THE EFFECTS OF RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS ON THE PERFORMANCE OF ANOTIPA ENTERPRISES IN ZIMBABWE

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Abstract
The study examined the effects of resource constraints on the performance of Anotipa Enterprises, a distribution company in Zimbabwe. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research investigated how financial, human, and technological resource limitations affect the company's operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, and overall business performance. The study used the Theory of Constraints by Dr. Eliyahu M. Goldratt as a framework for directing the research, influencing methodology, and facilitating the development of new ideas. The data was collected from Anotipa Enterprises using questionnaires and interviews. The employees who participated were given informed consent to sign before they could provide the data. Thirty willing employees from three company departments were selected using the Voluntary, Stratified, and Random sampling designs to participate in the study. The data gathered were analysed using SPSS and MS Excel. The findings reveal that resource constraints significantly hinder Anotipa Enterprises' ability to meet customer demands, maintain efficient operations, and achieve business objectives. The study identified specific challenges, including inadequate funding, insufficient staff training, and outdated machines and technology, and proposed strategic recommendations to mitigate these constraints and enhance the distribution company's performance. The study contributes to understanding resource management in distribution companies and offers insights for policymakers, managers, and stakeholders seeking to improve business outcomes in resource-scarce environments.

Keywords: Resource Constraints, Theory of Constraints, Just-In-Time (JIT), Total Quality Management (TQM), Distribution Company

JEL Classification: D24, L23, M11

I.INTRODUCTION

For a company to be fully operational and successful, it needs resources. Resources are what a company needs to produce the end product, which includes inventory, labour, and finance. This study looks at how resource constraints affect Anotipa Enterprises' performance and what can be done to make sure it can perform well even with very few resources. The research mainly focused on distribution companies, which play the role of getting products to the ultimate consumers. Distribution companies have to manage resources and figure out the cheapest distribution channels to use to get the end products to the ultimate customers. Manufacturing companies use distribution companies because they are closer to the customers and they know how to interact with customers. Distributors allow companies to focus on the core business (Mabhena, 2020). For distribution companies to be fully functional, they critically require resources such as labour (for operations), inventory (to stock products), finance (to manage cash flow and acquire goods), and transportation (to move goods efficiently).

The distribution companies are organisations that help manufacturing companies get their product to consumers or those who sell the products directly to the consumer (Garcia, Herrity, Gafner, & Eads, 2025; Mabhena, 2020). These companies were formed because they are quicker at delivering products than manufacturers. They know where the ultimate customers are and know the fastest distribution channels of reaching them. The distribution companies also have a wider customer base than manufacturers because they understand the market more. They know the best channels (ways) to reach the market (PDS, 2019). These companies are also very good sellers and marketers; they keep customer-facing centres filled with products. The distributors have adequate trucks and manpower to ferry their products to the next in the chain, usually retailers or directly to the ultimate customers. These companies also help manufacturers with storing the product because the distributors have warehouses where they store the products.

Most distribution companies depend on manufacturing companies for the stock they sell. If the manufacturing industry is not functioning properly and the companies are having problems in the sense that they are producing less, distribution companies will be affected. According to the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries 2024 survey report, the macroeconomic and general business environments did not cause a significant decrease in the ability to produce products (CZI, 2024). However, the manufacturing companies have realised an increase of 14% over the past five years up to 2024 (CZI, 2024). The transport industry also affects distribution companies because most of the small to medium distributors rely on transport companies to transport their goods to their ultimate customers. At times when there are problems like fuel shortages, distribution companies will find it difficult to pay for these costs and may end up failing to supply the products, which results in fewer sales and profits for the companies.

The distribution firms have been experiencing problems due to the lack of resources (Lavelle, 2021), which they need to operate well. The companies in the distribution sector are growing at a slow rate because they don't have access to resources like foreign currency and loans, so they can expand. The distribution companies in Zimbabwe are found in the Distribution, Hotels, and Restaurants sectors. There is a comprehensive and well-developed distribution network servicing the supermarket chains in Zimbabwe (ITA, 2024). The Zimbabwean distribution companies, hotels, and restaurants account for 14.80% of GDP, while transport and communication account for 13.20% (Kuwaza, 2016). With the availability of more resources, these companies can produce more. The study objectives were to determine the effects of outsourced transport and financial constraints on the growth of Anotipa Enterprises, evaluate the relationship between employee performance and the efficiency of distribution companies, and assess the relationship between the availability of stock and the sales levels of Anotipa Enterprises.

II.LITERATURE REVIEW

The Theory of Constraints (TOC) was created by Dr. Eliyahu M. Goldratt in his 1984 book, "The Goal" (Boogaard, 2022). It is based on the idea of using scientific principles and logic to guide human-based organisations in their decision-making processes. Ultimately, the goal of the theory of constraints is to help organisations achieve their goals and, more importantly, continue doing so through changing times. In simple terms, the TOC is a recipe for change. The theory of constraints is based on a set of basic principles, or axioms. These principles are applied, using a set of basic logical processes, to specific fields such as operations, finance, distribution, project management, people management, strategy, sales, and marketing. The underlying premise of the TOC is that every organisation has, at any given time, at least one stumbling block (or constraint) that limits its performance and stops the company from reaching its intended goals. To successfully improve the organisation's performance, the constraint must be identified and managed according to one of the processes involved in the theory. As with any dynamic situation, the constraint may change over time, either because the initial constraint was successfully managed or because a changing environment has left the organisation with a new constraint. At any rate, the constraint management process is continual (BrightHub; Boogaard, 2022).

Market constraints arise when the demand for a company's products and services is less than or equal to the current output capacity of the organisation. The theory of constraints is followed by focusing on the five focusing steps which are (a) identify the system's constraint, (b) decide how to exploit the system's constraint, (c) subordinate everything else to the above decision, (d) elevate the system's constraint, and (e) if in any of the previous steps a constraint is broken, go back to step (Forte Labs, 2023). The Theory of Constraints is applied to improve production and increase profits (Garcia, Herrity, Gafner, & Eads, Theory of Constraints (Definition, Benefits and How To Use), 2025). The researchers stated that the theory is most used in manufacturing, but can also be used to improve the efficiency of systems and processes. The TOC was applied to the logistics service of medical records of a hospital (Aguilar-Escobar, Garrido-Vega, & González-Zamora, 2016). Bonatsos (2020) applied the Theory of Constraints as an improvement methodology at a private healthcare facility in Cyprus. The researcher discovered that the theory could improve the throughput by more than 30% (Bonatsos, 2020). One strength of the Theory of Constraints, as opposed to other improvement approaches tending to optimise performance in each area of the system (such as TQM, Six Sigma and Lean), is that it is based on systemic thinking, by focusing improvement efforts on critical components of the system (Reid, 2007).

The Theory of Constraints has been successfully implemented in several systems of manufacturing companies but has limited applications in services (Reid, 2007; Cox & Schleier, 2010; Nowakowska-Grunt & Moroz, 2013). Despite this, services offer major room for improvement through applying the Theory of Constraints concepts and tools (Cox & Schleier, 2010). However, the Theory of Constraints has been extensively applied in the healthcare sector (Ronen & Pass, 2010). That concurred with Stratton and Knight (2010) and Goldratt and Fox (1986), who stated that the Theory of Constraints was perfectly applied to the healthcare sector for patient-flow management, apart from theoretical contribution as stated by Breen, Burton-Houle, and Aron (Breen, Burton-Houle, & Aron, 2002), and Sadat, Carter and Golden (2013). The services present unique characteristics that must be considered when using the Theory of Constraints. Other researchers, such as Groop, Reijonsaari, and Lillrank (2011) and Taylor and Churchwell (2004), applied the Theory of Constraints in budget management and health technology assessment, respectively. A system constraint significantly prevents a system from improving its performance towards that goal. Every system has at least one constraint. There will always be very few constraints, since a single weaker link is always in a chain (Chawla & Kant, 2017; Goldratt, 1990). The basic principle of the Theory of Constraints is the impossibility of running a balanced factory at 100 percent capacity (Pozo, 2011). Decreased productivity and efficiency are caused by poor stock management, especially regarding warehousing and distribution, which significantly raises the rate of inefficiency and poor productivity. Without an integrated system that can instantly locate a specific item of inventory, a huge amount of employee hours is wasted. By employees having to search for misplaced, poorly labelled and stored, or simply non-existent items of stock, you are significantly adding to the costs of the business (Chan, 2016).

III.METHODOLOGY

Research Type and Design: The research used a case study of Anotipa Enterprises Trading as Freshtrade to study the effects of resource constraints on the performance of logistic companies. The case study was chosen because it was a company affected by resource constraints. The research design focused on transport, finance, employees, and inventory elements. The research design allowed the researcher to narrow the industry and elements into an easily researchable area. The case study method allows for in-depth research and richer data analysis than other experimental designs. The research used qualitative and quantitative research methods; thus, mixed methods research was used. The quantitative data analysis was done using Microsoft Excel sheets.

Conceptual framework: The conceptual framework of the research is presented in Figure 1.

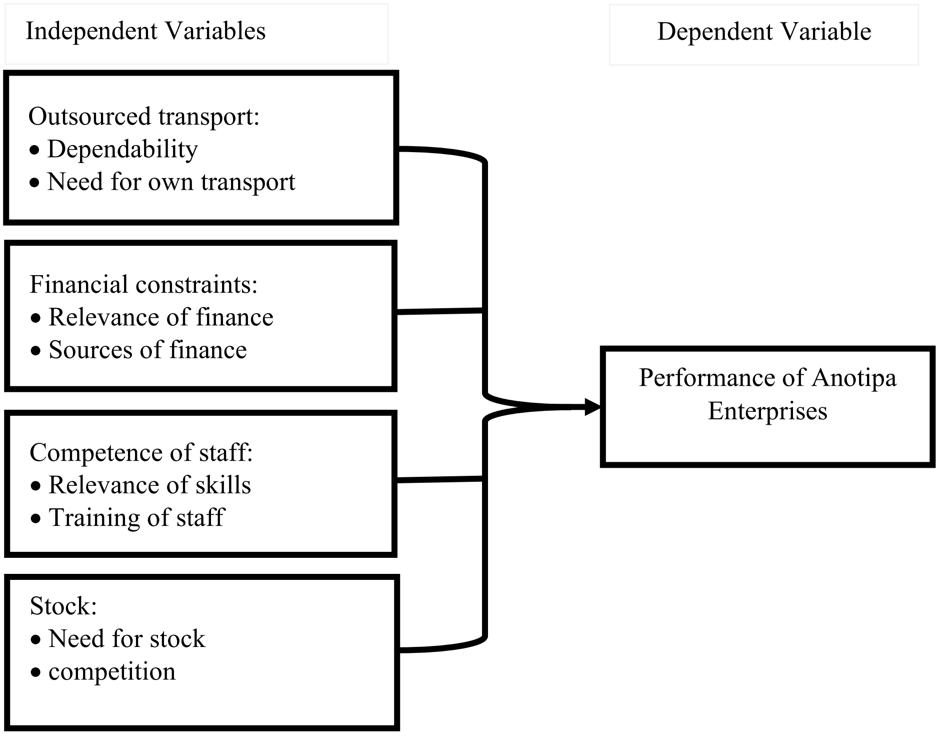

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows that the independent variables of the study were outsourced transport, financial constraints, staff competence and stock, while the dependent variable was the performance of Anotipa Enterprises.

Population and sampling: The population was 45 volunteer employees (Murairwa, 2015) of Anotipa Enterprises, as Freshtrade. A sample of 30 employees of Anotipa Enterprises was selected using a Stratified sampling design. The employees were coming from three departments of Anotipa Enterprises. The population and sample sizes are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Population and Sample Sizes

Department	Population	Sample
Finance Department	15	10
Sales Department	15	10
Warehouse Department	15	10
Total	**45**	**30**

Table 1 shows the distribution of the population and the sample of the study. A Simple Random sampling design was used to select employees from the three departments of Anotipa Enterprises. The Convenience sampling design was also used in this study to choose employees to complete the questionnaire and interviews.

Data Collection: The research collected primary data through questionnaires and interviews from selected Anotipa Enterprises employees. As opposed to easily accessible secondary data, they are not pure as they have undergone many statistical treatments (Ajayi, 2017). The researchers have complete control over the data collection process. Thus, primary data became a more accurate tool because of its ability to collect original and adequate data.

However, collecting data using primary research is costly and time-consuming. The research also used interviews of randomly selected employees from each department of Anotipa Enterprises.

Analysis tools and organisation of data: The data was analysed in SPSS and MS Excel. The results were presented in tables, graphs or charts, so that logic and conclusions could be derived from them.

Ethical consideration: The selected Anotipa Enterprises employees were asked to read and sign an informed consent form before participating in the research.

IV.DATA ANALYSIS

The response rate was 100 percent because the Voluntary sampling design (Murairwa, 2015) was used to select participants. Table 2 presents the distribution of the participants by gender.

Table 2: Distribution of participants by gender

Gender	Probability	Percentage
Male	0.67	67
Female	0.33	33
Total	1.00	100

Table 2 shows that 67% of the participants were males, while 33% were females. The value of z is 2.6336. The p-value is 0.00854. The result is significant at $p < 0.05$. Thus, the difference between the two proportions is statistically significant. Therefore, more male than female employees participated in the study. The study investigated the level of resource constraints at the company and presented the results in Figure 2.

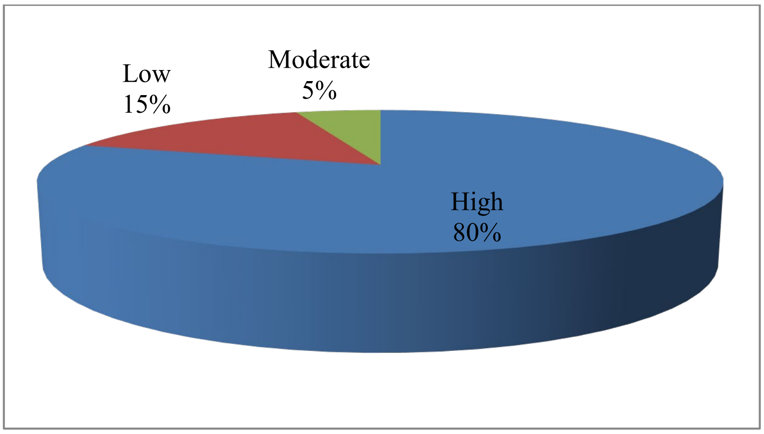

Figure 2: Level of Resource Constraints

Figure 2 shows that 80% of the employees of Anotipa Enterprises Trading as Freshtrade believed that the effects of resource constraints were high and detrimental to the growth of the distribution company. Only 15% of the employees believed that resource constraints were only slightly affecting the performance of the distribution company. Those employees who believed that the resource constraints were moderately affecting the performance of the distribution company were 5%. The Chi-square test value is 30.2. The p-value is < 0.00001. The result is significant at $p < 0.05$. The results indicate that there were different levels of resource constraints in Anotipa Enterprises that affected its performance. The study investigated the effects of outsourced transport on the logistics of the distribution company and presented the results in Figure 3.

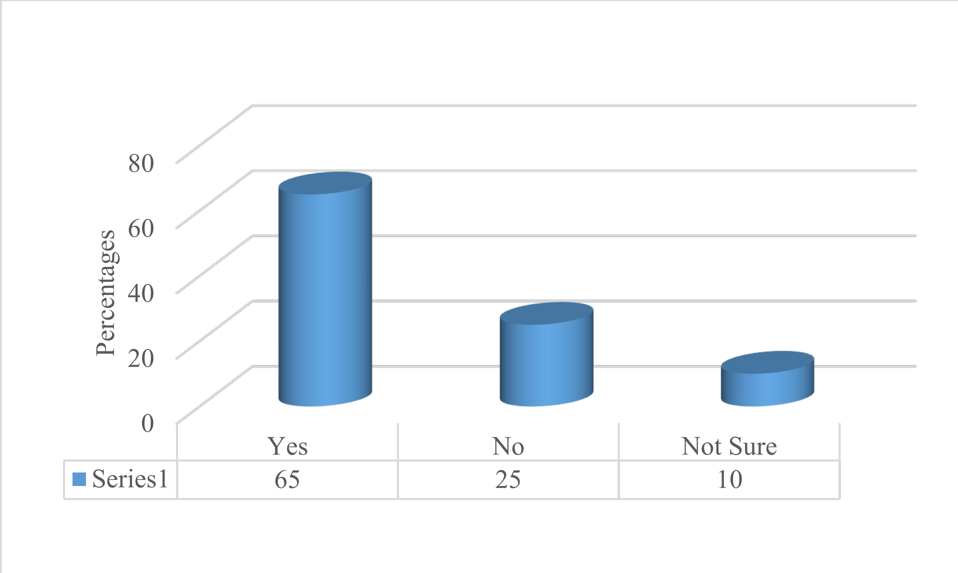

Figure 3: Need for Outsourced Transport

Figure 3 shows that 65% of the participants agreed that outsourcing transport was good for Anotipa Enterprises, while 25% disagreed. The results were discussed in more detail during the interviews conducted. The 65% participants stated that.

"….outsourcing was good for the company because it would not need to look for large sums of capital to buy trucks. However, it may not be easy for the company to get the required money to buy the trucks."

However, the other 25% participants stated that Anotipa Enterprises.

"….should borrow and buy their trucks to benefit them in the long run. The company should terminate paying outside transporters, as this reduces the profits of the company. The participants stated that the expenses the company was having when they had their trucks would be less than what they were paying"

The proportion test results are $z = 3.114$ and $p = 0.00188$. The result is significant at $p < 005$. The results indicate that the difference between the two proportions is statistically significant. This means that Anotipa Enterprises employees wanted it to continue outsourcing transport for its business. The study investigated the effects of financial constraints on the growth of Anotipa Enterprises and presented the results in Figure 4.

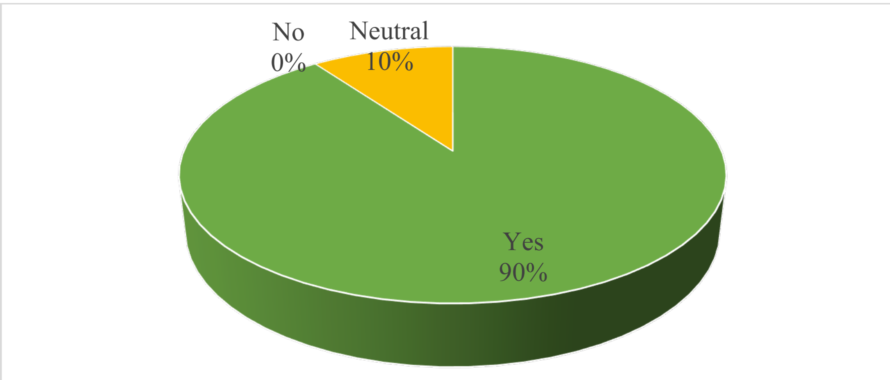

Figure 4: Effects of Financial Constraints

The study found that inadequate assets were one of the effects of financial constraints at Anotipa Enterprises. When asked whether the company had enough assets to operate efficiently and effectively, 90% of the employees agreed that the company had inadequate assets due to financial challenges. However, 10% of the respondents argued that the existing assets were incorrectly used, which had affected the company's performance. During the interviews, the 90% respondents believed that

"…the company had adequate assets to meet its demands and perform to the acceptable capacity level."

However, 10% employees argued that

"….the Company should adopt new methods of tackling business problems with the available resources."

The argument presented by 10% employees indicated an admission that the assets were inadequate, but they wanted the company to be creative and innovative in production and operations approaches to get more from the available assets. The results agree with Chen (2014), who found that physical and intangible assets differ and matter, but do not affect firms equally. The research investigated the need for external finance for Anotipa Enterprises and presented the results in Figure 5.

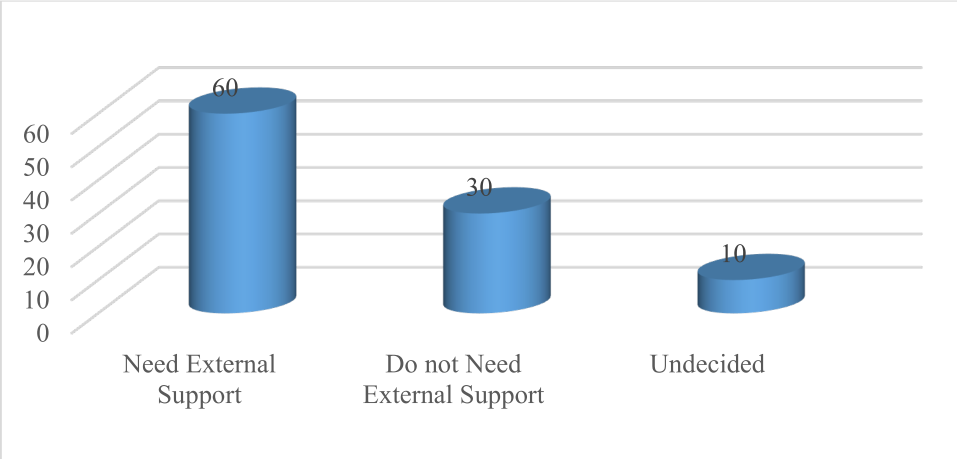

Figure 5: The Company Needs External Finance

Figure 5 shows that 60% of the employees concurred that Anotipa Enterprises needed external financing to boost its performance, while 30% disagreed. Only 10% were undecided on whether the Company needed external support. From the interviews conducted, more than 60% of the employees stated that

"....Anotipa Enterprises required external funding to open more branches and buy more trucks for easy transporting of goods. Funds were also required to upgrade its operations systems and acquire better trucks, which are more efficient."

The interviews with the selected employees highlighted the benefits of getting external financing for the growth and performance of Anotipa Enterprises, which are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Benefits of External Funding for the Company

Important Factor	Percentage Response
Improved working capital position	37.50
It enables businesses to acquire new, productive assets	28.85
Enter new markets	21.63
Hiring highly skilled managers and a workforce	12.02

Table 3 shows that of the 60% employees who wanted the Company to access external funding for growth, they stated that it would improve the working capital position (37.50%), enable acquisition of new assets (28.85%), allow penetration of new markets (21.63%), and allow hiring of skilled staff (12.02%). The Table 3 results support the discussions by Harrison (2023), Sutherland (2023), and Tiberghien (2025) on the advantages of external funding. At most 30% of the employees pointed out that.

".....the company may fail to pay off the debts, and in the end, the company may be forced to close down. They also said that if the company decides to get financing by issuing shares and selling off more than 50%, it may end up with new owners, and the employees were afraid of the change."

The results show that 30% of the employees also support the company's need to access external funding, but were sceptical about its capacity to return the funds. The results support MacKean's (n.d.) and Patel's (2025) discussions. The study investigated the relationship between the availability of stock and the sales levels of distribution and presented the results in Figure 6.

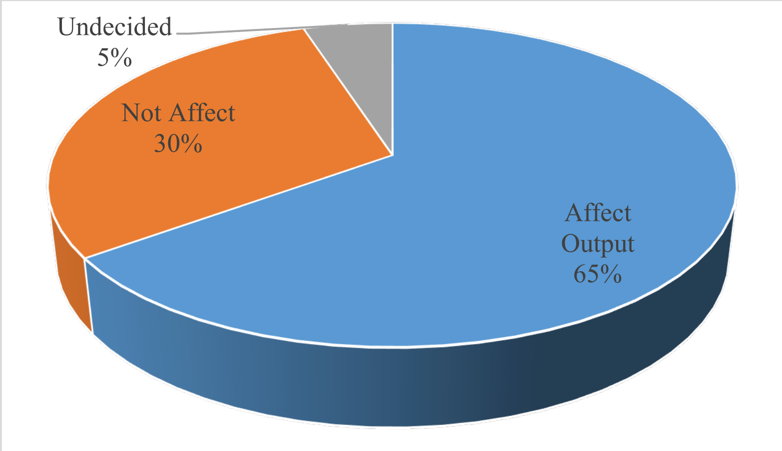

Figure 1: Effects of Stock Availability on Sales

Figure 6 shows the responses to whether the availability of stocks affects the sales of the company's goods. More than 65% of employees concurred that the sales levels depend on the availability of stocks. About 30% of the employees stated that the company may have stocks but fails to market them and make sales. So the availability of stock does not directly affect the quantity of sales. However, the discussions with the employees indicate that output increases, but the consumption of the goods depends on the effort to market them. The results support the discussions by Hand (2025) that the relationship between achieving a good stock and sales is affected by market fluctuations and supply chain disruptions. However, the company should balance the ratio between inventory and sales to minimise over- and under-stocking, which affects the sales of the company's goods. Making sure that the products are constantly on the shelves ensures maximum sales, brand loyalty and support for retail partnerships (Umbrex, 2025). The research investigated the effects of employees on the efficiency of Anotipa Enterprises and presented the results in Figure 7.

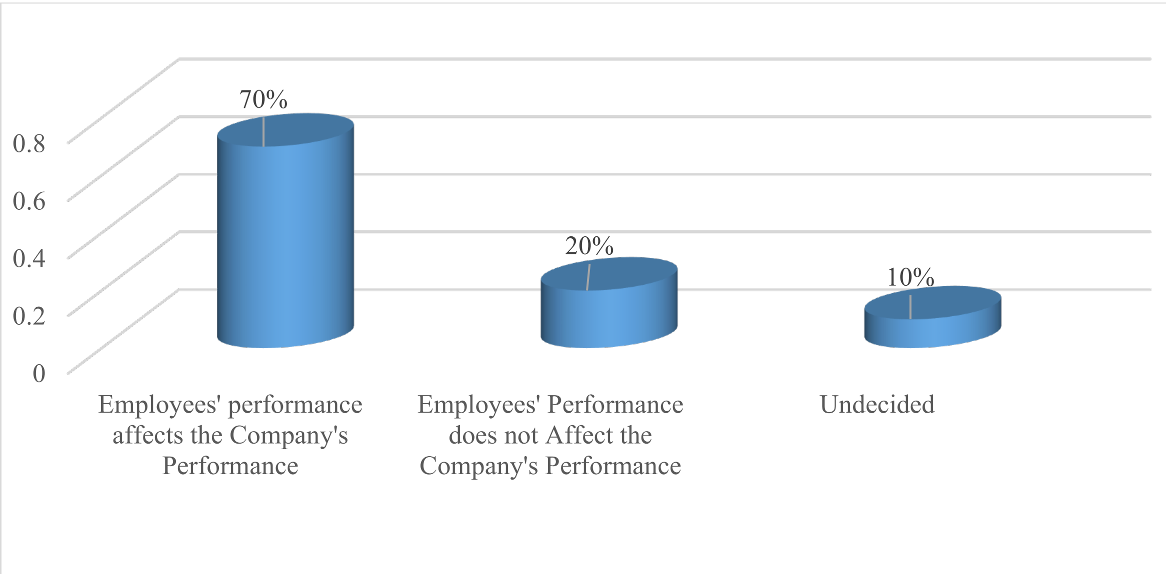

Figure 2: How employees' performance affects the company's performance

Figure 7 shows that the performance of the employees was a huge factor in the performance of Anotipa Enterprises. More than 70% of the employees stated that their performance affects the company's performance, while 20% stated that their performance does not affect the company's performance. , and 10% said that they are not sure. From the interviews, the employees said that.

".....they bring together the company's resources from the first stage to the final stage, from when the company gets the products to the final stage when the product reaches the customer. If the employees are inefficient, the quality of the products will be low and the customers will be dissatisfied, leading to a loss of customers and a decrease in sales revenue. The employees stated that having inefficient staff increases costs, which reduces profits."

The results show that employees' performance directly affects the performance of Anotipa Enterprises. This concurs with the discussions in Novakovic (2025) and Vosloban (2012) that employees' performance directly affects company performance. Companies grow faster if they know how to use their employees. Therefore, the distribution companies should understand their employees to put in place a motivational framework to enhance performance. The research investigated the performance of the company's sales over the five years and presented the results in Figure 8.

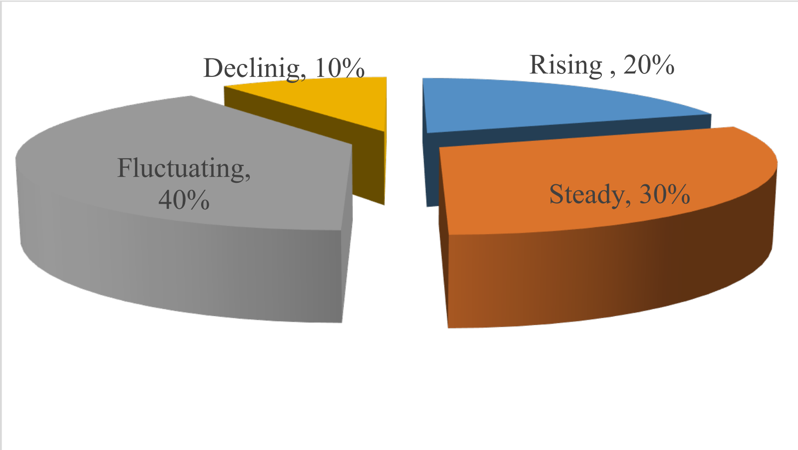

Figure 3: Performance of Sales over the Last Five Years

Figure 8 shows that Anotipa Enterprises' performance has been fluctuating for the past five years. This is supported by 40% of the participants who stated that the Anotipa Enterprises' performance had been fluctuating for the past five years, 30% stated that the performance was steady, 20% stated that the performance was rising, and 10% stated that the performance was declining. The company should invest more in Artificial Intelligence (AI) to improve performance. The company should deliberately select sales performance metrics for monitoring to achieve the expected performance levels (Flaherty, 2025; Jain, 2024).

V.CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results show that the majority of the employees preferred the company to use its vehicles for logistic purposes. Anotipa Enterprises should access external sources of funds to get the required capital. However, the company should be prepared to be in debt for some years while servicing the loan. This may affect the performance of the distribution company. The study was expected to find an inverse relationship between financial constraints and the growth of Anotipa Enterprises. That means the more the company became financially constrained, the weaker the company became and the slower its growth. The research showed that the employees play a big role in making sure that the company performs well. The performance level of the employees affects the performance of the distribution company. Therefore, the company must engage capable and highly qualified and experienced staff. The study found that the availability of stock has a positive relationship with the level of sales. The more the company sells, the higher the sales volume, which means that the company will have high sales volumes and profits. The less stock the company has, the less profit the company will make. It may make just enough to break even.

Companies should have systems in place to keep track of their inventory, such as Just-In-Time. Companies should have proper training in place for the employees they hire and should make sure that employees have the required qualifications. Companies should give employees certain targets to meet, and they should have regular employee appraisals. The company should have set contracts with the transport companies if they are going to outsource their transport, and both parties should agree on the terms and conditions. The best option would be for the company to raise funds to buy its trucks. Most companies are resistant to issuing more shares because they do not want to change the shareholding structure.

VI.AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

Other researchers could look at how manufacturer/distributor relationships affect the performance of distribution companies. Manufacturers should see how their distributors carry out their business because that also affects performance. Manufacturers' and distributors' relationships must also be investigated so that both parties benefit from the agreement. There should also be ways in which a manufacturer should handle business if they have at least a distributor.

VII.ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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