONIC DATA INTERCHANGE (EDI)

Once a firm has an effective computer-based purchasing system in operation, a logical extension of that system is to link it, in one way or another, with the order-handling computer system of selected suppliers. The term generally given to this type of buyer-supplier communication operation is electronic data interchange-EDI. In an evolutionary sense, EDI simply is an advanced step in the continuing drive toward the development of a "paper less" purchasing operation that began with techniques such as the banked order, systems contracting, consignment purchasing, and various data-phone techniques.

EDI and Bar Coding- An EDI operation can be enhanced by linking to it a bar coding system. When the supplier receives the buyer's electronic order to order release, it contains information the supplier can use to create a bar code shipping label. At the time of shipment this label is scanned by the supplier to generate a packing slip and an electronic advance shipment notice (ASN) that is transmitted to the buying firm when the shipment arrives at the buyer's receiving dock; the bar code label can be scanned and compared with the ASN for identification purposes, and subsequently used in the receiving and internal communication processes.

Financial EDI: Although internet EDI is growing and offering new flexible information interchange solutions for many trading partners, some elements of EDI remain difficult to transfer to the internet. The EDI transaction sets that provide instructions to a trading partner's bank are called financial EDI (FEDI). All banks have the ability to perform electronic funds transfers which are the movement of money from one bank account to another (Schneider 2007).

EDI-Capable banks: are banks that are equipped to exchange payment and remittance data through value added networks (VANS) several companies use FEDI is an issue in most corporations because FEDI uses the internet, it can be exposed to problems that are less likely to occur on the dedicated leased telephone lines used for connecting to a VAN. For instance, if an internet route outage delays an instruction to transfer ₦10. Million, a trading partner could easily lose a day's interest on the funds (Schneider 2007).

E-Procurement and the Power of Bandwidth

Connectivity is very important in any business-to-business environment, especially in electronic Purchasing in this 21st century internet marketing. Connectivity refers to the ability of computers to link to networks, (the internet). The aspect of bandwidth connectivity that is the amount of data that can be transmitted in a fixed amount of time. It is therefore important in any business, to first estimate the amount of the bandwidth that will be needed to feed data from the business's web server to customers, in this regard, suppliers.

Therefore, bandwidth is the number of bits per unit of time that can be carried across a communication line. The basic unit of bandwidth measurement is bits per second (bps), but most commonly, it is expressed kilo-bits per second (kbps) or Mega-bits per second (mbps). Here, the rate at which connection transfers data is measured in the same bits per second. This bandwidth determines how fast data is transmitted to and from the company's web server and also how many requests, e.g. purchase requests, can be serviced simultaneously to enhance productivity in order to meet and satisfy the needs of customers. For instance, even with a robust server, if the company does not have sufficient bandwidth for the number of suppliers coming to their website, *delays* or *failures* occurs, and when delay occurs, productivity is delayed and customer's need are also delayed. The faster the bandwidth, the faster the company's supplies will arrive thereby enhancing faster and effective productivity to satisfy the needs of the customers. Selecting a way of delivering bandwidth that is scalable to meet the company's website's future needs while at the same time limiting additional costs and frustration (Reynolds 2004).

Further, according to (Schneider 2007), bandwidth is the amount of data that can travel through a communication line per unit of time. The higher the bandwidth, the faster data files travel and the faster web pages appear on the company's screen. Each connection option offers different bandwidths and each ISP (Internet Service Provider) offers varying bandwidths for each connection option. Traffic on the internet and the company's local service provider greatly affects *net bandwidth*, which is the actual speed that information travels. Bandwidth also differs for data traveling to or from the ISP depending on the user's connection type.

Symmetric Connections provide the same bandwidth in both directions.

Asymmetric Connections provide different bandwidths for each direction.

Upstream bandwidth or **upload bandwidth** is a measure of the amount of information that can travel from the user to the internet in a given amount of time.

Downstream bandwidth also called download or downlink bandwidth is a measure of the amount of information that can travel from the internet to a user in a given amount of time.

E-Procurement and the Power of Broadband

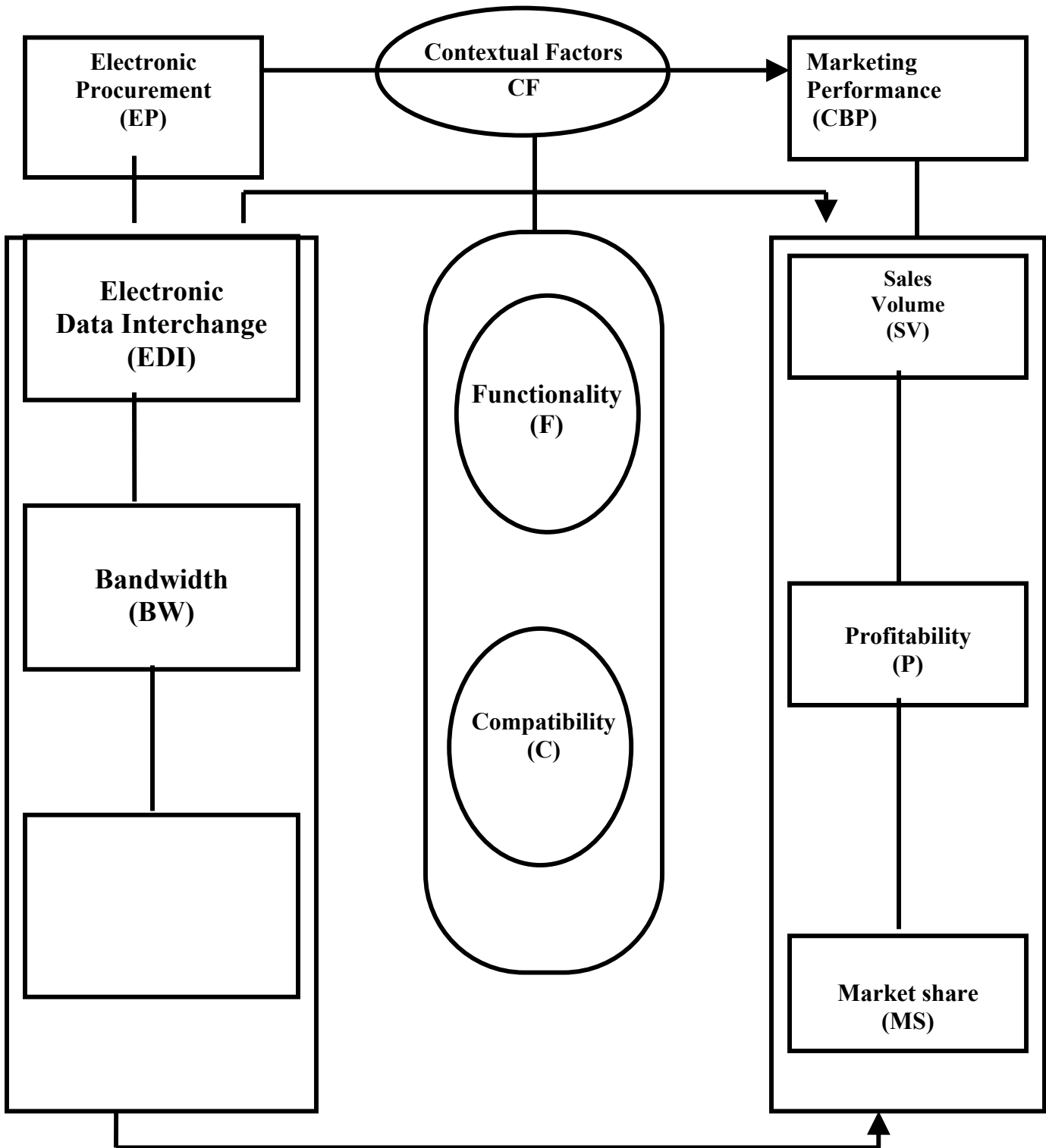
The term broadband is typically used to describe media transmission rates of 1.544 mega bites per seconds (mbps) or higher. Connections that operate at speeds of greater than about 200 kbps are called broadband services. One of the newest technologies that uses the Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) protocol to provide service in broadband range is *Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line* (ADSL). This provides transmission bandwidths from 100 to 640 kbps upstream and 700 1.5 to a mbps (Million bits per second) down stream. For business, a high-speed DSL (HDSL) connection service can provide more than 768 kbps of symmetric bandwidth. DSL is a private line with no competing traffic. Unlike DSL, cable modem connection bandwidths vary with the number of other subscribers competing for shared resources.

Transmission speeds can decrease dramatically in heavily subscribed neighborhoods where many people are using cable modems simultaneously (Schneider 2007). Let us briefly look at the concept of marketing performance.

Based on the forgoing we proposed a conceptual framework of the relationship between e-procurement and marketing performance. Our proposal presupposes that e-procurement can be measured through electronic data interchange, bandwidth and Broadband. Also, Marketing Performance can be measured through sales volume, profitability and market share. However, these relationships may not have relationship without some intervening variables such as functionality and compatibility. On the basis of the above discussion, we make the following prepositions:

- P1 Electronic Data Interchange will influence marketing performance of corporate in organizations.
- P2 Bandwidth will significantly improve the marketing performance of corporate organizations.
- P3 Broadband will significantly influence marketing performance of corporate organizations
- P4 The relationship between e-procurement and marketing performance of corporate organizations in Nigeria will be mediated by their functionalities and compatibility.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



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