

## QUALITY OF PRODUCTS AND COMPETITIVENESS IN THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR IN UGANDA: A CASE OF UGANDA CLAYS LTD.

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### **Abstract**

The current study sets out to analyse the effect of Quality of Products on the competitiveness in the manufacturing sector with specific reference to Uganda Clays Ltd. In order to achieve the above purpose the study objective was; To analyse the effect of Quality of Products on Competitiveness. The current study applied the post-positivist paradigm and employed a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. The main Approach used was Quantitative but Qualitative method and/or approach was also employed on limited scale. Results from the study indicate that overall, Quality of Products had a profound effect on Competitiveness ( $r (160) = .527, P < 0.01$ ). The findings therefore reveal that if a company maintained good quality products there would be an increase in the market share and hence remain very Competitive.

To achieve sustainable competitiveness the study proposed the SCOPQUAP Model which guarantees not only competitiveness but also sustainability.

**Key Words:** Quality of products, Competitiveness, SCOPQUAP Model.

### **Introduction**

The current study set out to analyse the effect of quality of Products on competitiveness in the Manufacturing Sector.

Quality of Products means to incorporate features that have a capacity to meet consumer needs (wants) and gives customer satisfaction by improving products (goods) and making them free from any deficiencies or defects (Akrani, 2013).

UCL product quality mainly depends on important factors like the type of raw materials used for making a product, how well are various production-technologies implemented, skill and experience of manpower that is involved in the production process, availability of production-related overheads like power and water supply and transport (UCL Marketing Plan 2016).

The product quality management approach at UCL is about ensuring that all personnel in the production process "does the right things, right, the first time". This enables the staff to avoid misunderstandings of what to produce, and how hence circumventing productivity losses, quality losses and schedule delays (*UCL Marketing Plan 2016*).

The nature of product quality at UCL is evidenced in the experienced human resources with the energy and ability to execute and deliver to the customers' expectations, the largest manufacturing capabilities in the industry, (machinery and production capacity), owns Quality Clay deposits within the industry and above all there has been a steady manufacturing track record spanning over 65 years with consistency in quality manifested in the product durability, standard dimensions and texture (*UCL Marketing Plan 2016*).

UCL was first registered as a private limited liability Company on 10<sup>th</sup> July, 1950. At that time it was a monopoly in the business and was therefore focusing on increasing the number of individual sales hence transactional marketing. However towards the end of 2000 there developed stiff competition coming from both direct and indirect competition.

In 2001, UCL a Clay products manufacturing company approved Quality of Products strategy for enhancement of the company's competitiveness (*UCL Marketing Report, 2001*). The major aim of coming up with a Quality of Products strategy at UCL was therefore based on the expectation that it would present enormous benefits which included among others improving its competitiveness by 45%' in the ten years (*Uganda Clays reports 2001*). Hence forth improved quality of products strategy was selected to make UCL remain Competitive.

### ***Statement of the Problem***

In enforcing the Quality of Products strategy it was deemed that when implemented Uganda Clays Ltd would become competitive (*UCL Marketing Report 2016*). Additionally UCL became the only company in the Clay manufacturing sector in Uganda that complied with the requirements for both Local and International Quality Standards hence certification by both Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS) and International Certification Services (ISO) PVT. Ltd (ISO) 9001:2000 in 2003 (*UCL*

*Marketing Report 2016*). This therefore confirmed the fact that UCL products were of high Quality and could be trusted by the customers anywhere in the world.

However, UCL Competitiveness increased by only 12% in the 10<sup>th</sup> year instead of the forecasted 45% raise. This left a big crevice of 33%, yet there had been several interventions through operating with the best plants in Kajjansi and Kamonkoli to continuously improve quality and having the staff professionally trained to offer best quality services (*UCL marketing Reports 2011*). This 12% raise after 10 years seems to indicate that Uganda Clays is not as competitive as was expected. It was therefore necessary to confirm how much Product Quality contributes to Competitiveness by carrying out an empirical study.

### **Objective of the study**

The objective of the study was to analyse the effect of Quality of Products on Competitiveness in the manufacturing Sector.

### **Study hypothesis**

H<sub>0</sub><sup>1</sup> There is no significant relationship between Quality of products and competitiveness in the Manufacturing Sector.

### **Related Literature**

#### **Theoretical review**

Uganda Clays Ltd is struggling with the dilemma of competitiveness. The Board of Directors and Management wanted to enhance the level of Competitiveness believe that Quality of Products would play a major role in achieving this goal. To analyse this predicament, the Blue Ocean theory has been indentified to offer an apt theoretical prism through which to consider the contribution of Quality of Products to Competitiveness in the manufacturing sector.

In the current study, the theory of the Blue Ocean theory which was developed by globally pre-eminent thinkers (Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne, 2005) offers an apt theoretical prism through which to consider the impact of Quality of Products to Competitiveness in the manufacturing sector and thus was relied on as this theory postulates a number of factors that may be important to this study.

Blue Ocean Theory is about creating and capturing uncontested market space, thereby making the competition irrelevant. Lasting success comes, not from battling competitors, but from creating blue oceans of untapped new market spaces ripe for growth (Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne, 2005). The Blue Ocean Theory explains better the Uganda Clays Limited current Quality of products Approach where the main intention is to remain competitive despite the existence of other companies.

It should be stressed that the theory selected in this study is a representative sampling of key theories of marketing in general and Quality of products in particular but in no way should be construed to be an exhaustive list. The same can be said for the key thought leaders and selected literature cited throughout.

#### **Effect of Quality of Products and Competitiveness.**

Quality of Products is a vital area to be concentrated on in a business environment because it decides the market share of the firm. It is also used as one of the product differentiation strategies by few leading firms. In a study entitled Product Quality for Competitive Advantage in Marketing Singh (2013) focused on the major role played by the quality of product in competitive advantage in marketing and the steps to attain the product quality. Accordingly Singh (2013), asserts that Marketing has to set the quality standards for the firm's products, constantly verifying these standards and upgrading them as per the needs and growing sophistication of the market is a crucial task in product management. The study elaborates that product quality, customer satisfaction, and company profitability are intimately connected and thus, higher levels of quality results in higher levels of customer satisfaction. Quality creates value and customer satisfaction. Marketers play several roles in helping their organization to define and deliver high quality goods and services to target customers. As the competitive environment becomes more turbulent, the most important issue the sellers face is no longer to provide excellent, good quality products or services (Teng, 2007), but also to keep loyal customers who will contribute long term profit to organizations.

Marketers are forced to look beyond the traditional 4Ps of marketing strategy for achieving competitive advantage (Andaleeb, 2006) to compete in such competitive and interactive marketplace. It is only through continuous

managing for excellent quality the firm can maintain bright product / brand image in the customer's mind in this competitive world (Singh, 2013). The research at hand however realises the scholars highlighted throughout the study do not elaborate on Quality of Products exhaustively, a gap that this current study intended to fill.

In competitive marketing, Delegge (2007) emphasised that firms must consider their strengths and weaknesses and examine a competitor's background, strength and weakness, provide a valuable insight into their strategic thinking and actions. The author examined a full range of areas in manufacturing, technical and financial strength, in relationship with suppliers and customers, market and segment served, as well as the usual garnet of marketing activity. Delegge (2007) further stressed that it is particularly worth undertaking a detailed review of competitor's product range, identifying where it is weak and where it seems to be heading. Conversely, while conducting a study, Eliaz and Spiegler (2008) presented a model of competitive marketing based on the notion that consumers are very rational, and that firms use marketing tactics in an attempt to influence consumers' decision process. The standard model of consumer behaviour, they claimed, assumes that consumers apply well-defined preferences to perfectly perceive set of available alternatives.

For Business executives to perform strategic planning for firms' future, it is imperative to know who the competition is, and exactly what managers are up against Bacak (2005) to ensure that market share is sufficient for the firms' future. Heyneet. al., (2014) affirms that it is in the market process that Competition is widespread given that it is herein where buyers tend to compete with other buyers, and sellers tend to compete with other sellers. This is because in offering goods for exchange, buyers competitively bid to purchase specific quantities of specific goods which are available, or might be available if sellers were to choose to offer such goods. Similarly, sellers bid against other sellers in offering goods on the market, competing for the attention and exchange resources of buyers. Competition actually results from scarcity when there is never enough to satisfy all conceivable human wants and occurs when people strive to meet the criteria that are being used to determine who gets what (Heyneetal, 2014). Other researchers such as Cowen et. al (2013) believe the competitive process in a market economy

exerts a sort of pressure that tends to move resources to where they are most needed, and to where they can be used most efficiently for the economy as a whole and for the competitive process to work however, it is important that prices accurately signal costs and benefits.

Product support can be as simple as a set of instructions and a throwaway wrench that comes with an assemble-it-yourself child's bicycle or as complicated as warranty programs, service contracts, parts depots, and equipment on loan to replace a defective machine while it is being repaired(Thomas and Waterman,1980). All of these constitute product support; they are designed to ensure that customers obtain the most value from use of the product after the sale. On the other hand design **for supportability looks beyond the company's doors** (Bennekom and Goffin (2002), **hence** it is process of maximizing the benefits the customer receives during the product ownership period. In the contemporary language, it is truly designing the product for optimal customer experience. .

Competitiveness of a firm depends largely on its aptitude to innovate and develop and that some enterprises get some advantages over the larger competitors in the world because of the pressures and challenges that are subject. Goolsbee and Syverson (2008) conducted a study about the entry of a low-price competitor (Southwest Airlines) into the airline industry in the US and this study discovered that large price decreases occur during the first three quarters of the time period that elapses between the announcement of entry and the point in time when actual entry occurs. Conversely Besker and Basker and Noel (2009) analyzed the effect of Wal-Mart's entry into the grocery market using a store-level price panel dataset. They find that competitors' response to the entry of a Wal-Mart store, which has a price advantage over competitors of about 10%, is a price reduction of 1%-1.2%, on average, with most of this reduction being accounted for by smaller-scale competitors. They conclude that competitors' responses vary in line with their degree of differentiation from Wal-Mart. At one extreme, the largest supermarket chains reduce their prices by less than half as much as smaller competitors. At the opposite extreme, low-end grocery stores, which compete more directly with Wal-Mart, cut their prices by more than twice as much as higher-end stores. Another scholar Jia (2008) develops an empirical model –one which relaxes the assumption that entry into different markets is

independent— to assess the impact of Kmart stores on Wal-Mart stores and other discount retailers and to quantify the size of the scale economies obtained within a given chain. She finds that the negative impact of Kmart's presence on Wal-Mart's profits was much stronger in 1988 than in 1997, while the opposite is true for the effect of Wal-Mart's presence on Kmart's profits. Generally speaking the existence of a highly competitive environment is the safeguard progress on the economic scale and the burden of global markets.

In many industries, marketing budgets are being restructured to devote more resources to defensive marketing for customer retention and Scholars like (Kotler, 1992) argue that as markets become increasingly competitive, price competition intensifies and reduced loyalty appears to be the norm in contrast (Gummesson, 1999) argues that with the growth of marketing databases and the Internet, the ability to reach customers individually becomes a viable strategy for a wide range of firms including consumer products companies. Nevertheless, Quality of Products strategy is not without some challenges and if done improperly, the strategy will not achieve the goals of the firm. One strategy perhaps may not be appropriate for all marketing programs. Since this is an issue that raised concern in the competitive land scape, it deserved to be studied.

### **Research methodology**

The field research was carried out in greater Kampala and Wakiso Districts. These areas are considered appropriate because most of the clay Products Manufacturing Factories including Uganda Clays Ltd are situated in this area and major and reliable Customers can be traced in these areas as well as other important respondents. These areas also account for 70% of UCL's market share.

The total number of respondents was 162 but the response rate was 160. The sample was determined using the formulae for (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970). So the sample of 160 respondents including Staff (Field Sales Staff, Marketing & Customer Service staff, Managing Director and Heads of department in Company Customer contact points or Outlets in Wakiso and Kampala and selected customers was considered sufficient for this study. All these respondents were aware of the Uganda clays activities.

A descriptive cross sectional survey design adopted by this study required one to use more than one data collection method. In that regard a survey was the primary method. A specially designed Questionnaire was administered to 160 respondents. It was designed in such a way that respondents had a list of possible options or answers which they ticked. The Questionnaire as a tool was preferred because it is an appropriate instrument for any survey research. The respondents had to provide answers in a predetermined order. The instruments had three sections; demographics, Quality of Products and Competitiveness.

The Questionnaire as the main tool in the study employed 33 items. Apart from items on the demographics characteristics of the respondents, the rest of the items were on the likert scale type. This scale served as a measurement for the relationships between Quality of Products and Competitiveness. The likert Scale was (i) Strongly Agree = 5, (ii) Agree = 4, (iii) Neutral =3, (iv) Disagree =2, (v) Strongly Disagree =1. The main approach used was Quantitative

**Table: 1: Categories of respondents**

No	Category of respondents	Population	Sample size
1.	Commercial/Institutional Customers	150	88
2.	Retail Customers	100	56
3.	Heads of Department	06	06
4.	Staff/Employees	22	10
5.	Top Management	02	02
	<b>Total</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>162</b>

*Source: field data (2016)*

**Validity:**

The Validity of the items on the Questionnaire was determined using the Content Validity Index .The questions were rated as very relevant, relevant, irrelevant, and very irrelevant. The proportion of the very relevant and relevant questions over the total questions was computed using the following formulae;

$$CVI = \frac{\text{Total Very Relevant Questions} + \text{Relevant Questions}}{\text{Total Questions}}$$



Therefore:

$$CVI = \frac{40+29}{69+8=77} = CVI = \frac{69}{77}$$

$$CVI = 0.9$$

The content Validity Index is supposed to be above 0.7 as recommended by Amin (2005) for the questionnaire to be considered Valid. Therefore, the value of 0.9 indicated that the questions in instrument were highly valid.

**Reliability:**

*Reliability is the degree to which an assessment tool produces stable and consistent results (Cozby, 2001). Reliability was determined using the internal consistency method that is estimated using Cronbach’s alpha (Cronbach, 1951, 2004; Nunnally, 1978; hull and Nie, 1981). Typically, reliability coefficients of 0.70 or higher are considered adequate (Cronbach, 1951, 2004; Nunnally, 1978).*

**Table.2: Reliability Test Using Cronbach’s Alpha**

Variable	Cronbach’s alpha	Cronbach’s Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Number of Items
Quality of Products	0.693	.814	12
Competitiveness	0.817	.817	9
Average Cronbach’s Alpha Based on Standardized Items		0.815	

Initially, the consistency levels of the items/questions were examined using Cronbach’s alpha. The Cronbach’s alpha measure of reliability was Quality products 0.814 and Competiveness 0.817. All these commonly recommended values have an average Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.815 which is in the acceptable range. This showed that all the items in the instrument were consistent and acceptable.

**Findings and interpretation**

**The concept of quality of Products**

At Uganda Clays Limited quality was conceptualized as fitness for use or purpose, to do a right thing at first time, to do a right thing at the right-time, find and know, consumer want. Features that meet consumer needs and give

customer satisfaction, freedom from deficiencies or defects, conformance to standards and value or worthiness for money in the production process.

Uganda Clays Limited quality of products mainly depends on important factors like the type of raw materials used for making a product, how well are various production-technologies implemented?, skill and experience of manpower that is involved in the production process, availability of production-related overheads like power and water supply and transport.

**Table 3: Categories and Quality of products at Uganda Clays Limited.**

S/N	Product	Low	Moderate	High
1.	Roofing Tiles			√
2.	Bricks & Half Bricks			√
3.	Inter-Lockings & corners	√		
4.	Partitioning Blocks		√	
5.	Suspended Floor Units			√
6.	Ventilators		√	
7.	Floor Tiles		√	
8.	Decorative Grills			√

#### **UCL staff perception of quality of Products**

Uganda Clays Limited staffs were convinced that the company produced the best quality brands that were of the best texture, durable, which meet the market standards and are of desirable interest for customers. This was supported by the fact that Uganda Clays Limited was ISO 9001-2000 and UNBS certified Clay manufacturing Company in Uganda. These are the only recognised product quality certification companies in Uganda that gauge the standard of products.

**Table 4: Perceptions on Quality at Uganda Clays Ltd.**

Item	M	SD	Description
UCL continuously improves on their products.	4.33	.93	Very High
UCL products are preferred above other products in the market in terms of performance	4.40	.79	Very High
UCL is consistent in providing good quality products	4.35	.84	Very High

UCL products have the best features and look beautiful	4.30	.89	Very High
UCL products certified by authorised quality certification bodies like UNBS,ISO	4.43	.85	Very High
UCL has a good reputation and it gives me prestige and personal security to buy from them	4.26	.96	Very High

The results from table.3 revealed there are some issues which largely have very high mean levels like UCL Continuously improves the products (4.33), UCL products are above other products in the market (4.40), UCL is consistent in providing Quality Products (4.35), UCL Products have the best features and looks beautiful (4.30), UCL products are certified by Quality Certification bodies like the Uganda Bureau of Standards and International standards Organisation (4.43) as well as UCL has a good reputation and gives the Prestige and personal Security of associating with Uganda clays Ltd (4.26). This clearly means the above mentioned issues play an important role in both the Quality of products. Henceforth management of Uganda clays Ltd needs to take a keen interest since they can vitally have an influence on the competitiveness of Uganda Clays Ltd.

**Table 5: Correlations for Product Quality versus competitiveness**

Correlations			
	Quality of Products	Competitiveness	
Quality Of Products	Pearson Correlation	1	.527**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	160	160
Competitiveness	Pearson Correlation	.527**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	160	160
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

The test for Pearson's Correlation had Results in Table 5 which indicated that overall, there was a very strong positive significant relationship between Quality of Products and Competitiveness ( $r(160) = .527, P < 0.01$ ). These findings imply that good Quality of Products enhanced Competitiveness at UCL. This also indicated that Quality of Products is a prerequisite for organisational competitiveness. These findings therefore reveal that if the

company maintained good quality of products the market share would be increased and hence remain very Competitive.

**Table 6: Coefficients for Quality Products and Competitiveness**

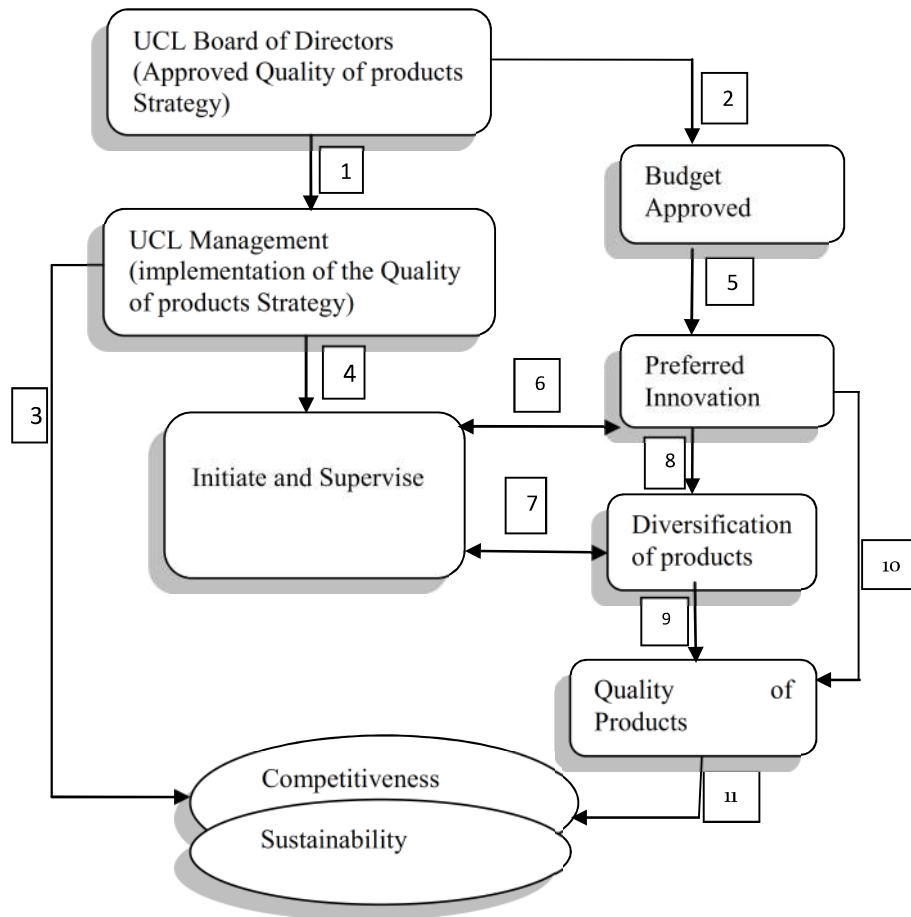
Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.493	.305		4.889	.000
	Quality of Products	.576	.074	.527	7.804	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Competitiveness

Quality of products as the predictor variable and Competitiveness the criterion variables are statistically significantly related (Beta.527,  $P < 0.01$ ). This statistic revealed that the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) which stated that “there would be no significant relationship between Quality of Products and Competitiveness” was rejected and instead the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) that “there would be significant relationship between Quality of Products and Competitiveness” was supported.

In spite of the current Competitiveness there was still need to improve the whole spectrum and hence the current study initiated the following new Model to enable companies remain sustainably competitive.

Fig. 1 Sustainable Competitiveness Preferred Quality of Products Model (SCOPQUAP MODEL)



**Key concepts and Operationalisation of the (SCOPQUAP MODEL)**

*Approved Quality of Products strategy: (AQP):* For a Quality of Products strategy to be successful it must be approved by the Board of Directors.

*Implementation of the Quality of Products strategy:* The first (1st) arrow shows that after approval of the Quality of Products strategy the Board passes it on to Management for Implementation.

*Approved Budget (AB):* The second (2nd) Arrow shows that the board approves a budget to provide a financial framework for the decision making process and that the Quality of Products strategy implementation has been planned for.

*Competitiveness Management (CM):* The third (3rd) arrow clearly shows that in implementation of the Quality of Products strategy management keeps keen interest in monitoring Competitiveness to be able to adjust accordingly.

*Initiation and Supervision:* The fourth (4th) arrow show that good quality of products is achieved through Initiating & supervising Holistic organisational Systems.

*Preferred Innovation:* The fifth (5th) arrow shows that preferred Innovation will take place where a specific allocation of the approved budget will cater for it.

The sixth (6th) arrow shows that management initiates and supervises preferred innovation and that it is a continuous process.

*Diversification of Products:* The Seventh (7th) arrow shows that the process of expanding business opportunities through additional market potential of an existing product (Diversification of products) is initiated and supervised by company Leadership and is continuous.

The eighth (8th) Arrow shows that preferred Innovation is connected to Diversification of products and all must have a budget approved.

*Quality of Product (QP):* The ninth (9th) Arrow shows that diversification of products is intended to improve the Quality of products.

The tenth Arrow (10th) shows that preferred Innovation is intended to improve Quality of products.

*Competitiveness (C):* The eleventh (11th) arrow shows that Quality of products leads to Competitiveness and that there is a link between all the other arrows which all aim to augment Quality of products to enhance Competitiveness save for the third arrow which has a direct link to Competitiveness.

*Sustainability (S):* The last relationship in the new model Shows that competitiveness is interconnected to Sustainability and that all other

relationships should work together to achieve sustainable Competitiveness that will stand the test of time.

### **Conclusion**

In a nutshell the study reveals that sometimes the line between Quality of Products strategy approval, implementation and execution is very thin and the differences are subtle which may lead into conflict. Basically, the board of Directors management and the Execution team must work as one team and each person involved in performance of any responsibilities should act conscientiously and the entire organisation must all work to achieve the stated desired results.

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