

## RETAIL INVENTORY MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF MYMYDIN Y20 STORE, SHAH ALAM

Sahaida Laily Binti Md Hashim<sup>1</sup>  
Izzaamirah Binti Ishak<sup>1</sup>  
Noraini Binti Ismail<sup>1</sup>  
Mohd Faizol A Rahman

### Abstract

*Inventory management is mainly to strike a balance between inventory investment and customer services. As there is poor management of inventory, higher costs will incur by retailers. This study investigates the poor inventory management at MyMydin Y20 store located in Shah Alam. Less efficient in managing inventories lead to excess inventory in the store, not enough inventory that need to be display and placed in shelf and high inventory return to suppliers due to expired, damaged goods and also overstock. Data and information were gathered through qualitative interviews, document search and observation then analyzed by using Cause and Effect Analysis and also SWOT Analysis. Some recommendations were suggested to improve the performance of the store in the forms of inventory management.*

**Keywords:** *inventory management, cause and effect analysis, SWOT analysis*

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### Introduction

Inventory is a term used to describe of any unsold goods that are ready to be sold or raw materials which waiting to be manufactured. Inventory also can be referred to an activity in organizing the availability to the customer (Wild 2002). All the items of inventories could be on the shelves in a retail store, in a store or warehouse that are miles away from the point of sale. Inventory management in retail store simply means how people organize and manage inventory to keep adequate goods in order to minimize costs. The main objective of inventory management is to strike a balance between inventory investment and customer services. As there is poor management of inventory, higher costs will incur by retailers. Inventory need to be managed efficient and effectively, since it is the key for a smooth operation. Employers and employees should be working together to embrace an effective inventory control, which is stated to be an important aspect for the company. It is where in the past, excess inventory are point of wealth and management are then considered as over stocking advantages.

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<sup>1</sup> College of Business & Accounting, Universiti Tenaga Nasional Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah Campus, 26700 Muadzam Shah, Pahang Tel: +6094552020 E-mail: Sahaida@uniten.edu.my

MyMydin Sdn Bhd is one of the business subsidiaries of Mydin Mohamed Holdings Bhd which owned by Mr. Mydin Mohamed. The legacy of this big operation Malaysian based company started from the late 1918 by the founder, Mr. Gulam Husen Jamal, father to Mr. Mydin. This Muslim wholesaler and retailer began to being a leader of local hypermarket and continuously expand the business from time to time. It can be seen by numerous businesses under this company all over Malaysia.

Under the operation of Mydin Mohamed Holdings Bhd, MyMydin Sdn Bhd reflects the true picture of its parent company. Y20 represents MyMydin Sdn Bhd of Bukit Naga branch, which was established on 7 May 2010. The store is 4 years operation as for now, located in No. 7, 9, 11, 13, 15 & 17, Jalan B, 34B Seksyen 34, 40460 Shah Alam, Selangor and operates in six shop lots. With a tagline of 'Closer To You', this store is placed closer to customers, bring forward to its buyers without doubt. This retail shop offers a wide range of products with reasonable and affordable prices as the key success factors for this store to be the first choice of customers in Bukit Naga area. Apart from that, the services provided by the staff and management team help the store in attracting new customers while retain its existing customers.

Y20 is fully controlled and managed by Mydin headquarter in Subang Jaya. However, for day to day operations of the store, it will be monitored by Mr. Mohd Asri, as Area in Charge of Shah Alam branches. Besides Bukit Naga branch, there are many other branches under his supervision, which are MyMydin Taman Sentosa, MyMydin Desa Latania, MyMydin UiTM, MyMydin Bukit Kuda, MyMydin Bandar Puteri and other branches. The management team of MyMydin Sdn Bhd should comprises of first branch in charge, second branch in charge, supervisor, administration staff and retail assistants which can be divided into cashiers and floor staff.

MyMydin Sdn Bhd (Y20) is a company specialized in retail business activities. Most of the time, the company is experiencing a poor inventory management in its operation. The issues arise a long time ago, in terms of three main problems of inventory management, which are overstock, out of stock and return of stock. The company is less efficient in managing its own inventory that leads to excess inventory in the store, not enough inventory that need to be display and placed in shelf and high inventory return to suppliers due to expired, damaged goods and also overstock. All of these being a historical problem for Y20 especially, when employers and employees still need to face with the problem even after changes of management of that retail store. Poor inventory management involves three parties including Branch in Charges (BICs) of the store, Headquarter (HQ) in this case is Mydin Sdn Bhd, and also suppliers which are S7 Warehouse and other suppliers.

This study is mainly to identify the problems and issues in inventory management at Y20 store, to investigate the factors and causes contribute to poor inventory management at Y20 store and to determine the solutions towards the problems of poor inventory management at Y20 store.

As cited in Haribhai (2014) inventory emerges in various forms which may include stock of raw materials, sub-assemblies, semi-completed goods (work in progress), finished goods and consumables depending upon the type of enterprise. However, within retail context inventory

consists of final goods purchased and held for sale to customers who are end users of the product or service (Williams et al., 2005). According to Mogere et al. (2013) inventory control systems has play a crucial role in enhancing effectiveness and efficiency in handling inventory of business firms. In 1980s inventories of raw materials, work-in-progress components and finished goods were kept as a buffer against the possibility of running out of needed items (Salawati et al., 2012). However, large buffer inventories consume valuable resources and generate hidden costs. Too much inventory consumes physical space, creates a financial burden, and increases the possibility of damage, spoilage and loss (Nyabwanga & Ojera, 2012).

Bhattacharya (2012) argued that modern retail industry faces a number of challenges. Like shortage inventory, over stock has given huge impact on inefficiency of firm's performance as mentioned by Ayad (2008) argued that manufactures and retailers face similar challenges with excess inventory. He observed that, in early 2006, Wal-Mart announced plans to cut inventory by \$6 billion in 100 days and Charles Holley, Wal-Mart Senior Vice President said that "Inventory is playing a big part in return on investment. A survey by Frozen Food Age (2000) stated that the survey of 165 manufacturers and retailers found that 4 percent of the \$1.3 trillion in sales from manufacturers to distributors and retailers was excess inventory. As a result, estimated between 10 and 98 percent of the inventory values were in overage (Relph & Barrar, 2003).

According to Salawati et al. (2012) inventory management lead to inventory reduction as is often the case in just in time (JIT). This approach of inventory management brings considerable cost savings from reduces inventory level and as a result, inventories have been decreasing in many firms (Chen et al., 2005). Further study by Fullerton et al. (2003) found that implement higher degrees of JIT manufacturing practices should outperform competitors who do not; it was also found that a positive relationship exists between firm profitability and the degree to which waste-reducing production practices, such as reduced set-up times, preventive maintenance programs and uniform workloads are implemented. On the other hand, another study suggesting a positive relationship between inventory management and performance was Eroglu & Hofer (2011), which used the empirical leanness indicator (ELI) as a measurement for inventory management. According to Morege et al. (2013) the theory elaborates on how manufacturers gain flexibility in their ordering decisions, reduce the stocks of inventory held on site and eliminate inventory carrying costs. According to Eroglu & Hofer (2011), firms that are leaner than the industry average generally see positive returns to leanness.

## **Methodology**

The interview was conducted with three different people that are experiencing or have experienced with inventory management at MyMydin Y20. The respondents are Mr. Mohd Faizol Bin A Rahman (second Branch in Charge at MyMydin Y20), Miss Siti Soliha Bt Ahmad (Supervisor at MyMydin Y20) and Mr. Syairol Izham bin Ahmad (First Branch in Charge at MyMydin Y20). All of the three respondents have been asked about the same questions relating to inventory management at MyMydin Y20.

This study also uses accessible documents obtained from the three respondents. The documents help the researchers in obtaining past, present and future data relating to inventory management. It gives a better view on how inventory at MyMydin Y20 are being managed. In addition, researchers have paid a visit to MyMydin at Bukit Naga store to have a clear view on its inventory management. The researchers spent half a day at the store to observe the real situation at MyMydin Y20.

Data collected will be analyzed by using a Cause and Effect Analysis, which was created by Professor Kaoru Ishikawa, a pioneer of quality management, in the 1960s. The diagram that is created with Cause and Effect Analysis is known as Ishikawa Diagram or Fish-bone Diagram. Besides that, a S.W.O.T. analysis also used to analyze the data. It is an acronym that stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. It provides information that is helpful in matching the firms' resources and capabilities to the competitive environment in which it operates.

## **Result and Discussion**

### **Interview Analysis**

From the interview the main issue that they faced is on handling out of stock (OOS), overstock (OS) and return of stock. Out of stock can be defined as the product is not available for sale. Hence, overstock is supply with more of inventory than is necessary or required. On the other hand, return of stock is when the product will be return to the supplier because of overstock or damage. The reason why this happened is because the product is damage, expired, or overstock.

OOS will be happening when there is misunderstanding between headquarters (HQ) and BIC because HQ do not order the product sufficiently. According to Mr. Izham, the role of HQ staff is to make an order of the product based on the highest demand of the product from customers. The HQ team will check each branch once a month and they have their own checklist that they refer to. The checklist will consist of the entire product that they sell. The team will check the entire inventory based on the checklist at the display shelf or at the store. If the inventory is not at the shelf or at the store, it means that the inventory is at out of stock. The team will ask BIC about that problem either the inventory still do not arrive or BIC do not order that product. On the other hand, Mohd Faizol explains about the role of BIC on handling out of stock are they need to find out the product that out of stock every week. If the product is out of stock, they need to put OOS sticker at the shelf to remark that the product need to be order either from MyMydin warehouse or directly from the other suppliers. The delivery of the product that has been order will be taken around 7 days to 10 days. But, if the supplier not sent the order between that duration, BIC need to do follow up with the suppliers and HQ ordering team. The ordering of the product will be done by HQ based on ordering template. If the ordering still does not deliver, BIC need to inform HQ about that problem and HQ will settle it up with the supplier. Hence, the HQ team will find out that BIC of that branch does not alert and committed to their works firstly when inventory does not display at the shelf even though that product still available at the store. Secondly, when HQ team found that the inventory do not display because it is truly out of stock. Next is when BIC only can

request the amount of inventory that needs to be ordered but HQ team will decide for it. Fourthly is when BIS only can check the item that out of stock but does not have any right to order that inventory because HQ will do it so. Lastly is when HQ doing checking and found that there is no OOS sticker at the shelf so that BIC will be blame for it. According to Izham, out of stock does not affect their sales so much because the customers will frequently come back to the store go get their daily necessity product.

The factor of overstock based on Siti Soliha is the HQ itself. According to her, the role of BIC on handling overstock is BIC will fill overstock form and determine the overstock item and sent it to the HQ warehouse that called as S7. HQ will accept the overstock from the BIS of the branch and will deal with the supplier about that particular problem. Then, HQ will pick up the return according to a certain amount from the amount that has been stated by the BIC. On the other hand, the other supplier will take the return when they sent their inventory to that branch. The reason why overstock happen is because HQ makes order based on the highest amount of the inventory sales at the branch. It also when the period of inventory allocate at the store will be long term because HQ still sent the stock even though BIC already inform HQ that they had overstock for that item. It will affect the space of the layout because so many inventory on that branch and they have insufficient space to store it.

The factor of return is either the inventory is damage, expired or overstock. According to three of them, there are certain step of handling return which is BIC and employee need to check the inventory that will be expired or damage at three month before expiring date for certain food and need to be remove from the display shelf. Next, BIC need to make key in all the return item and need to inform suppliers about the return through email. BIC also need to make sure that all the return will be settle within a month. If not, their performance allowance will be deducted if it not settles within a month. The supplier will take the return when they sent their inventory to that branch for every two times a week for HQ warehouse (MMW) and every day for different suppliers. The duration of the return is 45days. Within 21 to 45 days, if the suppliers still do not take that inventory, the branch has a right to dispose it. The main problem of the return is the suppliers do not take the return item, BIC do not key in the return item to the system and delaying it so as affect the inventory will increase. The branch also needs to pay overtime to their employee to calculate the return item that will minimize their level of productivity. The example of the return situation is when the supplier still does not take yogurt that already expired from the branch. So, the employee throws away the yogurt and only keeps the bottle. When the supplier comes to collect the return item, they will never accept it as a return of product because the action of the employee breaks their rule of return item. According to Mr. Faizol, return will affect the store outlet profit because they need to bear all the cost that does not taken off by the suppliers.

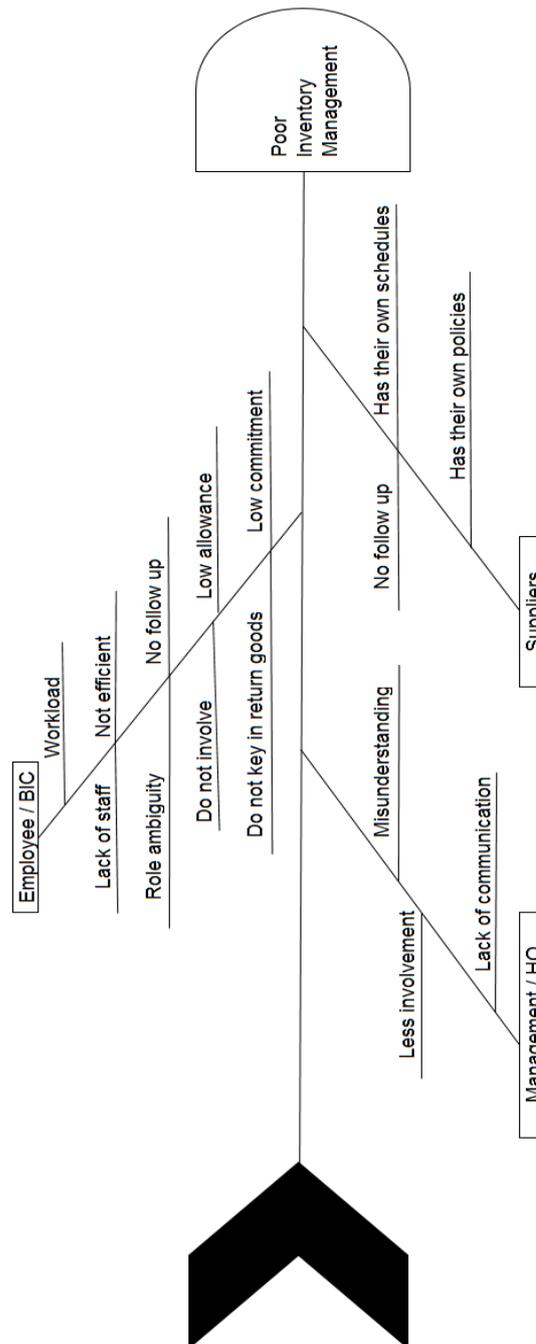
### **Observation Analysis**

From the observation that has been done by the researcher, the entire inventory will be store at the branch store and if there is not enough space, they will allocate the inventory at the top of the shelf and at the corner of the store where it will not make any disturb. The entire inventory at the store is in a good arrangement and they will arrange it according to the same type of inventory such as beverage item, boxes item and canned item. The storage area for the

inventory is in a good condition because they arrange their entire inventory at the shelf. By arrange them accordingly at the shelf, it can help them to maintain the quality of the inventory and can be well manage. Only the staff can enter the store room and it is closed area at the corner of the store branch which is not the eyesight of the customers. The inventory arrangement normally does not distract movement of the employee or customer except there is so many overstock items at the branch. This problem may happen but the employee will arrange the inventory at the space that will not incur any difficulties to the other parties. All inventories will be kept at the store and the distance between the store and the display area are not far away. From this observation also, researcher can see the sticker of the out of stock that is pink sticker. At the pink sticker is stated HQ warehouse (MMW), other suppliers (DS), OOS date, purchased order (PO), first follow up date (F1) and second follow up date (F2). This sticker will be filled by the lower employee. There is also have the overstock item and the return item at the store of the branch. The return form, invoice, purchase order form, and goods return debit note are also including and attached at the appendices part.

**Cause and Effect Diagram)**

**Analysis (Fish-Bone**



The diagram shows that poor inventory management at MyMydin Y20 are caused by three parties, namely the employee and Branch in Charge (BIC), the management and the headquarters (HQ) as well as the suppliers. BIC plays important role in managing inventory at the store. BIC are the one who is responsible to key in inventory in and out flow. It creates a problem in inventory management when BIC do not key in inventory. For example, if BIC do not key in inventory for return, the store will hold expired or defect inventory for a long time. Return goods at MyMydin Y20 could be in hold for more than one year, due to BIC negligence.

At MyMydin Y20, the employees and BIC do not give high commitment on their task. They also avoid from involving in any task requested from the management or supervisor. Some of the employees could not identify their role at the store. These situation has made inventory at the store are poorly managed. Other than that, employees are given low allowance for a workload. They also have to do double task because the store is always lack of staff. This has made employees to be not efficient in their duty due to lack of rest.

The management system at Mydin is always changing. As the subsidiary of Mydin, all commands from the headquarter (HQ) have to be followed. This has create a problem to MyMydin when ordering of products from the manufacturers and suppliers are made by the HQ. The HQ do not involve directly with the operation at the store outlet. Hence, they do not know the real situation occur. When HQ makes order for its store outlet, they tend to make too many orders or too few orders. This will create over stock or out of stock situation at the store outlet. Furthermore, there is lack of communication between the BIC and the management. Any reports from store outlet will usually be informed to the HQ through e-mail, telephone or fax. These methods sometimes could create misunderstanding and misinterpretation of information to both sides.

Other cause of poor inventory management at MyMydin Y20 is due to suppliers' policies. Suppliers have their own policy on when to collect return goods from retail outlet. For instance, they would not collect defect goods that have no contents. If a detergent powder bag has leakage, they would not collect it if the bag is empty. It will be the same for other products. Furthermore, suppliers have their own schedules on when to come to retail outlets. They would not simply come to the store just to collect returns. Returns will only collect when the suppliers come to the store outlet to deliver new purchasing orders. Other than that, there is no follow up on the store outlet inventory from the suppliers. Due to that, suppliers do not know on the inventory condition at the store outlet, whether it is in excess, adequate or lack.

## **SWOT Analysis**

The strengths of the Y20 store are as follows:

i. Established brand name

Mydin Mohamed Holdings Bhd. has been established in 1957 by Tuan Mydin Mohamed. It started as a small wooden shop in Jalan Tok Hakim, Kota Bharu and has grown to all over Malaysia. Currently, it has more than 90 outlets nationwide inclusive of 14 hypermarkets, 16

emporiums, 3 bazaars, 48 minimarkets (MyMydin), 8 convenience shops (MyMart) and 6 franchise outlets (Mydin Mart). Due to its branding, customers are not hesitating to shop at Mydin because it brings its own values to the customers.

ii. Low price

Mydin uses the slogan of “Why Pay More, Buy at Wholesale Prices!”. The slogan itself tells the consumers that they are selling groceries and other products at a low price. Consumers could enjoy wholesale price of a product when they buy in bulk. MyMydin is at advantage in terms of pricing as compared to other retailers because it sell products at a lower price. This has made MyMydin to become attractive in terms of pricing strategy.

iii. Customer loyalty

Mydin has its loyalty card called “Meriah Card”. It could create customer loyalty by giving points upon customers’ purchasing. The more customers buy at MyMydin, the more points customers could collect. These points could be exchanged for gifts or cash vouchers. This has enabled MyMydin to lock its customers and they would not shift to its rivals. Customers could collect points at any Mydin or MyMydin stores nationwide.

iv. Variety of products

Mydin sells variety of local and foreign products. Products range sold at Mydin includes food line, household, soft-lines and hard-lines items. Hard-line products include hardware, electrical, stationery, porcelain and toys. Whilst soft-line comprises of textiles and fabrics products. Food line includes confectionery, drinks and beverages, delicatessen and dairy products. Customers could get almost everything at Mydin stores.

v. Strategic location

Mydin stores are located near to its consumers. It makes consumers easy to go to Mydin and buy their necessary goods there. Mydin stores also are usually located at a focused area, where there will be crowded of people at the location.

The weaknesses of the Y20 store are as follows:

i. Unattractive store employees

Many employees at Mydin stores are those who are SPM leavers, aborigines and foreigners. Employees which such background usually have no extraordinary characters. This has made not all of the employees could create value added services to the customers. Some of the employees are difficult to train due to less educated.

ii. Improper layout

Some of Mydin stores, particularly the subsidiaries such as MyMydin and MyMart do not have good arrangement and layout. It has small spaces between one shelves to another. This makes customers difficult to use the passage, especially when two trolleys come from different ends of the alley.

iii. Small space

MyMydin and MyMart are usually small stores. Due to that, it has difficulty in arranging the products that they sold. Since the stores are small, some products may be allocated at the

place where it was not supposed to be. During stock take and stock out, the alley will be crowded with boxes of products and create difficulty for the customers to buy things.

iv. Weak management

The management of Mydin at the headquarters (HQ) is always changing. It always changes its system and creates difficulty to the stores, as all Mydin stores in Malaysia have to follow commands from the HQ. The voices of store managers are seldom be heard by the management, and they usually create their own decision without giving much attention to the store managers' opinion.

v. Poor inventory management

Some products are ordered in a large volume for a small MyMydin store. This has made the store to have excess of inventory and have no space to store them. They also keep expired products for a long time without returning them to the manufacturer. On the other hand, some products are ordered too few that it leads to out of stock. This could reduce sales of the store because customers could not purchase them. This could also drop the company's reputation because they could not supply products to the consumers when needed.

vi. High employee turnover

Not many employees at Mydin maintain with the company. This could be due to poor management and fewer benefits offered. During lack of staff, especially cashier, they have to do double shifts. As the consequences, the cashiers will have lack of rest and tend to do mistakes when receiving and returning payment to the customers.

The opportunities of the Y20 store are as follows:

i. Online shopping

In this technology era, everything could be done on the fingertips. Hence, Mydin could grab the opportunity to sell online. It could redesign its website by adding functions that allows customers to buy online. All the customers have to do is to select items that they want to purchase from Mydin, and Mydin will deliver it to them.

ii. New markets

Mydin could enter into a new market with the support from its loyal customers. Entering into a new market could expand its business and diversify its portfolio of products and services.

iii. International expansion

As Mydin brand could create local customers' loyalty, it is not impossible that it could also attract foreign customers. Entering into international market could increase the company's sales as well as high reputation of Mydin brand internationally.

The threats of the Y20 store are as follows:

i. Intense competition

Rivals are the main threats to the company. They will always have their own strategies to attract customers. Intense competition can lower Mydin's profits, because competitors can entice consumers away with superior products. Mydin main competitors are Tesco and Giant.

ii. Substitute products

The availability of substitute products could make customers easily switch to another product or service available in the market. Hence, they could purchase those substitute products at stores other than Mydin.

iii. Consumers' buying decision

The purchasing power is owned by the consumers. They can choose to shop at any stores they want. Mydin could lose its customers when they are no longer comfortable to shop at Mydin or could have experienced dissatisfaction with the service offered.

iv. Suppliers' policy

Supplier's policy could change the way Mydin operate its business. Cost of products may increase, and the suppliers may also increase its selling price to Mydin. Due to that, Mydin have to sell at higher price to the customers to cover its cost. As the consequence, customers may lose faith with Mydin because they increase its products' prices.

## Conclusion

According to the respondent, the people that are responsible in inventory management at MyMydin are all people that involve at the store and the HQ. At the store, BIC need to responsible for it and at the HQ the responsible person is inventory department. From their opinion, they need to improve their communication among them to minimize this problem. Haribhai (2014) article stated that there have been proven that issues such as inadequate stock control, wastages resulting from theft of stock, soliciting inappropriate suppliers, incorrect costing methods and buying stocks that are not mandatory, over-capitalization in unsalable stock may result in improper inventory control and its valuation. This also happen in MyMydin store due to the miscommunication and the HQ and BIC not in line to overcome it. As per Ayad (2008) over stock has given huge impact on inefficiency of firm's performance and they will face similar challenges with excess inventory. The same problem that faced by MyMydin store which over stock will affect their space of layout in order to keep the entire access inventory and it will impact the performance of the store itself. DeHoratius & Raman (2004) identified several reasons for the inaccuracies seems to be similarities with the problem that face by MyMydin store. In this case shows that return of inventory will be happened when there is an expired inventory, damage or overstock. In order to manage this problem, BIC should be strict to handle it because it will be costing to the company if there is so many return items that need to be manage. Overall performance of MyMydin Y20 store shows that they inefficiently in managing their inventory.

As recommendations, it is suggested that branch need to plan their inventory management itself without any interference from the HQ team. The managers of each branch need to be committed with their work to minimize the entire problem that will occur. Other than that, the branch and the suppliers need to build a good relationship between each other in order to minimize misunderstanding between them. For the return problem, it is suggested for BIC and HQ conduct a meeting where they need to specify all of their responsibilities so that it does not be redundant between each other in managing their inventory. According to Irungu

& Wanjau (2011) Electronic Data interchange (EDI) can linked vendors and clients to manage their inventory. This allows the vendors to monitor levels of inventory. By having this system at MyMydin, it may reduce the entire inventory management problem with the suppliers.

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