

The effect of target cost in sustainability support

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Abstract: The research objective mainly to demonstrate the effect of apply technique the target costing in sustainability support, by costs reduction through the optimal use of resources, where the value chain analysis method was adopted to determine the value-adding activities in the company and distinguish them from non-value-adding activities and work to exclude or reduce those activities to make the cost equal to the target cost of competing and similar products, all of which works to sustainability support in terms of the environment, human resources and social capital, laboratory data was adopted to clarify the research problem and to achieve its objective and hypothesis by applying target cost technology for the purpose of the costs reduction of production oxidized asphalt and oil waste. - Among the most important conclusions reached by the research: The fact that companies follow the target cost method has a major role in achieving competitive advantage for the company's products through studying the market and competitive products in competing companies in order to determine the target selling price for those products, as well as determining the target profit margin by the company's administrative on the basis of that study, a comprehensive survey of similar companies, also this method has a major role sustainability achieves in several dimensions (environmental, social, and human), through this method, the cost reduction of production and thus the effect of this reduction in sustainability support, he researcher then reached a set of recommendations, the most important of which are: Companies must provide the appropriate conditions to continuously apply the target costing method in order to achieve competitive advantage and maintain their market position and status by gaining and fulfilling market desires, also this method must be used in order to achieve sustainability as a result of preserving the environment from the side effects caused by companies due to product damage or harmful releases, as well as enhancing public relations between companies and external parties, in addition to supporting human resources and ensuring their rights and safety at work.

Keywords: Cost reduction, Sustainability support, Target cost.

1. Introduction

Attention to target cost is one of the main factors in sustainability achieve, as it contributes to equilibrium achieve between quality and efficiency in the resources use, and helps in the priorities identify and resources allocation at effectively to warranty the activities continuity and sustainable programs, Therefore, it can be said that solicitude to target cost is a crucial factor In developing strategies that sustainability support and warranty the long-term success. By correctly identify target costs, institutions and companies can achieve their environmental and social objectives more efficiently and with less financial impact, thus making it possible to sustainable development achieve and better preserve the environment, and enabling institutions to enhance the effectiveness of their performance and equilibrium achieve between economic, environmental and social dimensions.

2. The first section: Research methodology

2.1. Research Problem

- The target cost in sustainability support is a major challenge facing companies and institutions. Companies must find an equilibrium between profits achieve and social maintain and environmental responsibility. Through this, the research problem focuses on the following:
- Does the target cost have an impact in sustainability support?

2.2. Research importance

The research importance is evident in determination the most important strategic tools used to costs reduction and the extent of their impact and interaction with the business environment in order to support and achieve sustainability from the environmental, human and social aspects.

2.3. Research Objectives

The main objective is to determination the effect of the target cost use method in sustainability support from the environmental, social and human aspects, and sub-objectives are derived from it, which are as follows:

- A- determination modern strategic methods for costs reduction and giving a general idea about them and their application.
- B- The effect of optimal use of resources in costs reduction.
- C- The costs reduction has an effect on sustainability support.

2.4. Research Hypothesis

A- The target cost method helps in priorities Identify and resources allocation at efficiently to warranty the activity continuation in a sustainable manner.

B- Companies' use of optimal resources works to costs reduction.

C- The target cost method contributes to transparency reinforcement and accountability within the company, which enhances confidence among partners and investors.

The total reduction in additional salaries is:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Total reduction} &= \text{One day's salary} * \text{reduction period} \\ &= 2,333,333 * 29 \\ &= 67,666,675 \text{ dinars} \end{aligned}$$

2.5. Research Limits

- Spatial Limits: Data from the Oxidized Asphalt Plant/Basra were adopted as a sample for the research.
- Temporal Limits: Data from May- 2023 were adopted, as the plant relies on the batch system.

2.6. Data Collection Methods

Data were collected by following two aspects:

- Theoretical aspect: Data related to the research topic were obtained by reviewing scientific sources in reliable journals on the Internet and offices, represented by messages and dissertations as well as books and periodicals to benefit from them in covering the theoretical aspect of all trends related to the research topic.
- Field aspect: Data were obtained by relying on the accounting records of the laboratory, in addition to personal interviews conducted by the researcher in the laboratory, the research sample in the relevant departments.

3. The Theoretical Framework

3.1. Costs Reduction

3.1.1. Definition of Costs Reduction

- Cost reduction is one of the most objectives important that companies seek to achieve without product compromise specifications and maintaining the level of quality required by customers. The philosophy of reduction is also the best method adopted by companies to profitability improve and strengthen the competitive position (Horngren, c& et al, 2011: 219), It is known as the easiest way to profits increase in the short term. The reason for the ease of this method was attributed to the fact that aspects determine of cost reduction is completely within the company's control. It can also be the main driver of growth in the long term if dealt with correctly (Bragg, 2010: 7), It is defined as the strategies and procedures taken in the early stages of the product life cycle that can lead to the costs reduction of the production stages and subsequent consumption costs. (Walker et.al, 2016: 292).
- It can be defined as a process of continuous study and planning for the company, through how to use available resources correctly, activities complete on time, and meet customer desires, in order to continuously improve its performance, maintain its market and competitive position, and warranty its sustainability in the long term.

3.1.2. Cost Reduction Methods

- Cost reduction is one of the most important processes carried out by companies due to its effect on the company's habits and the possibility of the company's continued success or failure. The cost reduction process must be within an integrated system of procedures and policies specific to the company so that cost reduction is not viewed in a separate manner, but rather must be viewed from a positive perspective with the involvement of all stakeholders and all those in a position of responsibility in the company. The following are among the cost reduction methods: (Goetsch & others, 2006: 2-4)

A- Target cost method in cost reduction.

B- Continuous improvement method in cost reduction.

3.1.3. General Principles of Cost Reduction Strategy

- There is a set of general principles for Apply this strategy, which are as follows: (Reaning, 2002: 165)

A- Start with products or services that meet the real needs of customers, as cheap products made of poor materials provide low-quality service to the customer, and this constitutes an obstacle to the company's growth or its failure to remain in the market in the long term, so the company can address this by cost reduction by products manufacture or services provide that meet the customer's needs presented in the market.

B- Understanding the possibility of controlling cost trends in the industrial sector in which the company operates.

C- The competitors Study, as some companies have designers and accountants who work together to compare the manufacture costs parts of the product to be manufactured with the costs of parts of products manufactured by competing companies in order to observe how competitors manage their business.

D - Withdrawing the advantage of cost reduction from many sources, the sources of cost reduction include all sources of financing, the method of sales followed, and following new approaches, and not just focusing on the mechanism of product manufacture or operational efficiency.

3.2. Target Costing

3.2.1. Definition of Target Costing

Target costing is defined as a method or methodology used to determine the cost of a product with specific specifications, characteristics and quality to ensure that the company achieves the planned profit from a specific selling price (sharafoddin, 2016: 125). It is defined as the process of determining the

required cost of the product based on competitive prices. Therefore, the company that uses the target costing technique must take strict measures to reduce the cost and redesign the product to suit the market price while maintaining profitability (Blocher et.al, 2010: 12). It is also defined as a technique that focuses on managing cost management during the product planning and design phase by determining the target cost of the product or service resulting from the difference between the target selling price and the target profit margin (Drury, 2018: 247). It is defined as a technique used to enhance the cost planning process during the product design phase to be redirected as a cost management process and determine strategic profit (Madhoun, 2020: 38). It is also defined as a tool for strategic cost management as it works to reduce the cost of the product in The planning and design stages focus on effectively managing all functions related to the product, such as marketing, engineering, production and accounting within the company (Celayir, 2020: 1310).

- Through the definitions above, target costing can be defined as a method used to track the product during its life cycle in order to identify excessive and non-value-added costs and work to exclude them and thus costs reduction of that product.

3.2.2. Target Cost Objectives

- The main objective of the target cost technique, which all researchers agreed upon, is to costs reduction and maintain product quality. There are also sub-objectives for this technique, which are as follows: (Sevim, 2019: 3)

A- Motivating employees to work hard to achieve the targeted profit, by doing work using the target cost technique at all levels of the company.

B- Achieving the strategic objectives of senior administration, represented by managing the cost of the product and profits, as well as achieving a competitive advantage.

C- Providing products that are always renewed at the right time and with high quality to ensure the company's continued operation in business markets, in a way that achieves customer desires and satisfies their desires.

D- This technique determines the competitive costs of the targeted products derived from external reality and is compared with the actual costs of the product.

C- This technique helps the company build its strategies according to the requirements of the market and its competitors

F- Always improve the product to attract consumers.

3.2.3. Stages of Apply Target Cost

- The target cost has important stages that are followed in order to satisfy the customer through the products quality, and they are as follows: (Al- hosban, et.al, 2021: 6)

A- Study and planning for the target cost.

B- Achieving the target cost.

C- Continuous improvement.

3.3. The Impact of Optimal Use of Resources in Costs Reduction

- The performance of any activity within the company is based on the use of many resources, these resources are the basis for achieve that activity, and these resources are raw materials, human resources, machinery and equipment, technology... and others, as the focus is on these resources and what is used from them to achieve that activity, the administration needs the appropriate information in order to planning and controlling its resources with the aim of optimal use of resources, by employing the unused energy of resources, which has a high impact in increase production and costs reduction of production to ensure that the product remains at its high quality to satisfy the customer, The philosophy that came with consumption accounting stipulates that the company's resources are the basis for costs determine, and that resources must be organized in resource pools, each resource pool has its own inputs used to produce outputs that enter into the production of other products in other resource pools. Using raw materials in specific quantities and

as needed, means reduction the raw material inventory amount to zero and using more advanced equipment by more skilled and innovative workers and with more rational administration decisions while allowing workers to participate in expressing their opinions, also using advanced systems and programs (such as employee training programs, incentive programs, etc.), all of which are a reason for product costs reduction because the costs reduction of waste through:

- Excess inventory
- Holidays, maintenance and replacement of equipment
- Salaries during holidays and production stoppages
- Damaged products
- and others (Qin & others, 2011: 230).

3.4. *The Effect of Cost Reduction in Sustainability Support*

- The costs reduction of waste that companies are exposed to **support** sustainability in the following: (Sasb, 2017: 22)

A- Environment: By reducing the impact of companies on the environment, by using natural resources correctly and as needed in a way that suits the company's industrial, commercial or economic direction, such as water, minerals, ecosystems, biodiversity... and others, as well as reduction non-value-added productions that cause high levels of damage to the environment as a result of their harmful releases into the environment, which negatively affect natural resources, or by the production reduction of damaged products, which provides an opportunity to protect the environment from harmful waste resulting from the disposal of those damaged products.

B- Human capital: By administration employee rights and conducting a comprehensive study on selecting and employing employees who have experience and skill in managing work and carrying out the company's activities in the best possible way, this reduces the costs of paying wages to employees who do not add value to the company and focusing only on those concerned, which leads to ensuring their rights in terms of salaries, incentives and compensation, and allowing them to share opinions and ideas with administration, as well as administrate the health and safety of concerned employees and establishing a safety system for them, especially companies that operate in hazardous environments.

T- Business model and innovation: This dimension focuses on businesses innovation that are of high financial benefit and return to the company, i.e. the costs reduction by businesses exclude and innovations useless benefits companies as a result of their focusing only on innovations and businesses that are valuable to the company and nothing else, also in innovations or productions only products that add value and excluding non-valuable products.

4. **The Practical Aspect**

4.1. *Definition of the Research Sample*

- The oxidized asphalt plant is one of the most important industrial plants in Basra Governorate within the manufacturing industries sector. This plant was established in 1919 on an area of (30 acres) under an investment license. It started its production work in 2023, as it includes (71 employees). The plant objective is to use black oil as a raw material and as operation energy the plant, which is received from the Oil Products Distribution Company. This material also enters into the production of oxidized asphalt and four oil wastes, which are considered the final products of that plant.

4.2. *Determine the Effect of Target Cost in Sustainability Support*

- This study focused on studying the research sample for the period from 1\5\2023 to 31\5\2023, since the factory operates on a batch system, each meal is liquidated during the month in which it was received, and in this study the target cost method is applied in order to the costs reduction of products to approximately the costs of similar products for competing companies and to show the

impact of this reduction achieved by this method on the economic situation of companies and customers by raising purchasing power and supporting sustainability.

- **The target cost of the products is determined through several steps, which are:**

1- Determining the target selling price of the product. The target selling price is determined by studying competing products that are similar to the products of the oxidized asphalt plant, in order to information collect about the selling prices of the products and their quality. This information was obtained through several means, including conducting a survey about their selling prices and quality in local markets and interviewing some officials of competing plants. Table No. (1) shows the selling prices of competing products that are similar to the products of the oxidized asphalt plant:

Table 1.

Products	Selling price per unit (in thousands)
Oxidized asphalt	100
Oil waste	120
Final selling price	220 thousand dinars

- Through the field study and unstructured interviews conducted by the researcher, It was found that the target price, which represents the average selling prices of products per unit (220 thousand dinars), and the selling price of per unit for the plant is :

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Selling price per unit} &= \frac{\text{Total Sales}}{\text{Production units}} \\ &= \frac{5,600,831,000}{20,370,000} \\ &= 275 \text{ thousand dinars}\end{aligned}$$

Therefore, the difference between the current price and the target price is (55 thousand dinars) per liter, It was the reason for customers resort to for Competition and similar products.

4.3. Determining the Target Profit Margin

- The plant seeks to achieve a profit margin of 20% of the target selling price per liter of asphalt and petroleum waste products, where the profit margin amount is determined as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Target Profit Margin} &= \text{Target Selling Price} * \text{Target Profit Margin Percentage} \\ &= 220,000 * 20\% \\ &= 44,000 \text{ dinar}\end{aligned}$$

Determining the target cost of products

- After determining the target selling price per liter for asphalt and petroleum waste products and the target profit margin amount, the target cost of the products is determined as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Target cost of products} &= \text{Target selling price} - \text{Target profit margin amount} \\ &= 220 - 44 \\ &= 176 \text{ dinar}\end{aligned}$$

To achieve the target cost, the laboratory engineers calculated the current cost as follows:

Raw material	3,969,000,000
+ Salaries	144,666,661
+ Other expenses	589,140,000
Total current cost	4,702,806,661 dinars

So the current cost per unit is:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Current cost per unit} &= \frac{\text{Total current cost}}{\text{Production units}} \\ &= \frac{4,702,806,661}{20,370,000} \\ &= 231 \text{ thousand dinars}\end{aligned}$$

By determining the current cost, we notice that labor constitutes only 3% of the total current cost, while raw materials constitute 85% of the total current cost, which represents the largest percentage in the cost

structure. Accordingly, the next step is to try to reach the target cost by testing all stages of the production process to determine the reason for the increase in costs, and cost reduction from 231 thousand dinars to 176 thousand dinars. The reduce amount in the cost is 55 thousand dinars, so the total reduction amount to reach the current cost to the target cost is:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Total reduction} &= \text{amount of reduction per unit} * \text{number of units produced} \\ &= 55 * 20,370,000 \\ &= 1,120,350,000 \text{ dinars}\end{aligned}$$

By using some methods to eliminate or reduce the difference in costs, and one of these methods is the value chain method, as this method costs reduction by determination activities that add value and distinguishing them from activities that do not add value and their costs, and working to exclude those costs, so these activities are classified into:

1- Basic activities: These are the activities that contribute directly to the production and sales process. These activities include the following:

A- Raw material: It constitutes 85% of the total cost

B- Fuel for operating the plant, replacing old equipment, and marketing and sales costs: Which are part of other expenses within a percentage of 12% of the total cost.

2- Supporting activities: These are the activities that help the basic activities perform their function and are represented by the following:

A- Labor : Which is represented by the salaries pay of the workers in the plant, which constitutes 3% of the total cost.

B- Equipment maintenance: which are considered supporting costs for the equipment maintenance and the continuation of the production process and constitute part of the percentage of other expenses from the total costs.

It was found that the work to reduce breakdowns as a result of the company developing its equipment, led to reducing the breakdown period from 32 days to 3 days, so maintenance costs decreased from 25,000,000 to 2,343,750, a difference of (22,656,250 dinars), and additional salaries decreased from 32 days to 3 days, a difference of (29 days), And in an amount of:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Per day salary} &= \frac{\text{Total monthly salaries}}{30 \text{ day}} \\ &= \frac{70,000,000}{30 \text{ day}} \\ &= 2,333,333 \text{ dinars}\end{aligned}$$

The total reduction in additional salaries is:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Total reduction} &= \text{One day's salary} * \text{reduction period} \\ &= 2,333,333 * 29 \\ &= 67,666,675 \text{ dinars}\end{aligned}$$

- The plant must also negotiate with the petroleum products distribution company to reduce the price of one liter from 189 to 140, with a difference of 49 per liter and a total amount of:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Total reduction} &= \text{amount of reduction in the cost of one liter of raw material} * \text{quantity of raw material} \\ &= 49 * 21,000,000 \\ &= 1,029,000,000 \text{ dinars}\end{aligned}$$

- The company must also reduce the product marketing costs by (1,027,075 dinars), so that the total reduction in the current cost becomes equivalent to the target cost, which is:
 - Total reduction = maintenance cost Reduction + salaries cost Reduction + raw material cost Reduction + product marketing cost Reduction
- $$\begin{aligned}&= 22,656,250 + 67,666,675 + 1,029,000,000 + 1,027,075 \\ &= 1,120,350,000 \text{ dinars}\end{aligned}$$

The researcher notes that the current cost reduction to the equivalent of the target cost has a major role in environmental sustainability achieve through the company improving and developing its equipment, which has led to a reduction in the percentage of production of damaged products, which waste reduction that may harm the environment, as well as activities exclude that do not add value and have a negative effect on the environment, with a focus on activities that benefit the company and the environment as a whole, his reduction

also contributes to achieving the sustainability of social capital, as companies work for the public good and by obtaining a social license to operate, Companies also paid attention to public relations with external parties such as customers and the government... and others, breakdowns Reduction and stopping the production process leads to not consuming additional fuel or at a lower rate than before, thus reducing the chances of spoilage of the raw material within the production process due to work stoppage and production of products with high impurities or poor quality, which in turn causes great harm to the company because it did not meet the desires of customers. Therefore, the researcher believes that reducing maintenance opportunities as a result of reducing the chances of breakdowns and stoppages, thus producing high-quality products that meet the desires of the market and customers. Also, the company contracting with a government company such as the Oil Products Distribution Company according to a legal clause and at an agreed cost is much better than if it received its raw material from private sector companies, as it will offer much higher selling prices than those offered by government companies. In addition, the company guarantees receiving its raw material on time or at the time specified by the company, i.e. according to need, thus reducing the chances of delaying the receipt of meals, which leads to the production of meals and delivering them to customers on time. Also, this reduction supports and achieves the sustainability of human resources, as the company has chosen specific people with experience to employ them according to a comprehensive study, excluding workers who do not add value to the company, This saves on salary costs and also gives administrative the opportunity to focus on the best workers, Reward them and develop training and motivational programs to support them, Therefore, the target cost method has a major role in sustainability support in terms of the environmental, social and human dimensions.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

1. The fact that companies follow the target cost method has a major role in achieving competitive advantage for the company's products through studying the market and competitive products in competing companies in order to determine the target selling price for those products, as well as determining the target profit margin by the company's administrative on the basis of that study, a comprehensive survey of similar companies.
2. The target cost method contributes to the current cost reduction to approximate or equal the target cost determined by the difference in the selling price from the profit margin, and this reduction pushes the company to separate and differentiate between activities and products that add value from activities and products that do not add value or are less valuable, and thus enhance the position of The company produces products that meet the desires of the market and the customer.
3. The company contracts with government companies to receive its raw material according to a legal clause in which the quantity of the material, the selling price, date of receipt, and the rest of the conditions and details are recorded.
4. The company's reliance on the raw material itself as fuel to operate the equipment by consuming the equivalent of 3% of the raw material.
5. Applying and achieving the target costing method has a major role sustainability achieves in several dimensions (environmental, social, and human) Through this method, the cost reduction of production and thus the effect of this reduction in sustainability support.
6. The link between the use of target costing and sustainability support is the process of cost reduction, since target costing seeks the cost reduction of production to be equal to the cost of similar products of competing companies, while sustainability is achieved by applying that reduction.
7. The value chain method was used to achieve and implement the target cost method in the company.

5.2. Recommendations

- 1- Companies must provide the appropriate conditions to continuously apply the target costing method in order to achieve competitive advantage and maintain their market position and status by gaining and fulfilling market desires.
- 2- Companies must always study and survey local and international markets and know the renewed and diverse needs of customers and keep pace with the renewed market conditions in order to focus on activities

and products of value and desire and exclude useless activities in order to save costs and avoid wasting time and effort and wasting costs in producing useless products with little or no need.

3- Companies must contract with government companies to receive their raw materials according to a legal clause stating the quantity of the material, the selling price, the date of receipt and the rest of the conditions and details in order to ensure receipt of the raw materials on time. Also, government companies offer much lower selling prices than private sector companies and are less guaranteed than government companies because private sector companies are exposed to bankruptcy.

4- The company must always rely on the same raw material as fuel to operate the equipment by consuming the equivalent of 3% of the raw material, which contributes to saving time and reducing cost waste, as it is the same material that is produced and burned.

5- The target cost method must be used in order to achieve sustainability as a result of preserving the environment from the side effects caused by companies due to product damage or harmful releases, as well as enhancing public relations between companies and external parties, in addition to supporting human resources and ensuring their rights and safety at work.

6- The company must identify the reduction areas that companies desire that do not affect the quality of the product and the degree of its marketing and achieve this reduction actually in order to support sustainability in an effective and realistic way.

7- The value chain method must be used when applying the target cost method because it is one of the most important administrative methods that works to sort out the basic activities from the supporting activities, as well as sorting the activities that add value from those that do not add value, thus facilitating the reduction task by excluding those unhelpful and undesirable activities.

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