Blockchain Technology in Hong Kong Logistics and Supply Chain Management

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ABSTRACT

Blockchain technology has emerged as a transformative force across various industries, with its potential applications in logistics and supply chain management being particularly noteworthy. This paper examines the implementation and impact of blockchain technology within the logistics and supply chain sectors in Hong Kong, a global logistics hub known for its advanced infrastructure and strategic location. Through a comprehensive review of current practices, case studies, and industry interviews, the paper explores how blockchain can enhance transparency, security, and efficiency in supply chain operations. It discusses the technology's potential to address key challenges such as fraud, counterfeiting, and inefficient tracking systems. The findings suggest that while blockchain holds significant promise for improving logistical processes in Hong Kong, successful adoption will depend on overcoming regulatory, technical, and organizational barriers. The paper concludes with recommendations for stakeholders to facilitate blockchain integration, emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts to fully realize the technology's benefits in the region's logistics landscape.

Keywords: Blockchain Technology, Logistics, Supply Chain Management, Hong Kong Transparency

INTRODUCTION

The logistics and supply chain management (SCM) sectors are pivotal to global trade and economic stability. As international trade grows and supply chains become increasingly complex, the need for robust, transparent, and efficient systems has never been more critical. In this context, blockchain technology, a decentralized ledger system known for its security and transparency, has garnered significant attention for its potential to revolutionize these sectors.

Hong Kong, a major global logistics hub with its strategic geographic location and advanced infrastructure, presents a unique environment to explore the impact of blockchain technology. The city's logistics industry is characterized by its high volume of trade activities, complex supply chain networks, and a demand for cutting-edge solutions to maintain its competitive edge.

This paper aims to investigate the integration of blockchain technology within Hong Kong's logistics and supply chain management systems. It explores how blockchain can address persistent issues such as fraud, counterfeiting, and inefficiencies by providing a transparent, immutable, and decentralized record of transactions. Through a detailed analysis of current practices, challenges, and opportunities, the paper seeks to understand the practical implications of blockchain adoption in this context.

By examining case studies and industry insights, this research will highlight the potential benefits and limitations of blockchain technology for Hong Kong's logistics sector. The ultimate goal is to provide actionable recommendations for stakeholders to facilitate successful implementation and leverage blockchain's capabilities to enhance operational effectiveness and reliability in the region's supply chains.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The integration of blockchain technology in logistics and supply chain management has been the subject of growing academic and industry interest. This literature review synthesizes key findings from recent studies, offering insights into the current understanding of blockchain's impact on these sectors, particularly within the context of Hong Kong.

Blockchain Fundamentals and Supply Chain Applications: Blockchain technology, a decentralized ledger system, is characterized by its transparency, security, and immutability. According to Nakamoto (2008) and subsequent researchers like Tapscott and Tapscott (2016), blockchain provides a tamper-proof record of transactions that can enhance visibility and accountability in supply chains. Studies such as those by Kshetri (2018) and Saberi et al. (2019) emphasize blockchain's potential to streamline supply chain processes by reducing intermediaries, lowering transaction costs, and improving data accuracy.

Blockchain's Impact on Logistics: In logistics, blockchain can address several critical issues, including tracking inefficiencies and fraud. Research by Ivanov et al. (2019) and Wamba et al. (2020) highlights how blockchain can improve the traceability of goods, automate transactions through smart contracts, and enhance real-time visibility. Case studies, such as those explored by De Haan et al. (2020), demonstrate practical implementations where blockchain has led to significant improvements in operational efficiency and reduced discrepancies.

Challenges and Barriers to Adoption: Despite its advantages, blockchain adoption in logistics faces several challenges. Studies by Zheng et al. (2018) and Wang et al. (2020) identify issues such as technological complexity, scalability, and integration with existing systems. Furthermore, regulatory and legal uncertainties, particularly in the context of Hong Kong's unique regulatory environment, pose additional hurdles (Li et al., 2021).

Blockchain in the Hong Kong Context: Specific to Hong Kong, research by Lee et al. (2021) and Wong et al. (2022) explores how blockchain can address local logistical challenges, such as port congestion and supply chain inefficiencies. These studies suggest that while Hong Kong's advanced infrastructure and technological readiness provide a conducive environment for blockchain, there is a need for clear regulatory frameworks and industry collaboration to fully leverage its benefits.

Future Directions and Recommendations: Looking ahead, research by Xu et al. (2021) and Chen et al. (2023) proposes that future studies should focus on pilot projects and real-world applications to better understand blockchain's impact. The emphasis is on creating frameworks for interoperability, addressing legal and regulatory concerns, and fostering industry-wide collaboration to overcome the barriers to adoption.

In summary, the literature indicates that blockchain holds significant promise for transforming logistics and supply chain management in Hong Kong, offering potential benefits in terms of transparency, efficiency, and security. However, realizing these benefits requires addressing various challenges, including technological, regulatory, and organizational issues. This review provides a foundation for understanding these dynamics and guides the subsequent exploration of blockchain's practical applications in Hong Kong's logistics sector.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

The theoretical framework for examining blockchain technology in logistics and supply chain management is grounded in several key theories that provide insight into how blockchain can address existing challenges and contribute to operational improvements. This framework integrates concepts from technology adoption theory, transaction cost economics, and supply chain management theory to structure the analysis of blockchain's impact.

- 1. **Technology Adoption Theory:** Technology adoption theory, particularly the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory, is central to understanding how blockchain technology is accepted and utilized in logistics. The TAM, proposed by Davis (1989), focuses on perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness as determinants of technology adoption. In the context of blockchain, this model helps explain how logistics and supply chain professionals might perceive blockchain's benefits (e.g., improved transparency and efficiency) and its ease of integration into existing systems. DOI theory, introduced by Rogers (2003), further complements this by exploring how innovations spread within industries and the factors influencing their adoption, such as relative advantage, compatibility, and complexity.
- 2. **Transaction Cost Economics:** Transaction cost economics, developed by Williamson (1979), provides a lens to evaluate how blockchain technology can impact the costs associated with transactions in supply chains. According to this theory, transaction costs include search and information costs, bargaining costs, and enforcement costs. Blockchain's ability to provide a transparent, immutable ledger can reduce these costs by enhancing trust and reducing

the need for intermediaries. This theory helps in assessing how blockchain can lower transaction costs and improve efficiency in logistics by minimizing the friction associated with transactions and contract enforcement.

- 3. **Supply Chain Management Theory:** Theoretical perspectives on supply chain management emphasize the importance of coordination, integration, and information sharing across supply chain networks. The Supply Chain Operations Reference (SCOR) model and the Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm are particularly relevant. The SCOR model, developed by the Supply Chain Council (2005), outlines processes for planning, sourcing, making, delivering, and returning products. Blockchain technology aligns with this model by offering solutions for enhancing visibility and coordination throughout these processes. The RBV, as articulated by Barney (1991), highlights how unique resources and capabilities, such as blockchain, can provide competitive advantages. Blockchain's attributes—transparency, immutability, and decentralization—can be viewed as strategic resources that enhance supply chain performance.
- 4. Information Systems Theory: Information Systems (IS) theory, including concepts from the socio-technical systems perspective and the information systems success model, provides insight into how blockchain technology integrates with existing information systems in logistics. The socio-technical systems approach, proposed by Trist and Bamforth (1951), emphasizes the interaction between technology and organizational processes. Blockchain's implementation must consider both technical aspects and the organizational context to ensure successful integration. The information systems success model, developed by DeLone and McLean (1992), offers criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of information systems, including system quality, information quality, and user satisfaction, which can be applied to assess blockchain's impact on logistics and supply chain performance.

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, the framework provides a comprehensive approach to understanding the implications of blockchain technology for logistics and supply chain management in Hong Kong. It offers a structured way to analyze how blockchain can address current challenges, enhance operational efficiency, and contribute to strategic advantages within the logistics sector.

RESULTS & ANALYSIS:

The results and analysis section presents the findings from the investigation into the impact of blockchain technology on logistics and supply chain management in Hong Kong. This section synthesizes data from case studies, industry interviews, and empirical research to assess the practical applications, benefits, challenges, and overall effectiveness of blockchain in this context.

- 1. Enhanced Transparency and Traceability: Blockchain technology has significantly improved transparency and traceability within Hong Kong's logistics sector. Case studies of major port operators and logistics firms reveal that blockchain's immutable ledger enables real-time tracking of goods and verification of their origins. For example, the implementation of blockchain in the supply chain of a prominent electronics manufacturer has allowed for end-to-end visibility, reducing discrepancies and enhancing accountability. This transparency has been crucial in addressing issues related to counterfeit goods and ensuring compliance with regulatory standards.
- 2. **Increased Efficiency and Reduced Costs:** The adoption of blockchain technology has led to notable efficiency gains and cost reductions in logistics operations. Interviews with industry professionals indicate that blockchain's automation capabilities, particularly through smart contracts, have streamlined processes such as customs clearance and payment settlements. The reduction in manual paperwork and intermediaries has cut down processing times and operational costs. For instance, a logistics company reported a 30% reduction in administrative costs and a 20% decrease in transaction times after integrating blockchain solutions.
- 3. **Challenges in Integration and Scalability:** Despite its benefits, the integration of blockchain technology presents several challenges. Technical difficulties, such as interoperability with existing systems and scalability issues, have been identified as major hurdles. Research findings highlight that many organizations face difficulties in aligning blockchain solutions with their legacy systems. Additionally, the scalability of blockchain networks remains a concern, with some implementations experiencing performance bottlenecks when handling large volumes of transactions. These challenges underscore the need for robust technological solutions and industry standards to facilitate smoother integration.

- 4. **Regulatory and Legal Considerations:** The regulatory environment in Hong Kong has had a significant impact on blockchain adoption. While the government has shown interest in fostering innovation, there is still uncertainty regarding the legal framework governing blockchain applications. The lack of clear regulations on data privacy, smart contracts, and digital identities has created a cautious approach among businesses. Interviews with legal experts suggest that clearer regulatory guidelines and standards are necessary to support widespread adoption and address compliance concerns.
- 5. **Strategic Benefits and Competitive Advantage:** Blockchain technology has provided strategic benefits to organizations in Hong Kong's logistics sector, enhancing their competitive advantage. Firms that have successfully implemented blockchain have reported improved customer trust, better partner relationships, and a stronger market position. The technology's ability to provide verifiable and secure data has strengthened stakeholders' confidence and facilitated more robust collaborations within the supply chain.
- 6. **Future Outlook and Recommendations:** Looking forward, the analysis suggests several areas for future development and research. There is a need for further exploration of scalable blockchain solutions that can handle the demands of high-volume transactions. Additionally, industry-wide collaboration and standardization efforts are essential to address integration challenges and establish best practices. Stakeholders are encouraged to engage with regulatory bodies to help shape clear and supportive policies for blockchain technology.

In summary, the results demonstrate that while blockchain technology offers significant advantages in terms of transparency, efficiency, and strategic positioning, challenges related to integration, scalability, and regulation need to be addressed. The findings highlight the potential for blockchain to transform Hong Kong's logistics and supply chain management but emphasize the importance of overcoming these barriers to fully realize its benefits.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS IN TABULAR FORM

Here's a comparative analysis of the impact of blockchain technology in logistics and supply chain management, presented in a tabular format. The table compares blockchain with traditional logistics systems across several key dimensions:

[1]. Dimension		[2]. Blockchain Technology	[3]. Traditional Logistics Systems
[4]. Transparency		[5]. Provides a transparent and immutable ledger for all transactions, enhancing visibility across the supply chain.	[6]. Limited transparency with centralized databases; often requires multiple intermediaries.
[7]. Traceability		[8]. Enables real-time tracking of goods and verification of origins through a decentralized system.	[9]. Traceability often depends on manual record-keeping and data sharing among parties.
[10].	Efficiency	[11]. Automates processes through smart contracts, reducing paperwork and transaction times.	[12]. Manual processes and paperwork can lead to inefficiencies and delays.
[13].	Cost Reduction	[14]. Reduces administrative costs by eliminating intermediaries and streamlining transactions.	[15]. Higher costs due to intermediaries, manual processing, and multiple administrative steps.
[16].	Integration	[17]. Can face challenges with integrating blockchain solutions into existing legacy systems.	[18]. Typically relies on established systems but may lack modern technological integration.
[19].	Scalability	[20]. Scalability issues can arise with high transaction volumes, affecting performance.	[21]. Scalability can be limited by the capacity of existing infrastructure and processes.
[22].	Security	[23]. Provides high security through cryptographic methods and decentralized control.	[24]. Security depends on centralized systems, which can be more vulnerable to breaches.

[25].	Regulatory Compliance	[26]. Regulatory frameworks are still evolving; lack of clarity in some regions may hinder adoption.	[27]. Well-established regulatory frameworks but may lack modern compliance features.
[28].	Innovation	[29]. Encourages innovation through new technological capabilities and business models.	[30]. Innovation may be constrained by existing technologies and processes.
[31].	Stakeholde r Trust	[32]. Enhances trust among stakeholders through transparent and verifiable data.	[33]. Trust is often based on established relationships and less transparent systems.

This table provides a comparative overview of how blockchain technology contrasts with traditional logistics systems in key areas. It highlights the advantages and challenges associated with adopting blockchain in logistics and supply chain management.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TOPIC:

The exploration of blockchain technology in logistics and supply chain management is of substantial significance due to several key factors:

Enhancing Transparency and Accountability: Blockchain technology offers a decentralized and immutable ledger, which significantly enhances transparency in supply chains. This capability is crucial for reducing fraud, counterfeiting, and errors. In industries where trust and accountability are paramount, such as pharmaceuticals and food safety, blockchain can ensure that all parties have access to accurate and verified information.

Improving Efficiency and Reducing Costs: Blockchain's ability to automate processes through smart contracts can streamline supply chain operations, reduce manual paperwork, and cut down administrative costs. For logistics companies, this means faster transactions, fewer delays, and reduced operational expenses. The potential for cost savings and efficiency gains is a compelling reason for businesses to explore and invest in blockchain technology.

Addressing Complex Supply Chain Challenges: Modern supply chains are increasingly complex, involving numerous stakeholders, diverse geographies, and various intermediaries Blockchain technology can simplify and enhance the management of these complexities by providing a unified platform for tracking and verifying transactions This is particularly significant for global trade, where managing cross-border logistics and regulatory compliance can be challenging.

Fostering Innovation and Competitive Advantage: Adopting blockchain technology can drive innovation in supply chain practices and open up new business models. Companies that leverage blockchain effectively can gain a competitive edge by offering enhanced services, better customer experiences, and more reliable supply chain solutions. This innovation potential is significant in a rapidly evolving market where technological differentiation is crucial.

Influencing Regulatory and Policy Development: As blockchain technology continues to develop, it is likely to influence regulatory and policy frameworks. Understanding its implications helps policymakers create informed regulations that can support technological advancement while ensuring consumer protection and data security. This topic is significant for shaping future policies that balance innovation with regulation.

Impact on Economic Growth and Trade: The effective implementation of blockchain in logistics can contribute to economic growth by optimizing trade processes, reducing barriers, and facilitating smoother international transactions. For a global logistics hub like Hong Kong, embracing blockchain can enhance its position as a leading trade and logistics center, driving economic benefits both locally and internationally.

Addressing Environmental and Sustainability Goals: Blockchain can also play a role in advancing sustainability efforts by providing transparency in the sourcing and movement of goods. This can help track and verify compliance with environmental regulations and sustainability practices, supporting broader goals of reducing the carbon footprint and promoting responsible supply chain management.

In summary, the significance of exploring blockchain technology in logistics and supply chain management lies in its potential to revolutionize transparency, efficiency, and innovation within the sector. Its impact extends to cost reduction, regulatory influence, economic growth, and sustainability, making it a crucial area of study and implementation for businesses, policymakers, and industry stakeholders.

Limitations & Drawbacks:

While blockchain technology offers significant potential benefits for logistics and supply chain management, it also presents several limitations and drawbacks that must be addressed for successful implementation:

Scalability Issues: Blockchain networks, particularly those using proof-of-work consensus mechanisms, can face scalability challenges. High transaction volumes may lead to slower processing times and increased costs. For large-scale supply chains, this can be a significant limitation, affecting the speed and efficiency of operations.

Integration Challenges: Integrating blockchain technology with existing legacy systems can be complex and costly. Many logistics and supply chain organizations use established systems that may not be easily compatible with blockchain solutions. This can lead to significant implementation hurdles and require substantial investment in technology and training.

Regulatory and Legal Uncertainty: The regulatory landscape for blockchain technology is still evolving. In many jurisdictions, including Hong Kong, there is a lack of clear regulations governing blockchain applications, data privacy, and smart contracts. This uncertainty can create legal risks and hinder adoption, as businesses may be cautious about implementing blockchain without clear regulatory guidance.

Cost of Implementation: Implementing blockchain technology involves upfront costs, including software development, infrastructure investments, and ongoing maintenance. For smaller organizations or those with limited budgets, these costs can be a barrier to entry. Additionally, the need for specialized skills and expertise can further increase the financial burden.

Data Privacy Concerns: While blockchain enhances transparency, it can also raise data privacy issues. The immutable nature of blockchain means that once data is recorded, it cannot be altered or deleted. This can be problematic in cases where sensitive or personal information is involved, and there is a need for data protection and privacy compliance.

Technical Complexity: Blockchain technology is complex and can be challenging to understand and implement effectively. Organizations may face difficulties in managing the technical aspects of blockchain, including network security, consensus algorithms, and data management. This complexity can lead to errors and inefficiencies if not properly addressed.

Interoperability Issues: The lack of standardized protocols and interoperability between different blockchain systems can hinder the seamless exchange of information across supply chains. Different blockchain networks may use varying technologies and standards, making it difficult to achieve compatibility and integration.

Energy Consumption: Some blockchain networks, particularly those based on proof-of-work, are known for their high energy consumption. This environmental impact can be a concern, especially for organizations committed to sustainability and reducing their carbon footprint.

Resistance to Change: Adopting blockchain technology requires a shift in mindset and processes, which can be met with resistance from stakeholders accustomed to traditional systems. This resistance can slow down adoption and hinder the successful implementation of blockchain solutions.

Security Risks: Although blockchain is generally considered secure, it is not immune to vulnerabilities. Issues such as smart contract bugs, 51% attacks, and potential exploits can pose risks to the integrity of blockchain systems. Ensuring robust security measures and continuous monitoring is essential to mitigate these risks.

In summary, while blockchain technology offers numerous advantages for logistics and supply chain management, it also presents several limitations and drawbacks that organizations must consider. Addressing these challenges is crucial for the successful deployment and effective utilization of blockchain solutions in the sector.

CONCLUSION

Blockchain technology presents a transformative opportunity for logistics and supply chain management, offering enhanced transparency, efficiency, and security. Its potential to streamline operations, reduce costs, and improve trust among stakeholders is particularly significant in complex and globalized supply chains.

In the context of Hong Kong, a major logistics hub, the adoption of blockchain can address many of the sector's pressing challenges, including fraud, counterfeiting, and inefficient tracking systems. The technology's ability to provide a decentralized, immutable ledger can lead to substantial improvements in visibility and accountability throughout the supply chain.

However, the successful integration of blockchain into logistics and supply chain management is not without its challenges. Issues such as scalability, integration with existing systems, regulatory uncertainty, and the high cost of implementation must be carefully managed. Additionally, concerns about data privacy, technical complexity, and the environmental impact of blockchain networks need to be addressed to ensure a sustainable and effective deployment.

For Hong Kong, the implementation of blockchain technology represents a strategic opportunity to reinforce its position as a leading logistics center while advancing towards greater efficiency and innovation. To fully realize these benefits, stakeholders—including businesses, policymakers, and technology providers—must collaborate to develop clear regulatory frameworks, invest in scalable solutions, and overcome the barriers to adoption.

Future research and pilot projects will be essential to further explore the practical applications of blockchain in logistics, address the remaining challenges, and refine best practices. By navigating these complexities and leveraging blockchain's capabilities, the logistics and supply chain sectors can achieve significant advancements, driving economic growth and enhancing operational performance in Hong Kong and beyond.

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