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TRANSPARENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY: A NEW PARADIGM FOR SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

Larysa Shchekhovska. *"Transparency and sustainability: a new paradigm for supply chain management".* This research examines the evolving paradigm of supply chain management that integrates transparency and sustainability as core operational principles. The study investigates how modern supply chains are transitioning from traditional models focused primarily on efficiency and cost reduction to more holistic frameworks that incorporate environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and economic sustainability. Through comprehensive analysis, the research identifies transparency as a critical enabler of sustainable supply chain practices, introducing a six-dimensional framework that encompasses traceability, transaction, impact, policy and commitment, activity, and effectiveness information. The study presents a systematic four-step process for building transparency in supply chains: identifying and prioritizing risks, visualizing risks through mapping techniques, implementing transparency levers to bridge information gaps, and developing robust management and monitoring systems. The findings demonstrate that supply chain transparency not only mitigates risks related to environmental and social impacts but also creates long-term value for all stakeholders. The paper argues that transitioning from traditional monitoring approaches to transparency-centered sustainability management systems encourages supplier ownership of sustainability initiatives and fosters collaborative relationships throughout the supply chain. This paradigm shift ultimately transforms supply chain management from a potential source of reputational and operational risk to a strategic driver of competitive advantage and sustainable development. The practical implications include methodologies for companies to implement transparent and sustainable supply chain practices that align with global standards such as the United Nations Global Compact principles while improving operational resilience and stakeholder trust.

Keywords: supply chain sustainability, transparency, corporate responsibility, environmental governance, traceability, risk management, sustainable development, supplier engagement, monitoring systems, transparency levers, supplier ownership

Лариса Щеховська. *"Прозорість і сталість: нова парадигма управління ланцюгом поставок".* Це дослідження розглядає еволюціонуючу парадигму управління ланцюгом поставок, яка інтегрує прозорість і сталість як основні операційні принципи. Дослідження вивчає, як сучасні ланцюги поставок переходять від традиційних моделей, орієнтованих переважно на ефективність та зниження витрат, до більш цілісних концепцій, що включають екологічне управління, соціальну відповідальність та економічну сталість. Шляхом комплексного аналізу дослідження визначає

прозорість як критичний фактор, що сприяє сталим практикам у ланцюгах поставок, та представляє шестивимірну модель, яка включає інформацію про простежуваність, транзакції, вплив, політику та зобов'язання, діяльність та ефективність. Дослідження представляє систематичний чотириетапний процес побудови прозорості в ланцюгах поставок: ідентифікація та визначення пріоритетності ризиків, візуалізація ризиків за допомогою методів картографування, впровадження важелів прозорості для подолання інформаційних прогалів, а також розробка надійних систем управління та моніторингу. Результати демонструють, що прозорість ланцюга постачання не лише зменшує ризики, пов'язані з екологічними та соціальними впливами, але й створює довгострокову цінність для всіх зацікавлених сторін. У статті стверджується, що перехід від традиційних підходів моніторингу до систем управління сталим розвитком, орієнтованих на прозорість, заохочує постачальників брати на себе відповідальність за ініціативи зі сталого розвитку та сприяє розвитку співпраці у всьому ланцюгу поставок. Ця зміна парадигми зрештою перетворює управління ланцюгом постачання з потенційного джерела репутаційного та операційного ризику на стратегічний драйвер конкурентної переваги і сталого розвитку. Практичні наслідки включають методології для компаній щодо впровадження прозорих і сталих практик у ланцюгах постачання, які відповідають глобальним стандартам, таким як принципи Глобального договору ООН, водночас підвищуючи операційну стійкість та довіру зацікавлених сторін.

Ключові слова: сталий розвиток ланцюгів постачання, прозорість, корпоративна відповідальність, екологічне управління, відстежуваність, управління ризиками, сталий розвиток, взаємодія з постачальниками, системи моніторингу, важелі прозорості, власність постачальників.

Introduction. In today's interconnected global economy, supply chain sustainability has emerged as a critical component of corporate responsibility and strategic management. As organizations navigate increasingly complex networks of suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, and customers, the need to address environmental, social, and economic impacts throughout the product lifecycle has become paramount. The traditional view of supply chains as mere operational mechanisms for delivering products and services has evolved into a broader understanding that recognizes their role in advancing sustainable development objectives.

Supply chain management now extends beyond the mere oversight of logistics and operations to encompass responsibility for environmental stewardship, social welfare, and ethical governance throughout the entire value network. This paradigm shift has been driven by multiple factors, including heightened consumer awareness, regulatory pressures, investor demands, and the recognition that sustainable supply chains

can deliver both competitive advantage and positive societal impact.

The concept of transparency has emerged as a fundamental principle in this new paradigm. Transparency in supply chains refers to the visibility of information across various dimensions, from traceability of products and materials to the disclosure of environmental and social impacts. It serves as both a tool for accountability and a mechanism for driving continuous improvement in sustainability performance.

Despite growing recognition of its importance, many organizations struggle to implement effective transparency and sustainability practices within their supply chains. This challenge stems from the complexity of global supply networks, information asymmetries, and the difficulty of coordinating sustainability efforts across multiple tiers of suppliers and partners.

This article examines the evolving paradigm of supply chain management that integrates transparency and sustainability as core operational principles. It explores theoretical frameworks for understanding

supply chain transparency, presents practical approaches for building transparent and sustainable supply chains, and discusses the transition from traditional monitoring to more collaborative models of sustainability management.

Analysis of recent researches and publications. The academic literature on supply chain sustainability and transparency has expanded significantly in recent years, reflecting growing interest from both researchers and practitioners. Early work in this field primarily focused on environmental aspects of supply chain management, such as green supply chain management and environmental performance measurement. However, more recent research has adopted a more comprehensive approach that integrates environmental, social, and economic dimensions of sustainability.

Scholars have developed various frameworks for conceptualizing and implementing sustainable supply chain management. Gardner et al. provide a foundational framework for understanding transparency in global commodity supply chains, highlighting the multidimensional nature of transparency and its role in improving sustainability outcomes. Building on this conceptual foundation, Buck explores the practical dimensions of transparency in supply chains, examining how organizations can implement transparency initiatives that create meaningful change. The relationship between transparency and corporate investments in sustainability is examined by Rueda et al., who analyze the selection of instruments in the agri-food industry. More recent publications from Tredence Inc. and The International Center for Trade Transparency Limited focus on the essential nature of transparency and traceability for sustainable supply chains, highlighting emerging technologies and approaches that enable greater visibility.

Despite these advances, gaps remain in our understanding of how organizations can effectively transition from traditional supply chain management approaches to more

transparent and sustainable models. Additionally, more research is needed on the specific mechanisms through which transparency drives improvements in sustainability performance and how organizations can overcome barriers to implementation.

The purpose and objectives of the study. The primary purpose of this research is to examine the integration of transparency and sustainability principles into supply chain management practices, exploring how this new paradigm transforms traditional approaches and creates value for organizations and their stakeholders.

Specific objectives of the study include: to define and conceptualize supply chain sustainability and transparency within the context of contemporary business practices and global sustainable development objectives; to develop a comprehensive framework for understanding different dimensions of supply chain transparency and how they contribute to improved sustainability performance; to identify practical approaches for building transparent and sustainable supply chains, including risk assessment, visualization, information gathering, and management processes; to analyze the mechanisms through which transparency and sustainability practices create business value while advancing broader societal goals.

By addressing these objectives, the study aims to contribute to both theoretical understanding and practical implementation of transparent and sustainable supply chain management practices.

Basic material and results. Supply chain sustainability can be defined as "the management of environmental, social and economic impacts, and the encouragement of good governance practices, throughout the lifecycles of goods and services." The objective of this approach is to create, protect, and grow long-term value for all stakeholders involved in bringing products and services to market [1].

A sustainable supply chain considers the environmental and social impact of a product's journey through the entire supply chain, from raw materials to final delivery. However, it is important to recognize that sustainability is a dynamic concept that evolves over time. As our understanding of environmental and social challenges deepens, the criteria for what constitutes a "sustainable" supply chain will inevitably change.

Transparency, within this context, refers to the ability of businesses not only to "know internally" that they are exercising due diligence but also to "show externally" that this is the case. This concept has both normative and substantive dimensions. Normatively, transparency is viewed as a tool to serve principles of democracy, participation, and accountability. Substantively, it encompasses concrete criteria necessary to improve sustainability practices, including monitoring, disclosure, reporting, and verification [3].

To provide a more comprehensive understanding of supply chain transparency, we propose a framework consisting of six interrelated dimensions of information:

1) Traceability information that reports on the different actors involved in a supply chain, their roles, and the connections between actors and production localities.

2) Transaction information that reports on purchasing practices and investment decisions of different supply chain actors, helping identify the main beneficiaries and those who share responsibility for sustainability concerns [4].

3) Impact information that reports on social and environmental impacts associated with specific stages in a supply chain, setting a baseline for assessing performance.

4) Policy and commitment information that refers to actors' policies and commitments to increase sustainability, providing transparency on differences in the levels and strengths of policies adopted by different actors [10].

5) Activity information that reports on actions taken by supply chain actors to deliver on their targets and commitments, showing how behavior is changing.

6) Effectiveness information that reports on the effectiveness of interventions in reducing negative impacts and improving performance, showing how much progress is being made.

These dimensions form a cyclical process of assessment and intervention necessary for improving sustainability conditions on the ground.

A Four-Step Process for Building Transparency. For organizations seeking to implement more transparent supply chains, it's recommend a four-step process:

Step 1. Identifying and Prioritizing Risks. Given the numerous risks inherent in most supply chains, organizations need a systematic approach to determine which to focus on. Supply chain risks can be grouped into four broad categories: macroeconomic, extended value chain, operational, and functional. Using tools such as the Failure Modes and Effects Analysis, organizations can review potential risks from each category and prioritize them based on severity, likelihood of occurrence, frequency, and ease of detection.

Step 2. Visualizing Risks. Once risks are identified and prioritized, organizations can map the volume of products flowing around the world using tools like Google Earth or 3D mapping. This visual representation reveals points of vulnerability where large volumes of products flow from particular suppliers into high-risk regions. The transparency mapping process involves identifying suppliers and business partners, isolating where visibility is most limited ("information gaps"), and determining who might help close those gaps.

Step 3. Using transparency levers to close information gaps. After highlighting information gaps, organizations can employ various transparency levers to bridge them [5]. These may include:

- anonymous SMS text surveys for supplier feedback;
- third-party verification and certification;
- supply chain mapping and traceability systems;
- stakeholder engagement and collaboration;
- technology solutions such as blockchain or IoT;

Step 4. Managing and monitoring. A sustainable transparency program must go beyond closing information gaps to help organizations learn from and manage the insights gained. This can be achieved through supplier databases containing compliance and risk data, with algorithms to sort suppliers into risk tiers. More sophisticated systems might integrate real-time risk indicators, visualization tools, and predictive analytics capabilities.

The ultimate goal of supplier engagement should be supplier ownership of sustainability, which occurs when suppliers integrate responsible practices into their mission, strategy, and decision-making. While monitoring and remediation are essential for understanding risks, they have limitations in addressing root causes or establishing forward-looking expectations [9].

Both companies and suppliers have roles in enabling supplier ownership: Companies should:

- share relevant business information with suppliers;
- build long-term relationships;
- create incentives for sustainability;
- expect improvements to sustainability management systems;
- encourage and reward transparency;

- be sensitive to how their business practices impact suppliers' ability to meet sustainability expectations.

Suppliers should:

- demonstrate personal executive commitment;
- incorporate sustainability into strategic planning;
- demonstrate continuous improvement;
- proactively communicate challenges and progress;

Leading companies are building supplier ownership through the development of sustainability management systems, incorporating evaluation of these systems into audit protocols, providing training and consulting for suppliers, and instituting improvement ladders that emphasize continuous improvement [8].

The use of different types of information, as mediated by different transparency processes and access limitations, can help inform and shape decisions relating to the four core challenges of supply chain sustainability governance (Fig. 1): how to untangle the complexity of global supply chains and identify starting points for efforts to improve their sustainability, how to manage the different risks associated with unsustainable production and trade practices, how to improve conditions on the ground, and how to assess progress against different targets and baselines, and understand the extent to which a given set of interventions places the trade of a given commodity on a more sustainable or even transformational path.

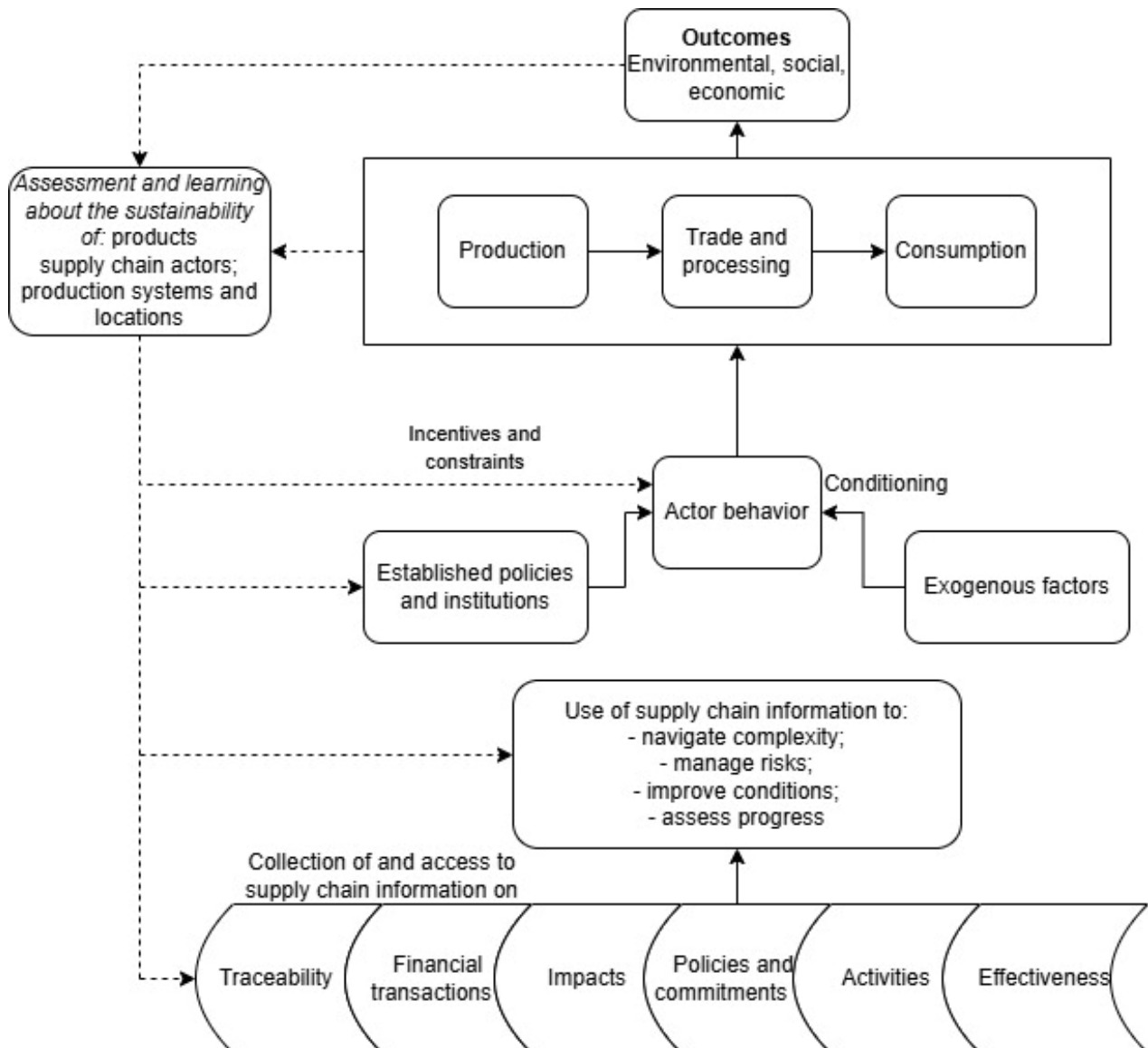


Figure 1. The relationships between supply chain information, transparency, and supply chain sustainability governance

Source: developed by the author

Conclusions. This research has examined the emerging paradigm of supply chain management that places transparency and sustainability at its core. Several key conclusions can be drawn:

First, supply chain sustainability represents a fundamental shift in how organizations conceptualize their responsibilities, extending them beyond direct operations to encompass the entire lifecycle of products and services. This approach recognizes that in today's globalized economy, outsourcing business operations does not mean outsourcing responsibilities or risks.

Second, transparency serves as both an enabler and a driver of sustainable supply chain practices. The six-dimensional framework presented in this study – encompassing traceability, transaction, impact, policy, activity, and effectiveness information – provides a comprehensive approach for understanding and implementing transparency in supply chains.

Third, building transparent and sustainable supply chains requires a systematic approach. The four-step process outlined in this research – identifying and prioritizing risks, visualizing risks, using transparency levers, and managing and

monitoring – offers a practical roadmap for organizations seeking to enhance transparency in their supply chains.

Fourth, the transition from traditional monitoring approaches to more collaborative models that emphasize supplier ownership represents a critical evolution in supply chain sustainability. This shift recognizes that lasting improvements in sustainability performance require suppliers to internalize sustainability values and integrate them into their business strategies and operations.

Finally, supply chain transparency and sustainability create value not only by

mitigating risks but also by driving innovation, enhancing brand reputation, strengthening stakeholder relationships, and contributing to broader sustainable development objectives.

As organizations continue to navigate complex global supply networks, the principles of transparency and sustainability will become increasingly central to effective supply chain management. By embracing this new paradigm, organizations can transform their supply chains from potential sources of risk to strategic assets that create value for the business and society.

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