

Green and Smart Supply Chains: Evaluating Nestlé Malaysia's and Danone's Strategic Approaches to Sustainability and Efficiency

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Abstract

This study examines the supply chain management practices of Nestlé Malaysia and its main competitor, Danone Malaysia, with a focus on sustainability, digital transformation, and competitive strategy. The analysis explores how both multinational corporations integrate global and local sourcing, utilize advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and blockchain, and adopt sustainable practices to enhance efficiency and resilience. Nestlé Malaysia emphasizes end-to-end digital integration through the GLOBE platform, local sourcing, and its commitment to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. In contrast, Danone Malaysia applies a demand-driven supply chain model supported by data analytics and sustainability principles aligned with its B-Corp certification and plant-based product innovations. The study highlights that Nestlé's competitive advantages lie in operational efficiency, strategic partnerships, and affordability, while Danone's strengths are rooted in ethical branding and environmental responsibility. Despite challenges such as global disruptions, rising costs, and regulatory pressures, both companies demonstrate that sustainable and digitally enabled supply chains are essential for long-term competitiveness and stakeholder trust. This comparative analysis provides valuable insights into how digital innovation and sustainability can be integrated into supply chain management to achieve business resilience and global sustainability goals.

Keywords

Ethical Decision-Making, Sustainability, Sustainable Development, Supply Chain

1. Introduction

Nestlé Malaysia has a long history, having begun as the Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Company in Penang in 1912. To meet its growth, the firm relocated to Kuala Lumpur in 1939. Following independence in 1957, the country's population increased, and Nestlé responded to the demand for jobs and more goods by establishing its Culinary goods Division in the 1960s. This marked the start of local production under the well-known MAGGI brand [1].

Nestlé Malaysia now employs over 5,000 people, runs six plants around the country, and can provide more than 500 items that have been certified Halal. Milo, Maggi, Nescafé, and Kit Kat are family favourites that have become essential to Malaysian culture. In addition to providing high-quality nourishment, Nestlé is dedicated to sustainability; this is demonstrated by programs like the Borneo Cocoa program and nationwide recycling activities, which have an influence on the environment and the community [2].

Despite the nation's present economic difficulties, the corporation has maintained its leadership position in the fast-moving consumer products industry by innovating and guaranteeing affordability. The launch of health-conscious goods and environmental initiatives like Nestlé Project SAVE, which tackled plastic waste in key Malaysian cities, are two examples. Nestlé Malaysia is using digitalisation in an effort to boost productivity and support environmental goals. The business has included digital supply chain tracking and is researching new technologies to enhance waste management and lower carbon emissions. It received recognition for its several sustainability initiatives, including the Waste Management Association of Malaysia's "Waste Management Outstanding Award" and The Edge ESG Awards' "Consumer Products & Services" category [3].

2. Discuss the Product(s) Produced by the Organisation and Briefly Explain the Product

Nestlé is one of the world's largest and most well-known food and beverage companies, offering a wide range of products designed to meet the various needs and preferences of consumers around the world. With a broad portfolio of products covering multiple categories, Nestlé has become a household name in many countries and is trusted for its commitment to quality, innovation and nutrition. From beverages and dairy products to snacks and cooking products, Nestlé has been providing consumers with products that meet their daily needs, enhance enjoyment and promote overall health [4].

Next, in the beverage category, Nestlé is well-known for brands such as Nescafé, one of the most popular instant coffee brands in the world, offering a variety of blends and flavors to suit different tastes, such as NESCAFÉ DOLCE GUSTO, NESCAFÉ Blend and Brew, NESCAFÉ® CLASSIC, NESCAFÉ Latte and more [5]. Then the price of NESCAFÉ Dolce Gusto Chococino Chocolate 16 Caps 256g is RM29.04, NESCAFÉ BLEND&BREW ORIGINAL 3IN1 (28x19g) is RM15.49, Nescafé Classic Refill Pack 200g is RM19.80 [6]. Another household name is Milo, a chocolate malt beverage mix that is particularly loved by children and athletes for its energy-boosting properties and nutritional value. MILO's origins can be traced back to the ancient Greek athlete Milo Croton, who was known for his amazing strength and Olympic victories. Inspired by his legendary story, Nestlé created MILO in 1934 to combat childhood malnutrition and the price of 1.8kg of milo is RM38.26 [6]. Nestlé also produces Nestlé Pure Water, which has been a trusted brand for over two decades, renowned for providing pure, high-quality water. It is a trusted brand of bottled water that promotes hydration and wellness. Nestlé Pure Water is available in a variety of sizes to suit your lifestyle, making hydration simple and convenient at home or on the go the price of Nestle Pure Life, contains 12 bottles, a volume of 6 liters is RM20.00 [7].

In the confectionery category, Nestlé is home to some of the world's most beloved and iconic snacks. One of the standout products is KitKat, a wafer chocolate bar renowned for its perfect blend of creamy chocolate and crispy wafers. KitKat is enjoyed in over 80 countries and has become a global symbol of taking a break, encapsulated in its famous slogan, "Take a break, have a KitKat." This treat is not just about flavor, but about the idea of pausing and savoring a well-deserved moment of relaxation [8] KitKat has many flavors, and the price of NESTLÉ KitKat® 2-Fingers Milk Chocolate Value Share Pack 20 Pieces is RM21.93, NESTLÉ KitKat® 2-Fingers Green Tea Chocolate is RM14.18 [8]. Another popular Nestlé confection is Smarties, a vibrant chocolate candy that's loved for its colorful, crunchy candy-coated exterior and delicious chocolate center. Smarties have become a symbol of creativity and joy, bringing excitement and color to every moment. Whether shared with friends or enjoyed alone, Smarties add a playful touch to everyday life, making them a fun and imaginative treat for all ages and the price of Smarties Mini shared bag is RM22.90 [9]. Both KitKat and Smarties are perfect examples of how Nestlé blends indulgence with a sense of enjoyment and creativity in its confectionery range [9].

Nestlé is a prominent leader in the culinary products category, with its Maggi brand being a staple in kitchens around the world. Since its creation, Maggi has become synonymous with convenience and flavor, offering a wide range of products that simplify meal preparation while enhancing taste. Among its most popular offerings are instant noodles, seasoning cubes, and sauces, all designed to make cooking quick, easy, and delicious. Maggi's instant noodles are a go-to choice for busy individuals and families, providing a satisfying meal in minutes. There are many flavors of Maggi, such as Kari, tom yam, chicken, Pedas Gile, and more. The price is about RM4.79 to RM9 [10]. The seasoning cubes and sauces are widely appreciated for their ability to elevate the flavor of everyday dishes, whether it's a simple vegetable stir-fry or a hearty soup. These products have become essential for those looking to save time without compromising on taste. The popularity of Maggi lies not just in its convenience but in its ability to bring rich and savory flavors to everyday meals. With a presence in numerous countries, Maggi has firmly established itself as a trusted and beloved brand, making cooking easier and more enjoyable for people of all ages [10].

Overall, Nestlé's extensive portfolio is crafted to address a wide range of consumer needs, offering everything from convenient and nutritious options to indulgent snacks and specialized nutritional products. By continuously innovating and adapting to evolving tastes and lifestyles, Nestlé has earned its reputation as a trusted global brand. It remains committed to supporting people's everyday nutrition, enhancing their enjoyment, and promoting their overall well-being, ensuring that Nestlé products are an integral part of daily life across the world.

Nestlé offers a wide range of products at various price points, making them accessible to consumers from all walks of life. Among its offerings, the most affordable option is Maggi Instant Noodles, priced between RM4.79 and RM9.00, which is well within the reach of budget-conscious individuals. Following this is NESCAFÉ BLEND & BREW ORIGINAL 3IN1 (28x19g) at RM15.49, and NESTLÉ KitKat® 2-Fingers Green Tea Chocolate at RM14.18. For slightly higher budgets, the Nescafé Classic Refill Pack 200g is priced at RM19.80, while Nestlé Pure Life bottled water (12 bottles, 6 liters) costs RM20.00. Indulgent snack options such as the NESTLÉ KitKat® 2-Fingers Milk Chocolate Value Share Pack (20 pieces) at RM21.93 and the Smarties Mini Share Bag at RM22.90 cater to those seeking small luxuries. Premium beverage options include NESCAFÉ Dolce Gusto Chococino Chocolate 16 Caps (256g) at RM29.04, while MILO (1.8kg), valued at RM38.26, appeals to families and individuals looking for a nutritious boost.

This pricing strategy demonstrates Nestlé's commitment to inclusivity, ensuring that its products are affordable for both affluent customers and those with limited financial means. Of course, these products are just a small part of Nestlé's extensive range, emphasizing how the brand caters to a wide audience by providing choices that align with different budgets and lifestyles.

3. Identify and Analyse the Supply Chain Process of the Organisation

Nestlé adopts a global sourcing strategy for procuring its raw materials as it purchases the raw ingredients from both domestic and international vendors. In addition to third-party providers, the company also sources directly from farmers, cooperatives, and suppliers [11]. The company sources key ingredients such as cocoa, coffee, sugar, milk, and wheat from various regions worldwide. In order to lower transportation costs and boost local economies, Nestlé uses regional

agricultural suppliers and guarantees local sourcing whenever feasible. Additionally, Nestlé has focused sustainability as it has made a commitment to ethical and sustainable sourcing methods. The business collaborates with vendors who adhere to its governance, social, and environmental requirements. A key component of its sourcing strategy is the sustainability of the raw materials, such as Fairtrade-certified chocolate and certified sustainable palm oil [12].

Nestlé's first-tier supplier for palm oil is Wilmar International, a major agribusiness group operating in Southeast Asia. By conducting frequent audits and maintaining close involvement, Nestlé guarantees high transparency and adherence to sustainability requirements. A transparency dashboard, grievance procedures, and policies like "No Deforestation, No Peat, No Exploitation" were implemented by Wilmar in response to powerful industry and Nestlé's lead firm demand to address social and environmental issues. For example, Wilmar supplies refined palm oil products directly to Nestlé's manufacturing facilities. For second-tier suppliers, Wilmar works with groups like Wild Asia and GeoTraceability to create traceability systems that track supply chains and encourage sustainable practices for its smallholder farmers. In order to assist smallholders in increasing productivity and profitability, these initiatives include specialised agronomist guidance, training, and RSPO certifications. For example, Wild Asia and GeoTraceability supply raw palm oil fruit bunches managed by Wilmar which then process and transport to Nestlé [13].

Nestlé Malaysia employs efficient modes of transportation for both inbound and outbound logistics to ensure the smooth flow of materials and products across its supply chain. Inbound logistics involves the transportation of raw materials to Nestlé's production facilities from both domestic and foreign sources, including palm oil, cocoa, and packaging materials. In Malaysia, local suppliers frequently use road transport, using trucks to carry goods straight to companies [14]. Ports like Port Klang are important entrance locations for marine freight, which is the main route of transportation for international sourcing. Air freight is used to prevent delays and preserve quality in urgent situations or for valuable perishable goods. Integrated tracking systems support Nestlé Malaysia's import logistics, guaranteeing traceability and adherence to the company's Responsible Sourcing Guidelines. Nestlé Malaysia handles outbound logistics by distributing its final goods, such as Kit Kat, Milo, and Maggi, to distributors, retailers, and consumers. The most popular way to deliver goods to supermarkets, convenience stores, and smaller merchants around the country is by road using trucks and vans [15]). Exporting goods to Southeast Asian regional markets as well as other international locations is done via sea freight. For large cargoes, rail transport is occasionally used to cut expenses and the environmental effect. In order to ensure prompt and secure delivery to consumers, Nestlé also works with third-party logistics providers (3PL) for effective last-mile delivery and warehousing operations.

Nestlé Malaysia operates as a prominent food and beverage producer that guarantees a consistent flow of goods to both domestic and foreign markets. Nestlé has 6 factories in Malaysia and its factories usually work three shifts with operations frequently lasting from 8:00 AM to 10:00 PM or even twenty-four hours for in-demand products like instant noodles and beverages depending on its demand [16]. Nestlé uses cutting-edge machinery and equipment, such as automated manufacturing lines, robotic packaging systems, and high-capacity mixers, to maintain high efficiency and quality [17]. Nestlé also places a high priority on localising its goods to appeal to Malaysian consumers. For example, it has made Milo with less sugar and Maggi Kari flavour. Nestlé also runs an R&D facility in Petaling Jaya to create new goods and enhance current ones. A key component of Nestlé Malaysia's operations is sustainability, as evidenced by the integration of waste minimisation, water conservation, and energy-efficient machinery [18]. Nestlé Malaysia makes sure that its operations are in line with its commitment to sustainability while successfully satisfying customer demands by using environmentally friendly methods and sourcing products sustainably.

Nestlé Malaysia uses a strong and varied distribution network to guarantee that its goods are effectively delivered to customers. Nestlé ensures a quick and dependable supply by using direct distribution which ships goods straight from manufacturing plants to stores, supermarkets, and hypermarkets [19]. Nestlé runs a number of central warehouses in key locations across Malaysia to help its distribution initiatives. These warehouses guarantee efficient operations and prompt delivery to domestic and foreign markets by storing raw materials, packaging materials, and completed goods. Regional distribution centres also manage inventory for particular geographic areas, guaranteeing that goods are easily accessible in high-demand locations. Nestlé maintains a balanced inventory that prevents overstocking or understocking while successfully satisfying customer needs by using sophisticated inventory management systems to track stock levels.

4. Identify and Discuss on the Application of Information Technology Tools by the Organisation in the Supply Chain Process

As a global food company with products reaching billions of people around the world, Nestlé aims to work faster and more efficiently, while ensuring that our solutions are adapted to the local context and individual needs. To begin with, the company leverages artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning for demand forecasting and predictive analytics. These tools analyze historical sales data, market trends, and external factors like weather or economic conditions to optimize production schedules and reduce wastage [20].

People's needs and preferences are rapidly evolving, which is leading to new trends and food ideologies that are amplified through social media. This, coupled with the use of connected devices and e-commerce, is generating a wealth of insights that we can leverage to drive innovation. Today, the first generation of AI tools based on advanced algorithms to gather social media insights are available to help innovators identify new concepts. Furthermore, Nestle uses AI to help the company analyze information about trends, ingredients, flavors, and health benefits in social media,

online publications, and other web resources. The company's innovators cluster the insights captured, which leads us to new ideas or trends that we can quickly turn into compelling product innovations. For example, using these tools, the company launched Nestle Dagona Coffee Powder and Nesvita Botanical Probiotics Adult Health Care in China [21]

In addition, artificial intelligence and virtual reality are increasingly becoming an integral part of consumer-facing experiences and services. Soon, vending machines and beverage dispensers will be equipped with holographic operators that interact with people in multiple languages while creating personalized experiences based on each individual's taste preferences. Nestle already offers personalized products and solutions for humans and pets. Through the use of home testing kits, consumers can share physiological data and receive personalized supplement recommendations for specific health conditions. Nestle partnered with the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation to develop a free, web-based digital tool that makes it easier than ever to create delicious and gut-friendly recipes. Developed by the researchers using Nestlé's expertise in digital health and nutritional science, the platform uses machine learning algorithms and nutritional data to generate personalized meal plans [21].

Meanwhile, Nestle employs blockchain technology to improve traceability and food safety. For instance, its partnership with IBM's Food Trust blockchain allows Nestlé to track the journey of raw materials, such as coffee beans or cocoa, from farms to shelves. This not only ensures product authenticity but also fosters consumer trust by providing detailed information about the origins and ethical sourcing of ingredients. Nestlé's use of blockchain technology in its supply chain is a key step toward achieving greater transparency, efficiency, and trust in its operations. Blockchain is a decentralized, immutable digital ledger that records every transaction across the supply chain. Nestlé leverages this technology to monitor the movement of raw materials and finished products, ensuring that each step in the production process is traceable and verifiable [22].

For example, Nestle uses IBM Food Trust, a blockchain-based platform, to track products like coffee, milk, and baby food from farm to fork. The system records detailed information about where and how ingredients are sourced, their processing journey, and their arrival at retail stores. This data is accessible to stakeholders, including consumers, who can scan QR codes on product packaging to view the entire production history. This level of transparency empowers consumers to make informed choices about the products they purchase, particularly those marketed as sustainable or ethically sourced [23].

Furthermore, blockchain also helps Nestlé improve operational efficiency. By having a single, shared version of the truth, Nestlé and its suppliers can reduce paperwork, streamline audits, and detect inefficiencies in the supply chain. Additionally, the technology minimizes the risk of fraud, counterfeiting, and mislabeling by ensuring that all transactions are securely recorded and cannot be altered. From an ethical and sustainability perspective, Nestle uses blockchain to validate claims about fair trade and environmentally friendly practices. It allows the company to verify that suppliers meet required standards, enhancing accountability and fostering trust between Nestlé, its suppliers, and consumers [24].

5. Examine the Supply Chain Process between the Selected Organisation and Top Competitor(s) in the Same Industry (Danone Malaysia)

5.1 Differences of Supply Chain Strategies

In order to maintain its effectiveness, resilience, and market leadership, Nestlé Malaysia's supply chain strategy is centred on end-to-end integration, sustainability, and digital transformation. The GLOBE platform, an integrated IT-based system that facilitates smooth coordination throughout the value chain from production and distribution to procurement, serves as the foundation of operations. Locally obtained raw materials are a major priority since they promote cost effectiveness, improve ties with domestic providers, and boost the local economy. This lessens reliance on imported goods, protecting the company against potential hazards in the global supply chain. Besides, Nestlé's strategy is based on sustainability, which includes reducing carbon emissions, utilising recyclable or reusable packaging, and adhering to the company's worldwide goal of reaching net-zero emissions by 2050 [25].

By doing this, Danone Malaysia transitioned from traditional push to demand-driven operations and adopted a pull supply chain model with an emphasis on consumer centricity, resilience, and sustainability. This allowed them to better adjust production and distribution to the demands of their customers in real time. The use of digital technology for demand sensing, data integration, and predictive analytics will support this, improving responsiveness and cutting waste. In addition, Danone incorporates energy efficiency, regenerative agriculture, and cutting-edge packaging into its business practices as part of its commitment to sustainability. By using these tactics, Danone will be able to adjust to disturbances while still meeting changing consumer needs and environmental objectives [26]. Thus, the key difference is Danone is more concerned with global procurement and flexibility in responding to shifting markets than Nestlé is with local sourcing and digital transformation.

5.2 Differences of Competitive Advantage

Nestlé Malaysia has a competitive advantage thanks to its strategic alliances, sustainability initiatives, and internet marketing. Nestlé can reach a larger audience and reallocate its resources to other expanding sectors thanks to inexpensive internet advertising. Environmental awareness, such as replacing dangerous components with eco-friendly ones, has a strong correlation with customers' preferences for sustainable products. In addition to strengthening brand

reputation, strategic alliances with socially conscious businesses aid in market expansion. Nestlé's dedication to addressing its shortcomings, such as the shift to healthier food alternatives, reaffirms its position as a market leader that is highly customer-driven and forward-thinking [27].

Danone Malaysia's strong dedication to sustainability and moral corporate conduct, demonstrated by its B-Corp accreditation, circular economy programs, and emphasis on plant-based product innovation, gives it a competitive edge. Danone is a pioneer in sustainable solutions because of these tactics, which are in keeping with international environmental goals and appeal to environmentally sensitive consumers. However, in response to customer demand for healthier, environmentally friendly options, Nestlé Malaysia concentrates on more comprehensive initiatives in the areas of strategic alliances, cost-effective online marketing, and product reformulations. With its focus on sustainability and ethical branding, Danone puts itself well ahead of Nestlé in the battle to promote environmental responsibility, even though Nestlé does stand out in terms of market penetration and operational efficiency. This difference demonstrates how Nestlé strikes a balance between sustainability and preserving its market dominance through a variety of techniques and broad outreach, while Danone prioritises long-term global impact. These two ways to achieving a competitive edge are diverse but equally successful [28].

5.3 Difference of Competitive Disadvantage

In order to improve competitive advantages or reduce company efficiency, Nestlé Malaysia is dealing with a number of supply chain-related problems. The first is its troublesome supply chain structure, which is particularly global and extensive, exposing it to risks like natural catastrophes and political unrest that disrupt regular supply continuity in volatile commodities markets [29]. Additionally, the business must maintain sustainability standards and navigate Malaysia's growing regulatory obligations, which can deplete operational deadlines and resources [30]. Additionally, Nestlé Malaysia competes in a highly competitive market; the majority of local firms have leaner supply chains and, consequently, lower operating costs, which makes it difficult for Nestlé to match high-quality manufacturing with its price strategy [17]. For Nestlé Malaysia to maintain its competitiveness on a local and regional level, these supply chain issues must be resolved.

The supply chain presents Danone Malaysia with significant obstacles and competitive disadvantages that affect the company's performance in the market. Supply chain disruptions brought on by global volatility, including increased raw material costs, delayed delivery, and unpredictable supply demand, present a significant problem [31]. Production volumes have decreased as a result of this disruption, raising operational expenses and making it more difficult for Danone to successfully compete in price-sensitive markets. Furthermore, Danone's supply chain is made more complex by the need to balance local legal needs with environmental aspirations [32]. Additionally, Danone faces a difficulty in balancing cost optimisation without sacrificing product quality and innovation due to fierce competition from both domestic and international businesses with more streamlined and efficient operations [33]. This is undoubtedly where Danone Malaysia sits in the market after conquering obstacles, satisfying customer demands, and appealing to environmental obligations.

5.4 Difference of Impacts

The supply chain of Nestlé Malaysia is essential for promoting operational effectiveness and sustainable growth in order to address environmental and financial problems. As a result, the business has implemented a sound plan for building a sustainable value chain, including resource management, logistical optimisation, and carbon emission reduction [34]. Nestlé's strategy also includes digital transformation and creative solutions to guarantee efficient operations, supply chain visibility, on-time delivery, and cost effectiveness [35]. In addition, the business is dedicated to sustainability by reducing waste, implementing circular economy principles, and sourcing from regional vendors in order to support the growth of the national economy [35]. Despite this, Nestlé continues to struggle to strike a balance between its environmental objectives, growing operating expenses, and shifting customer preferences. Since it impacts not just Nestlé's commercial success but also Malaysia's economic and environmental sustainability, this will have a significant impact on its supply chain.

The sustainability and operational efficiency of Danone Malaysia are significantly impacted by the supply chain. Performance enhancement and environmental impact reduction have been greatly aided by the use of SSCM principles. According to a comparison of the top dairy companies, Danone has become more sustainable and efficient at every stage of its supply chain since integrating cutting-edge technology like artificial intelligence. Other businesses, on the other hand, have been sluggish to embrace these new technologies, highlighting the need of technology integration in accomplishing SSCM goals [32]. Furthermore, by collaborating with dairy ingredient suppliers to build a plan and incorporating the climate response into agreements with its businesses, Danone exemplifies how decarbonisation may be progressed. Through a partnership with Royal FrieslandCampina, Danone has witnessed a 22% decrease in emissions from its ingredients between 2017 and 2023. More than 74% of Danone's suppliers support it, and since the Sustainable Dairy Partnership was established in 2021, almost half of them have set specific sustainability goals and strategies [36].

6. Conclusion

In short, Nestlé's global supply chain ensures efficient sourcing, production and distribution. The company also focuses on working with suppliers to emphasize sustainability and ethical sourcing, and uses different logistics strategies to ensure on-time delivery. Additionally, Nestlé uses cutting-edge information technologies such as advanced artificial intelligence and machine learning to optimize all demand forecasts. This can better improve product traceability, transparency, efficiency and consumer trust. Innovation also enables Nestlé to remain competitive in the market, meet many consumer needs, and stick to its commitment to sustainability and quality.

Other than that, both Nestlé and Danone Malaysia have adopted unique supply chain strategies. Nestlé is focusing on a more traditional global supply chain approach, emphasizing local sourcing, sustainability and digital transformation to improve efficiency and market reach. In contrast, Danone focuses more on flexibility, consumer-centric demand-driven operations and global sustainability initiatives, and is firmly committed to environmental responsibility and ethical sourcing. While both companies face challenges with supply chain disruptions and between costs and product quality, Danone's sustainability and innovative technologies give it a strong competitive advantage in promoting long-term global impact. Both companies have differences, but they are both committed to creating efficient and sustainable supply chains to meet different consumer needs and achieve goals.

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