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Advancing Sustainable Supply Chain Management: Integrative Approaches, Decision-Making Frameworks, and Emerging Technologies

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ABSTRACT: Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) has emerged as a critical paradigm for contemporary global commerce, integrating environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and economic efficiency. This research explores advanced decision-making methodologies, technological enablers, and performance evaluation mechanisms for sustainable supply chains across diverse industrial contexts. Through an extensive review and synthesis of current literature, the study investigates multi-criteria decision-making (MCDM) techniques, including rough set theory, fuzzy analytic methods, and ELECTRE-based approaches, for supplier selection and risk management. Moreover, emerging technologies such as blockchain, Internet of Things (IoT), and platform-based collaborative logistics networks are examined for their potential to enhance transparency, traceability, and resource optimization. The analysis identifies critical barriers to SSCM adoption, encompassing regulatory, organizational, and operational challenges, while highlighting the dynamic capabilities necessary for long-term sustainability. The study further elaborates on performance measurement frameworks using Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA) and hybrid evaluation techniques to assess the environmental, economic, and social outcomes of supply chain operations. The findings underscore the importance of aligning supply chain strategies with global sustainability objectives, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and emphasize the integration of stakeholder perspectives in decision-making. This research contributes to the theoretical advancement of SSCM by bridging methodological rigor with practical relevance, offering a comprehensive framework for both academics and practitioners seeking to optimize sustainable supply chains in an increasingly complex global environment.

Keywords: Sustainable Supply Chain Management, Supplier Selection, Blockchain, Multi-Criteria Decision-Making, Performance Measurement, Risk Management, Circular Economy

INTRODUCTION

The growing complexity of global supply chains, coupled with escalating environmental concerns and societal expectations, has necessitated the adoption of Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) practices (Walker & Jones, 2012; Zailani et al., 2012). SSCM extends traditional supply chain management by incorporating the triple bottom line of economic, environmental, and social performance (Bai et al., 2010; Hong et al., 2018). The concept has evolved from a peripheral strategic consideration into a central organizational imperative, influencing procurement, production, distribution, and reverse logistics decisions. Despite increasing adoption, firms face significant challenges in operationalizing sustainability, including supplier heterogeneity, lack of standardized evaluation frameworks, and fragmented regulatory environments (Zimon & Domingues, 2018; Costa et al., 2018).
Existing literature highlights several gaps that impede the effective implementation of SSCM. While there is extensive research on individual practices, such as green procurement, energy efficiency, and waste reduction, comprehensive integrative frameworks that combine decision-making methodologies, performance evaluation, and technological enablers remain underdeveloped (Beske & Seuring, 2014; Walker & Jones, 2012). Moreover, while multi-criteria decision-making (MCDM) approaches have been applied for sustainable supplier selection and risk prioritization, inconsistencies in methodology, data reliability, and contextual adaptation persist (Stević et al., 2019; Kumar et al., 2016). The intersection of

digital technologies with sustainability, particularly blockchain-enabled transparency, IoT-enabled monitoring, and platform-based collaborative logistics, presents new avenues for research and practice but is still in its nascent stages (Chowdhury, 2025; Kouhizadeh et al., 2021).
This study addresses these gaps by critically examining SSCM frameworks, integrating advanced decision-making techniques, and assessing the role of emerging technologies. The objective is to provide a holistic, methodologically robust, and theoretically grounded approach to sustainable supply chains, capable of guiding both academic inquiry and managerial practice.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted in this study is an integrative literature synthesis, combining insights from empirical research, theoretical frameworks, and case studies within SSCM. Decision-making methodologies such as rough set theory, fuzzy analytic approaches, ELECTRE-based models, and hybrid MCDM frameworks were examined for supplier selection, risk assessment, and sustainability performance measurement (Bai et al., 2012; Costa et al., 2018; Stević et al., 2019). Rough set theory, in particular, provides a mathematical basis for handling uncertainty and incomplete information in supplier evaluation, enabling robust classification and prioritization of suppliers based on multiple sustainability criteria (Bai et al., 2010).
Fuzzy Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) and Technique for Order Preference by Similarity to Ideal Solution (TOPSIS) methods were incorporated to quantify subjective judgments and translate them into actionable decision metrics (Singh et al., 2017; Sirisawat & Kiatcharoenpol, 2018). Hybrid models combining fuzzy logic with ELECTRE and rough set methodologies were reviewed for their ability to manage trade-offs among economic, environmental, and social performance dimensions.
Blockchain technology was analyzed for its potential to enhance supply chain transparency, mitigate informational asymmetries, and improve resource traceability (Chowdhury, 2025; Kouhizadeh et al., 2021). Studies on IoT integration, collaborative logistics networks, and platform economy models were also incorporated to examine operational efficiency, carbon emission reduction, and stakeholder engagement (Xu et al., 2021; Xue et al., 2021; Zhang & Zhao, 2021).
Performance evaluation frameworks, including Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA) and interval rough set methods, were reviewed to assess sustainable outcomes across supplier networks and manufacturing operations (Bai & Sarkis, 2012; Song et al., 2017). Barriers to SSCM implementation were systematically identified and categorized based on empirical findings, highlighting internal organizational challenges, regulatory constraints, and industry-specific limitations (Raut et al., 2019; Mangla et al., 2015).

RESULTS

The analysis revealed that integrative SSCM frameworks that combine advanced decision-making techniques with emerging digital technologies significantly enhance sustainability outcomes. Rough set-based supplier evaluation enables the classification of suppliers into sustainable, moderately sustainable, and non-sustainable categories, providing a data-driven basis for procurement decisions (Bai et al., 2010; Bai & Sarkis, 2012). Hybrid MCDM models incorporating fuzzy AHP, TOPSIS, and ELECTRE effectively manage trade-offs among multiple sustainability criteria, allowing decision-makers to prioritize suppliers and operational practices with higher accuracy and confidence (Kumar et al., 2016; Stević et al., 2019).
Blockchain-enabled transparency facilitates the monitoring of resource flows, reducing waste, and enhancing accountability across supply chain tiers (Chowdhury, 2025). The adoption of collaborative logistics networks and platform-based supply chain models improves coordination efficiency, reduces carbon emissions, and strengthens stakeholder engagement (Xu et al., 2021; Xue et al., 2021). Performance measurement frameworks, particularly those utilizing DEA, allow for comprehensive evaluation of economic, environmental, and social outcomes, enabling organizations to benchmark their sustainability initiatives effectively (Bai & Sarkis, 2012; Song et al., 2017).
Critical barriers to SSCM adoption were found to include a lack of standardized sustainability metrics, resistance to organizational change, insufficient regulatory support, and limited technological literacy among supply chain actors (Raut et al., 2019; Mangla et al., 2015). Additionally, contextual factors, such as regional economic development, industry-specific regulations, and cultural norms, significantly

influence the effectiveness of sustainability practices (Pehlken et al., 2020; Costa et al., 2018).

DISCUSSION

The findings underscore the importance of a holistic, multi-dimensional approach to SSCM. Methodologically, the integration of rough set theory, fuzzy logic, and ELECTRE-based decision-making provides a robust framework for supplier evaluation and risk prioritization, addressing uncertainty and conflicting criteria inherent in sustainability assessments (Bai et al., 2010; Stević et al., 2019). These methodologies support both qualitative and quantitative evaluation, enabling firms to reconcile environmental, social, and economic objectives without compromising operational efficiency.

Technologically, blockchain and IoT are transformative enablers, enhancing traceability, transparency, and resource optimization. The convergence of these technologies with platform-based logistics networks demonstrates potential for systemic efficiency gains and carbon footprint reduction, particularly in industries with complex multi-tier supply chains (Chowdhury, 2025; Xu et al., 2021). However, adoption is constrained by high implementation costs, interoperability issues, and limited technical expertise, highlighting the need for targeted capacity-building initiatives and supportive regulatory frameworks (Kouhizadeh et al., 2021).

From a strategic perspective, aligning supply chain operations with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offers a comprehensive orientation for sustainability performance, linking corporate objectives to global societal priorities (United Nations, 2015; Willis, 2016). Furthermore, stakeholder engagement, including suppliers, customers, regulatory bodies, and civil society, is crucial for the successful integration of sustainability practices, enhancing legitimacy and fostering long-term resilience (Jabbour et al., 2020; Croom et al., 2018).

Despite these advances, limitations exist. The heterogeneity of industries, regional regulations, and organizational capacities implies that SSCM frameworks must be context-specific rather than universally prescriptive. Moreover, while decision-making methodologies provide structured guidance, their effectiveness is contingent upon the availability and reliability of data, necessitating robust information management systems. Future research should explore dynamic, adaptive SSCM models capable of responding to market volatility, regulatory changes, and emerging environmental challenges, incorporating predictive analytics, artificial intelligence, and digital twin technologies to further enhance supply chain resilience.

CONCLUSION

Sustainable Supply Chain Management represents a strategic imperative for contemporary organizations, integrating environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and economic efficiency. This study highlights the significance of advanced decision-making methodologies, including rough set theory, fuzzy analytic approaches, and ELECTRE-based frameworks, in facilitating robust supplier selection, risk management, and performance evaluation. The integration of emerging technologies, such as blockchain, IoT, and collaborative logistics platforms, enhances transparency, traceability, and operational efficiency. The research underscores the necessity of aligning SSCM practices with global sustainability objectives and stakeholder expectations, while acknowledging contextual variations and operational constraints. By adopting integrative, methodologically rigorous, and technologically enabled SSCM frameworks, organizations can achieve superior sustainability outcomes, enhance competitiveness, and contribute meaningfully to broader societal and environmental goals. The study provides a comprehensive foundation for both academic inquiry and managerial practice, guiding the evolution of sustainable supply chains in an increasingly complex global landscape.

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