

AN IMPLEMENTATION OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES TO ENHANCE THE ORGANIZATION PERFORMANCE: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This paper presenting the findings from a case study conducted on the quality management principles in a Malaysian's SMEs food and beverages. The objective of this research is to determine and identify the quality management principles towards the organization performance in the XYZ Industry Sdn. Bhd. In order to achieve the objective, a case study was carried out by conducting in-depth interviews with the top managers. The findings show out about a number of quality management principles have been identified as contributors towards organization's performance. Since this research only focuses on a SMEs and beverage industry (traditional herbs drinks), therefore, the findings could be used to generalize within the similar business in the similar industry. The paper emphasizes that the implementation of quality management principles can be used as a framework to improve organization's performance.

Keywords: *beverages, food, industry, performance, SMEs*

INTRODUCTION

All organizations around the world need to take the initiative in increasing the product quality in order to satisfy the needs and demands of customer that always change other than minimizing their production cost. Quality becomes important aspect to all organizations to compete in growing global competition. Many companies are aware the necessary of quality management for their business to remains sustain, competitive and able to react in changing of competitive demand. But not all companies are able to implement quality management successfully. Thus, implementation of quality management is the important area for organization to achieve excellence. Quality management enables an organization to deliver quality product or services to customers based on customers need. In order for companies to survive and grow in the future, it is essential that they can deliver high quality goods and

services. For those that can deliver quality (products and services) are the ones that will prosper in the next century (Ross, 1994).

In Malaysia, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) can be considered as the backbones of the economy development. The SMEs dominate the industrial and commercial infrastructure (Deros *et al.*, 2006). SMEs play a very important role in the national economies by providing job opportunities, enhancing exports of the country and also supplying goods to other manufacturing industries (Deros *et al.*, 2006). However, SMEs are described in literature as business entities that face problems in expanding and succeeding in business due to lack of knowledge, skills, business resources, and low quality products (Idris, 2004). XYZ Industry Sdn. Bhd. is one of food and beverage manufactures in the category of SMEs located in Arau, Malaysia. XYZ Industry Sdn. Bhd. was established in 1999 and produces traditional beverage products such as herbs and healthy drinks. XYZ Industry's products have successfully penetrated the markets of Thailand and Indonesia since 2004. Their products have also made up into a series of mega supermarket outlets (*i.e.*, Mydin, AEON Big) as well as mini markets, petrol stations and grocery shops. It is becomes aspiration for top management in XYZ Industry to achieve a higher mission which is to be one of the versatile competitors in the beverages industry. Therefore, they are planning to add more values in the production capacity by improving the processing machineries. At the same time they are seriously to improve the quality of the products as well as to create more flavors of the drinks. Currently, they have implemented the marketing automation strategy as the supported approach for their products distribution. Marketing automation is about applying online technologies such as social media (*i.e.*, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram), landing pages and e-mails.

Problems Statement

Preceding literatures have confirmed an important research gap in terms of the quality of the management practices in the organizational performances of the SMEs in Malaysia mainly in the food processing industry (Talib *et al.*, 2013). As informed by SMIDEC (2006), the number of companies in the manufacturing sector is 40,793 and out of these 39,376 are SMEs. The food and beverage industry, which has been a second manufacturing subsector after textiles is conquered by SMEs reaching to around 5,925 business enterprises from a total of 6,069 registered firms. However, SMEs are labelled in literature as business enterprises that face problems in disbursing and following in business due to lack of knowledge, skills, business resources, and low quality products (Yusof and Aspinwall, 2000; Idris, 2004; Rahman, 2004; Osman, 2005; Rahman and Bullock, 2005). As one of the approaches, The International Standard for Quality management (ISO9001:2008) adopts eight management principles that can be used by top management to guide their organizations towards improved company performance.

Research Objectives

There are two objectives of the research;

1. To identify the quality management principles (QMP) that influences the organization performance; and
2. To determine how quality management principles (QMP) that implemented in organizations will influence the organization performance.

This research is expected to serve as a prelude for a further study among SMEs in food and beverage industry in Malaysia.

Research Significant

The significant of this research is to recognize which quality management principle is appropriate for a business organization (under SMEs category) to be implemented. Quality management principles were used as framework in examining it influences towards the organization performance. Contribution of quality management principles towards the organization's performance will be disclosed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section explores quality management, the QMP and the eight principles including the organization performance.

Quality Management

Quality management is activities performed to formulate and implement policies and programs intended to achieve quality (Goetsch & Davis, 2010). Quality management is a process involving certain functions and work activities that top management must perform to achieve an organization's objectives (Davood *et al.*, 2013). Quality management also is an activity performed to formulate and implement policies and programs intended to achieve an improvement of quality either products or services or both.

Quality Management Principles (QMP)

A QMP is a comprehensive and fundamental set of rules or beliefs in leading and operating of an organization, aimed at continually improving performance over the long term by focusing on customers while addressing the needs of all stakeholders (Quality Management

Principles, 1997). These principles can be used by top management as a framework to guide their organizations towards improved performance.

Eight Elements of QMP

There are eight elements of QMP that can be used as a basis for the quality management standards prepared by ISO/TC176 (ISO 9004, 2009). These principles can be used by top management as a framework to guide their organization towards improvement performance (ISO 9004, 2009). The ISO 9000 Family of standards will be based on these QMP (ISO Tech. USA Inc.,). These principles have been developed for the use of top management in order to lead the organization toward improved performance. By applying the following eight of QMP, organizations will produce perceived benefits for customers, owners, people, suppliers, local communities and society at large (ISO Central Secretariat, 2012).

Customer Focus

Organizations depend on their customers and therefore should understand current and future customer needs, should meet customer requirements and strive to exceed customer expectations (ISO 9004:2009). The customers are always the most important factor for any business and this called as customer orientation (Abdullah *et al.*, 2008). Company that able meet the customer requirements and strive to exceed customer expectations can gain customer loyalty. There are eight of items quest

Leadership

Leadership is the ability to inspire people to make a total, willing and voluntary commitment to accomplishing or exceeding organizational goals (Goetsch & Davis, 1994). Leaders establish unity of purpose and direction of the organization. They should create and maintain the internal environment in which people can become fully involved in achieving the organization's objectives (ISO Central Secretariat, 2012).

Involvement of People

People at all levels are the essence of an organization and their full involvement enables their abilities to be used for the organization's benefits (ISO Central Secretariat, 2012). ISO 9000:2008 state that people at all organizational levels are the organization and their involvement enables the use of their competence to the organization's benefits. Other than that, it is very important to involve suppliers and customers into the Research and Development (R&D) processes. According to Davood *et al.* (2013), quality of the products and services can be based on customer's perception where the meeting of higher standard is most welcome. Indeed, the quality produces by the products as example can achieve higher than what it is expected.

Process Approach

A desired result is achieved more efficiently when related resources and activities are managed as a process (ISO Central Secretariat, 2012).

System Approach to Management

Identify, understand and manage a system of interrelated processes for a given objective improves the organization's effectiveness and efficiency (ISO Central Secretariat, 2012).

Continual Improvement

Continual improvement of the organization's overall performance should be a permanent objective of the organization (ISO 9004, 2009).

Factual Approach to Decision Making

Effective decisions are based on the analysis of data and information (ISO Central Secretariat, 2012).

Mutually Beneficial Supplier Relationships

An organization and its suppliers are interdependent, and a mutually beneficial relationship enhances the ability of both to create value (ISO Central Secretariat, 2012). ISO 9000:2008 state that the organization and its suppliers are depending on each other and basing the relationship between them on mutual benefit will increasing their ability to create added value together.

Organization Performance

This study uses Govindarajan and Gupta's (1985) self-rated performance measure. This instrument measures performance along a multiplicity of dimensions rather than on any single dimension and exploits the degrees of importance of each dimension as weights in calculating the overall performance measure. There are a few numbers of elements in organization performance which can be in two categories; financial and non-financial. The financial performance can be measured by increasing in sales, profits and market shares. Meanwhile the non-financial performance can be measured by; increasing in management efficiency, innovation and new product development, reducing the operations and transactions costs, improving the product's quality, penetrating new markets and new customers, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty (Tari *et al.*, 2007; Feng *et al.*, 2008; Fotopoulos and Psomas, 2009; Zakuan *et al.*, 2010; Talib *et al.*, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

A business organization should adopt different manufacturing strategies, such as low cost standard products, differentiated make-to-order and built-to-order. Thus, in this type of organization (XYZ Industry), they must apply several quality management approaches in order to stay competitive in the industry. And because of that, the organization has been chosen to be a sample for the case study. This research is applying a qualitative method of data collection. It uses the case study of a business organization that involves the beverage industry. According to Thomas (2011), case study is an analysis of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, institutions or other systems that are deeply studied (holistically) by one or more methods. In this case, a case study method is used to get a general overall information on QMP implementation in the XYZ Industry Sdn. Bhd. The company is located at Arau, a small town in the state of Perlis. Before any communication is aligned with the company, an in-depth literature review was made from secondary sources such as journals, newspapers, business reports and articles. This is an important step to identify relevant factors of QMP. After that, a comprehensive research framework is developed. The research framework contains a structural relationship among these eight factors of QMP towards the organization performance. Figure 1 shows the eight independent variables of QMO and one dependent variable which is the organization performance.

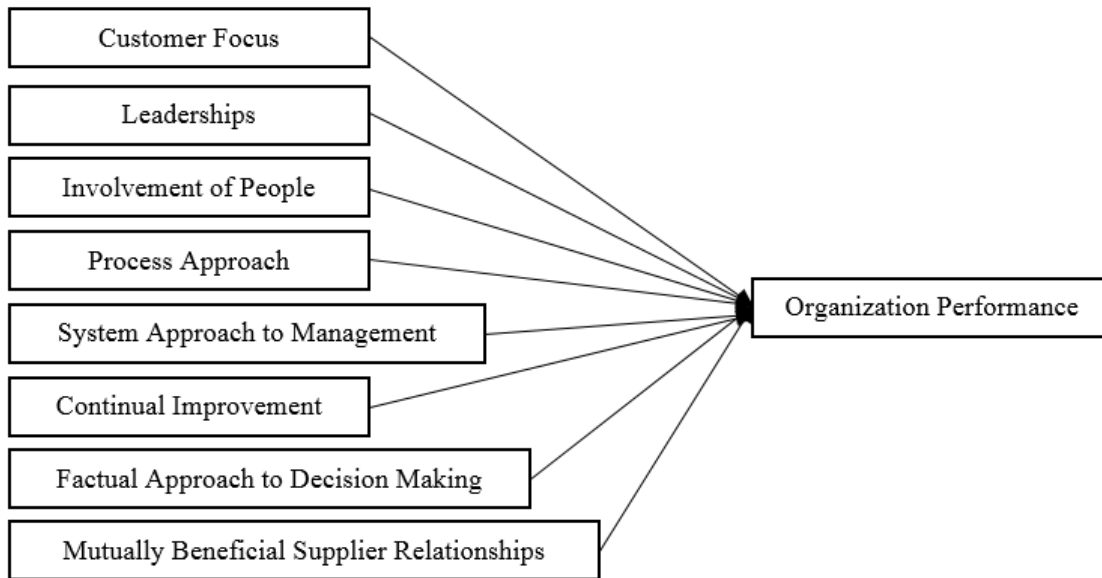


Figure 1
Research Framework on Organization Performance

A few e-mails were mailed to the organization which the address is taken from organization's website. After an agreement to participate was obtained, a formal telephone

conversation is made to arrange the details of interviews such as date, time and location. An interview guide is constructed and e-mailed to the respondents as a guideline for answering the questions. The interview guide was validated by two academicians and two experts from food business organizations. Interview sessions were conducted with CEO of the organization, operations manager, financial manager, marketing manager and three employees at XYZ Industry head office. During the interview sessions, each conversation is digitally recorded. An additional information were also gathered such as organization's annual reports, bulletins and statements. These sources provided information that was useful in determining the quality management principles that implemented in XYZ Industry Sdn. Bhd. The QMP that influences the organizations' performance was determined after analysis from the face-to-face semi structured interviews have been made.

FINDINGS

In this research, a business organization that involves in beverage industry was chosen to be a case study. The results of the data analysis were coming from four highest ranking informants and three employees from operations department. Each interview was done separately which takes approximately 30 minutes to one hour and 15 minutes. All conversation were digitally recorded and the interview transcriptions were transcribed right after each interview. The findings of the study were presented as follows;

Customer Focus

Presently, a lot of customers are having different perspective towards traditional drinks instead of modern beverages. They like to have something that traditional but with new methods of preparing and packaging. Thus it is an opportunity for XYZ Industry to fill the gap by producing something odd but with traditional tastes. For example, they hope customers will prefer their herb drink such as Java Tea and *Misai Kucing* Tea as compared to isotonic drinks (*i.e.*, 100PLUS, Revive and Mount Dew). They also have targeted customers but as overall their products are suitable for all ages, races, and geographical areas. Thus, the organization's R&D has formulated a lot of new drinks for local customers and international markets.

The CEO of XYZ Industry said *"We are hoping that our products can satisfy our customers and importantly able to attract the regular drinkers of isotonic to taste our formulas. Indeed, we have done a lot of research and survey in more than 14 big cities in Malaysia, just to get knowing our future customers! And surprise, we have a lot of positive feedbacks from them especially from middle ages people. Yes, they like the taste of Java Lemon! And because of that, we are now trying to develop more drinks from traditional herbs and distribute to our*

local market as soon as possible! Hopefully our customers can have their preference at local stores by end of this year!”

Improving the ability in fulfilling the customer needs is one of the approaches taken by XYZ Industry. By doing this, customer can give suggestion or complaints about their product directly to management. This can be done via e-mail and suggestion box in the website. To ensure the drinks can be accepted by all customers, the organization has successfully get the certificates of halal (from JAKIM) and MeSTI. The MeSTI logo (refer to Figure 2) is intended to act as a strong branding instrument to assure consumers of the products' compliance with the required food safety and hygiene standards. The benefits of customer focus are primarily coming from employee engagement and thus increase the motivation to do the best for quality.



Figure 2

Makanan Selamat Tanggungjawab Industri (MeSTI) Logo

Leadership

XYZ industry only has 47 employees with five departments and six of them are in the management level. With the small amount of workers it is easy for management team to communicate and convey the important information to all employees. Before making any decision, management conducted a meeting to ensure everyone can follow the organization's objectives. By this, miscommunication can be avoided in this company where employees can directly talk to top management.

The financial manager said *“Open culture is one of our objectives when dealing with all employees. We are like siblings, we take care each other and any disputes can be tolerated ... thus, our work conditions will be not effected! We have our motto of 3Rs Respect, responsible and rewards We believed with that motto, our relationships with top management and employees can be engaged harmoniously!”*

One of the employees said *“Indeed, any decision related to employees, were made by management through round table! If we have something or problems, it is easy for us to talk with them especially the operations manager ... also talk to our CEO! For me, I have fully*

responsible to my work and respect them as my superiors. They also look very smart in managing our needs!”

Involvement of People

In XYZ Industry, they put specific requirement in recruiting new employee. Potential people who have interest in joining the company must have at least basic knowledge in food processing technology. For R&D department, some knowledge in food chemistry add as advantage because the XYZ Industry’s specialization is producing healthy drink. Thus by having employees with same background and motivation in the beverage sector will make them easy in working relationship.

One of the employees said *“We can work together, closely and sharing what we know with our company! We are hard trained by them to be innovative and accountable for company’s performance. After all, we get back our effort in terms of daily benefits ... enjoying in good and healthy working environment and good salary too!”*

The organization has close relationship with Perlis State Government and FAMA Perlis. Both government agencies make a lot of effort to support the organization especially in making new product development, penetrating new local market (*i.e.*, Mydin and AEON BIG) and international markets such as Thailand. Now they are planning to bring the products into China’s market in 2016.

Process Approach

All activities and related resources to produce the drinks are coordinated as a process. They have implemented a very efficient system such as inventory system, barcode system, and just-in-time system. The results from the implemented those systems, the organization enjoys some benefits such as; lower costs and shorter cycle times, improved and consistent results from production flows and focused on main objective of the organization.

The operations manager said *“We have tried those systems for quite some times ... and as a result, we have a lot of improvement especially in producing good quality products! Indeed, we have less defective products and also product returns! We are happy about this! Thus, our sales are increased from time to time! For this time, we have reduced a lot of risks associated with massive inventories and inconsistent scheduled and delivery process! Now we are installing new forecasting system ... we hope ... we can make use it for better forecast of our production and sales in near future!”*

System Approach to Management

XYZ Industry ultimately committed in producing products which have been certified Halal by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM). Products are also compliant with MeSTI Certification provided by Ministry of Health. Makanan Selamat

Tanggungjawab Industri (MeSTI), or the "Food Safety is the Responsibility of the Industry", is a food safety program undertaken by the Ministry of Health (MOH). Before get MeSTI Certification, management have to develop a system by documented the practices in control records. XYZ Industry have procedure in place for premise control, operational control and traceability. The company has all the procedures, rules and policies in written. Each month the employees have to involve in a quality meeting handled by the operations manager.

The operations manager said *“As employees that involved in the production, they need to follow the procedures that been stated. We as top management ... we provide all flow charts for each process ... once step is done, each one needs to record in check sheet that provided. And by using this check sheets ... will be used by management in measuring and evaluating the workers’ performance”*.

Continual Improvement

It is a main objective for the organization to keep focus and to improve from time to time in terms of sales performance and react quickly to demand needs.

The CEO of the organization said *“Our focus to produce high quality of products is our main objective! Therefore, we have struggled to align our processes either in management and operations to become one flexible platform! Why this stage is important Because we can react as quickly as possible to meet our market demands ... as example ... we have successfully entered to Thailand’s market in about a year of our first production! Now we have about 30 different products coming from our traditional ingredients ... roots, herbs and others such as tamarind, lime, cucumber and jicama! We also increase our volume by 20% more!”*

Factual Approach to Decision Making

In getting a comprehensive solutions, effective decisions are based on in-depth analysis of data and information. At the moment, the organization has its own management information system (MIS) including online marketing such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Besides that, they also do some surveys at selected location of Mydin and AEON BIG hypermarkets in Malaysia. Meanwhile, the top management have also made some arrangements to enter Indonesia and Brunei markets in next two years.

The marketing manager said *“As overall, we are on the progression to move to next level in term of marketing our products. Indeed, we have a lot of feedbacks from our surveys, from our Facebook and the rests. We have put all of these information into our system ... and we are currently using the system to make our decision ... to make our move aligning with future’s demands. So, by doing that, we can have accurate information to launch our next product on the right time and right customers!”*

Mutually Beneficial Supplier Relationships

Supplier and manufacturer relationships are important since they are interdependence and thus a mutually beneficial may enhance the ability of both parties to create more values. These values are coming from optimization of processing costs, transformation costs and resource management costs.

The financial manager said *“Currently, we have about 12 main suppliers around Malaysia and three in Thailand. Now we are trying to negotiate with four or five suppliers that will be arranged our products in China, Indonesia, and Brunei. Despite of that, we have close collaboration with FAMA and State of Perlis to support us to make the deal happen! What we do now with them (suppliers) ... we have sharing information about customers’ feedbacks and needs. Perhaps in near future, we can establish joint development and improve our products much further! In term of financial, we have optimized our inventory costs and resources costs as well!”*

Organization Performance

Products output from XYZ Industry is now becoming more quality and tastier. Today, customers are concerned about the hygiene and safety of the food and beverage. Therefore, it is a right move for the organization to get the MeSTI certification as well as the halal certification from JAKIM. The MeSTI gives guideline that enhances company to be more concerned about safety and hygiene of product. With a better management, the organization is able to introduce a new development of product in at least four to six months. Now XYZ Industry starts to use aluminium can as a new packaging instead of plastic bottles. Even it requires new machine as new investment, the return of investment (ROI) of the organization will be paid in next two years (because the expanding of new markets and new customers). There are two criteria involve; financial and non-financial. The financial performance can be measured by increasing in sales, profits and market shares. Meanwhile the non-financial performance can be measured by; increasing in management efficiency, innovation and new product development, reducing the operations and transactions costs, improving the product’s quality, penetrating new markets and new customers, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty.

Impacts of QMP to Organization Performance

This section presents the impacts of QMP to organization performance based on data analysis. There are seven informants involved in the face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Top management people involves are CEO of the organization and three other department managers; operations, financial and marketing. In addition, there are three more individual (employees) involve in the interviews which are coming from several department. Table 1 indicates how the effectiveness implementation of QMP towards the organization’s performance based on the interviews.

Table 1
Agreement Indicator of QMP Effectives

ISO 9000:2000 QMP	CEO	OM	FM	MM	E1	E2	E3
Customer Focus	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Leadership	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Involvement of People	√		√	√			√
Process Approach	√	√		√	√	√	
System Approach to Management		√	√	√	√		√
Continual Improvement	√		√	√			√
Factual Approach to Decision Making	√	√		√	√		
Mutually Beneficial Supplier Relationship	√	√	√	√		√	

(Indicator: √ = agreed, OM = Operations, FM = financial, MM =marketing; E = employee)

Table 2
QMP Improve Organization Performance in Financial and Non-Financial Criteria

ISO 9000:2000 QMP	FA	NF1	NF2	NF3	NF4	NF5	NF6
Customer Focus	√	√		√		√	√
Leadership		√		√	√	√	√
Involvement of People		√	√		√		√
Process Approach	√	√	√		√	√	
System Approach to Management		√		√		√	√
Continual Improvement		√	√	√	√	√	
Factual Approach to Decision Making	√	√		√	√		√
Mutually Beneficial Supplier Relationship		√	√	√	√	√	√

Criteria; FA = financial - reduce of processing cost and transaction cost; increasing in sales, profits and market shares.

NF1 = non-financial - increase quality;

NF2 = increasing in management efficiency;

NF3 = innovation and new product development;

NF4 = improving the product's quality;

NF5 = penetrating new markets and new customers;

NF6 = customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty

Table 2 above presents the cumulative results from the interviews based on QMP contribution towards the organization's improvement in terms of financial and non-financial. For example, a good relationship with suppliers has conveyed major impact to the organization in terms of non-financial benefits; sharing information on customer's demands and innovative ideas for new product development.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Discussion

The research has examined the effects of QMP implementation towards organization performance. The research's results has important implication for the top management and their managers. First, the results show that QMP implementation can benefited the organization performance in terms of financial and non-financial implication. If top management and managers need to improve their performance, they have to make an investment in terms of money and time including high skills of human resources. The QMP is positively related to innovation performance because it encourage employees to innovate new product development as well as fertilize the culture of innovation. Based on customer focus, organization enjoys the high sales and demand that keep increase continuously. They are now can attracted more customer to let go other conventional isotonic drinks and taste new traditional herbs drinks with eye-catching packaging (*i.e.*, aluminium can) and 20% more in volume.

International market is very attractive, but the organization needs to penetrate local market at first stage. For example, besides Mydin and AEON BIG, other hypermarkets like TESCO, GIANT and ECONSAVE should be entered too. Besides that, franchise fast food restaurants like McDonalds, Pizza-Hut, KFC and Dominos should be approached. Perhaps academic population likes public universities, colleges and schools may provide lucrative markets in future marketing planning. On the other hand, the organization should take-off their own e-Catalogue and landing pages as one of online marketing strategies perhaps in Google, Mozila or other search engines. At last, the organization must also get the Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) certification. The GMP is a food product manufacturer must meet to assure that the products are of high quality and not expose any risk to the customers.

Conclusion

As overall, an implementation of QMP has enormous significant results to organization performance within the beverage industry. Supporting by legal certifications of halal and MeSTI, the organization can attract more customers in local markets as well as international customers. They also should innovate new ideas in order to continually produce new product in near future. This is very important because as SME in competitive beverage industry, a little different of packaging, brand names and volume may attract more crowd to taste it. Therefore, the organization must keep trying to survive in any potential market in Malaysia or international arena. Management has to give more attention to continuous product improvement by simplifying the operational procedures, the innovative new product development and considering for the technology transfer or joint venture. Within a context

of highly competitive industry, these results, may provide top management with the means of improving quality management has advantage to organization performance.

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