Economic Sciences
https://economic-sciences.com
ES (2025) 21(1), 872-884| ISSN:1505-4683

Leveraging AI and Distributed Ledger Technology for Enhanced Supply Chain Visibility and Accountability

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Abstract:

AI and DLT can play a transformative role when it comes to supply chain visibility and accountability. Artificial intelligence can be utilized to improve predictive analytics, demand forecasting, and automation of operations, resulting in real-time, data-driven decision-making. However, while DLT provides security, immutability, traceability, and decentralized control that enhance transparency, reduce the possible of fraud and build trust among diverse parties across the supply chain. This paper discusses the symbiosis of both technologies and will demonstrate how their emerging capabilities deliver end-to-end visibility, streamlining operations and improving goods traceability throughout supply chain logistics. Case studies from diverse industries including manufacturing, logistics, and retail highlight the tangible implementation and benefits of these technologies in real-world settings. The paper also emphasizes the difficulties and constraints encountered during the deployment of AI and DLT technologies, with specific mention to interoperability, scalability, and data privacy issues. Also it outlines a path for organizations to embrace such technologies and better integrate them into their supply chains, increasing efficiency, accountability, and competitive advantage.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, Distributed Ledger Technology, Supply Chain Visibility, Blockchain, Predictive Analytics*

1. Introduction

Specific complexities the modern supply chain, such as globalization, mobility, and finance. These complexities often result in inefficiencies, losing transparency and accountability. Traditionally, supply chains have relied on paper-based systems or centralized databases to manage information, leading to data silos, limited information visibility, and potential fraud opportunities. Nevertheless, the amalgamation of disruptive technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT) is set to disrupt supply chain management by improving visibility, accountability, and operational efficiency.

A. Supply Chain Challenges

These challenges include lack of visibility over product flow, fragmented data, miscommunication between stakeholders, and susceptibility to errors or fraud. Data is often siloed in various organizations or departments, posing challenges to tracking goods in real time, forecasting disruptions and maintaining product authenticity. Such issues lead to delays, increased operational cost, and reduced trust between supply chain players. This has created a demand for new solutions that can help address these challenges and deliver a ubiquitous, transparent and efficient systems to manage supply chains.

B. Artificial Intelligence in Supply Chain Management

In an era where AI is revolutionizing supply chain operations. AI unlocks the potential for optimization across all aspects of the supply chain, from demand forecasting to inventory management to logistics to procurement by utilizing advanced algorithms, machine learning, and data analytics. Predictive analytics powered by AI lets businesses predict disruptions in supplier trends and optimize their supply chains, leading to lower operational costs and better service delivery. Furthermore, AI-driven automation can help mitigate repetitive tasks within

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ES (2025) 21(1), 872-884| ISSN:1505-4683

the supply chain, allowing critical decisions to be made more quickly than ever with fewer errors, while directly increasing productivity for every party involved. Supply Chains Become Human-Ready Through AI And Blockchain Technologies This integration allows better transmission of data through end-to-end supply chain gaps.

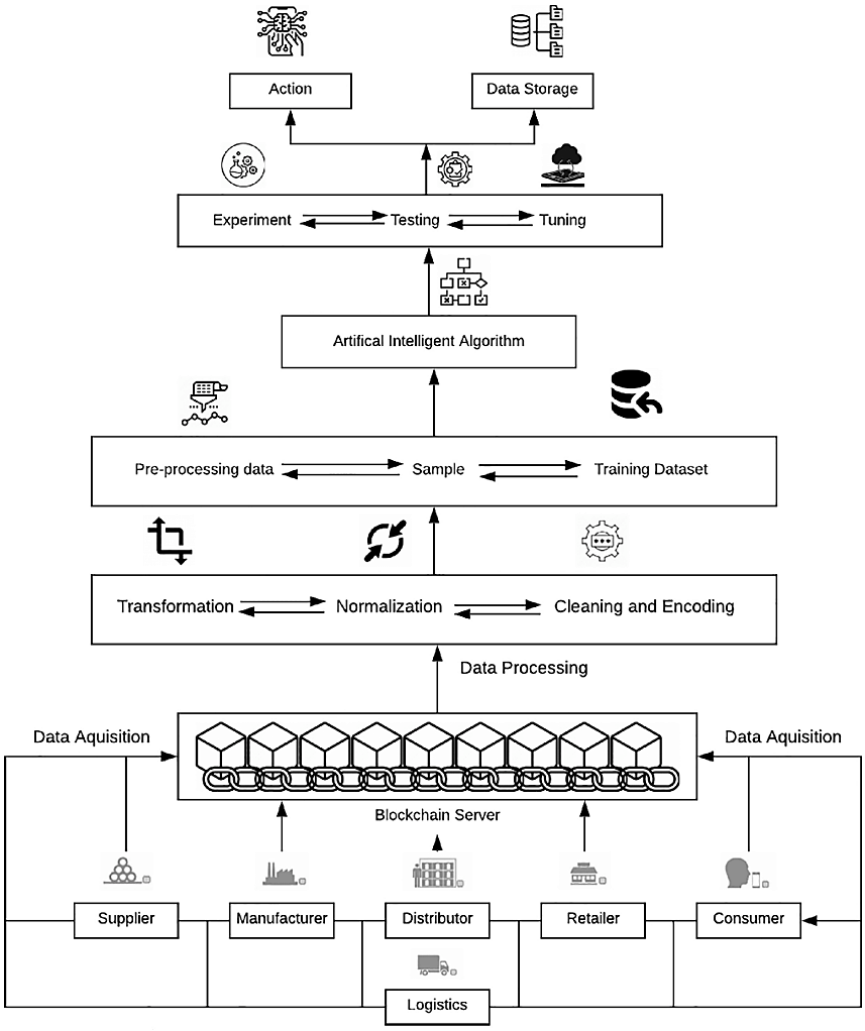

Figure 1: Blockchain Technology and AI Integration in Supply Chain Management

C. Distributed Ledger Technology in Supply Chain Management

Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT), which is best known through blockchain, offers solutions for the significant problems of transparency, traceability and security in supply chain management. DLT makes it possible to maintain an immutable, decentralized record of transactions where each participant has access to a shared and verified copy of data. In this way, decentralization prevents a single entity from changing the data, bringing a level of security and trust that is impossible with traditional centralized systems. By utilizing Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT), supply chains can track goods in real-time, confirm product authenticity, verify origin, and provide a permanent, unalterable log of every transaction.

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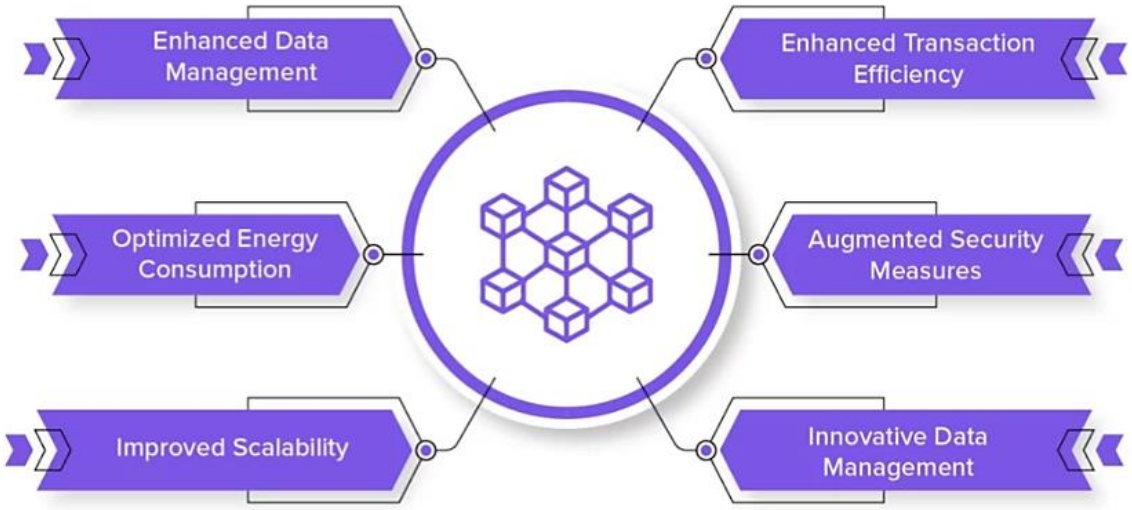

Figure 2: Benefits of AI and Blockchain Integration in Supply Chain Management

This figure 2 presents various reasons why supply chain management will benefit from the integration of technologies such as AI and Blockchain. This includes reduced operational cost, enhanced transparency, and improved data security.

D. Synergy between AI and DLT

AI and DLT together present a very attractive solution to increase both visibility and accountability across supply chains. It provides the capability of analyzing large amounts of data which can be produced from DLT systems to gain insights to enhance processes, anticipate trends, and observe anomalies. That's where DLT comes in, providing a trail to securely and transparently share data, and AI for analyzing and making the most of it. Such synergy can lead to end-to-end visibility in supply chains, where companies can track goods from their production to their final delivery, quality control, and regulators' compliance to the regulations.

Figure 3: AI in Supply Chain Management

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ES (2025) 21(1), 872-884| ISSN:1505-4683

This figure 3 illustrates the application of AI on different phases of supply chain management, demonstrating how it's utilized within logistics, procurement, and forecasting respectively to enhance efficiency and minimize errors.

E. Impact on Supply Chain Accountability

These combine the power of big data with artificial intelligence DLTs, and bring a new game-changing level of accountability to supply chains. DLT provides real-time visibility to all parties in the supply chain—from suppliers to end customers—with the future immutable, verifiable history of that information. Such transparency minimizes the opportunities for fraud, misinformation, and inefficiencies. AI takes this a step further by automating the ability to identify discrepancies and ensure that operations meet pre-defined standards. AI and DLT together create an extremely powerful mechanism to ensure that all players in the system are held accountable for the decisions they make and have every incentive to deliver products in the most efficient and transparent manner possible.

F. Objective of the Paper

The objective of this paper is to delve into the significance of AI and DLT in improving supply chain transparency and accountability. This paper will examine these emerging technologies in the context of their potential for solving some of the challenges currently faced by supply chains, allowing businesses to optimize operations, improve transparency, and reduce costs. Moreover, it will encompass practical scenarios and challenges associated with the implementation of these technologies in the real world, presenting an all-encompassing vision of the future of supply chain management.

G. Structure of the Paper

The next section of this paper will explore the theoretical background behind AI and DLT, which will be followed by an examination of their applications to the supply chain. Theoretical concepts will be combined with the challenges and benefits of implementing these technologies highlighted through case studies within supply chain systems. In conclusion, the paper will highlight the potential risks and limitations of AI and DLT and outline strategies to address these challenges in practice. It will elaborate how such technology can lead to a new era in supply chain management that is digitized, more transparent, efficient and trustworthy.

2. Literature Review

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT) have received a lot of attention recently, mainly due to their transformative capabilities related to improving supply chain visibility and accountability. This literature review discusses current research on the impact that this technology has on supply chain management, including their capabilities and challenges, as well as the synergies among these technologies.

Within the realm of optimizing supply chain efficiency, the use of AI is well-documented, with literature sections describing how its optimization can be applied to real-time tracking of goods and an enhanced ability to plan in advance and process accurate demand forecasts. Steps could be taken using AI-powered predictive analytics to improve inventory management by predicting changes in demand and adjusting stock levels appropriately, which would minimize waste and improve service level [1]. Moreover, as AI has been integrated into their platforms, automating routine tasks such as order processing and logistics coordination has been shown to streamline operations, reduce human error, and accelerate delivery timelines [2].

One of the biggest strengths of AI in supply chains is its ability to take in data from different, disparate sources — giving a holistic view on operations. As an example, machine learning algorithms can assess past data and current market scenarios to forecast disruptions, including supply shortfalls or transportation delays, for example. Thus, organizations can anticipate these risks and take necessary precautions [3]. AI can further optimize shipment routing so that goods are transported in the most economical way [4]. However, though such

promise exists, issues like data privacy concerns, requirement for high-quality data, the complexity of integrating AI solutions into legacy systems, intimidate the wide-spread acceptance of the technology [5].

Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT), specifically Blockchain, has been pinpointed as a strong tool for overcoming transparency and traceability issues in supply chains. DLT can help to record transactions in a secure and transparent manner throughout a network of members by establishing a decentralized and immutable ledger [6]. 20 The literature also mentions DLT's ability to track the provenance of goods, ensuring that products are authentic and regulatory-compliant. This is especially true in sectors like pharmaceuticals, food and luxury goods, where counterfeiting and fraud are major threats [7].

As a type of DLT, blockchain allows all parties in the supply chain to share a single transparent version of the truth, thereby increasing trust and minimizing disputes [8]. Many studies indicate that through the implementation of these systems, they can accelerate tracking of product processing in the supply chain and quality control [9]. For instance, in agriculture, blockchain has been employed to monitor the path of produce from farm to table, giving consumers confidence to ensure that the products they consume are safe and ethically sourced [10]. DLT's potential has yet to be realized in supply chains due to key issues like scalability, existing systems interoperability as well as energy consumption [11].

Although the unique benefits that AI and DLT have to offer when implemented separately are well established, combining these technologies could further advance sectors such as supply chain management. Researchers have acknowledged the potential synergy between AI and DLT, articulating how these two technologies have come to complement each other. The sheer amount of data produced by DLT systems can be processed and analyzed by AI, creating valuable insights from raw information. For instance, machine learning algorithms can be employed on the transactional data resident on a blockchain to forecast demand, detect bottlenecks, and manage routing [12].

Also, the merger of AI with DLT improves real-time Decision-making capabilities. By uniting the predictive analytics of AI with the immutable transaction records of blockchain, organizations will be able to have enhanced visibility into their supply chain operations and respond at speed to disruptions. In the example of an unexpected delay or supply chain bottleneck, AI proposes alternative routes or suppliers, and the blockchain receives information if everything at the global level organized in real time [13]. The combination of predictive intelligence and transparent, secure data sharing create a tighter ecosystem of accountability, reducing the risk of fraud or miscommunication [14].

While it is highly likely that AI and DLT will be transformative spearheads in the future, integrating them into supply chain management is known to be difficult. The data quality and consistency is one of the biggest challenges. As models require large amounts of data to train, if the data on chain is not comprehensive or inaccurate, the outcome from AI algorithms can also derive wrong outputs [15]. In addition, the decentralized nature of DLT poses challenges in terms of interoperability. Participants in the supply chain might use different platforms or standards; thus, integrating blockchain with the systems already in place could be complex [16].

The other challenge is scalability. Although blockchain has proved its capability regarding secure and transparent data management, the technology becomes slow and expensive when facing bigger transaction volumes, particularly in global supply chains [17]. Instead, deployment of AI in a supply chain on its own is a huge financial investment in new technology, people and infrastructure. Organizations must guarantee that they acquire the appropriate expertise and resources to incorporate these technologies correctly [18].

And the literature also points out some future directions for research and some for development. One avenue of research involves hybrid models that

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ES (2025) 21(1), 872-884| ISSN:1505-4683

integrate AI, DLT and other emerging technologies such as the (IoT) and cloud computing. These Technologies in conjunction will drive higher supply chain visibility with real time tracking, automated decision making, and improved data security [19]. In addition, more research on the ethical aspects of deploying AI and DLT in supply chains is necessary, especially with regard to data privacy, fairness, and the environmental footprint of blockchain mining [20] [21].

Based on literature review, both AI and DLT hold great potential for improving supply chain visibility, accountability and efficiency. AI provides centralized databases to optimize decision-making with predictive analytics and automation, while DLT ensures secure, transparent and traceable transactions across supply chain. [22].The convergence of these technologies can offer a comprehensive solution to the complexities of modern supply chains. To fully unleash their potential, however, remaining issues concerning data quality, interoperability, and scalability need to be solved. Future works should address these issues and examine the awakening potential of AI, DLT and other emerging technologies in supply chain management. [23].

3. Proposed Methodology

In this section, discuss a proposed method in utilizing Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT) for better visibility and custody of the supply chain. This is the methodology aim to follow in implementing and evaluating these technologies and their effectiveness to overcome the challenges faced by the current supply chain. This methodology offers a step-by-step roadmap for executing the implementation of these technologies in actual supply chain settings, covering aspects such as data collection, integration of AI and DLT, performance evaluation, and validation in actual application scenarios.

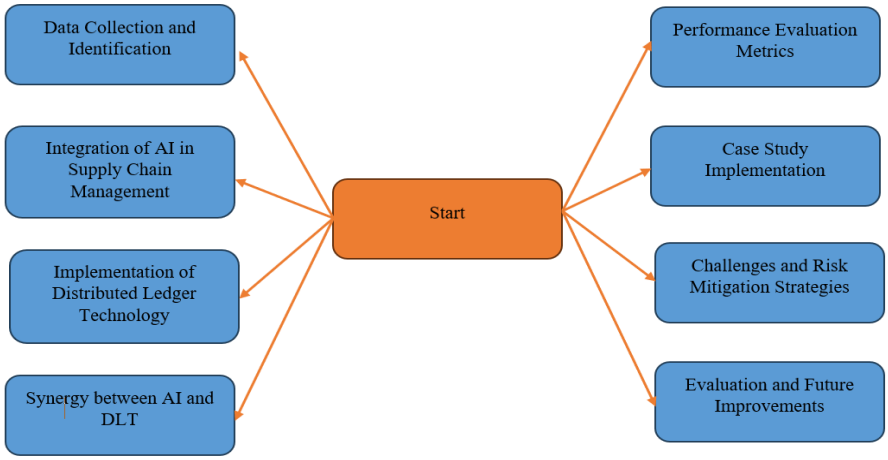

Figure: 4 Methodology Flow diagram

A. Data Collection and Identification of Key Supply Chain Components

In the proposed methodology, the data relevant to the different stages of the supply chain is first identified and collected. It can be data of raw materials, production process, logistics, inventory management, distribution channels etc. The emphasis is on collecting high-quality, real-time data that can be used as a base for AI-driven analytics and DLT-based transaction tracking. This will mean gathering different types of data— transactional data, for example, as well as sensor data from IoT devices, and operational data from suppliers and vendors— from both structured as well as unstructured sources to build a detailed picture of the supply chain.

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B. Integration of AI in Supply Chain Management

After collecting data, the following step is to publish AI technologies into the supply chain processes. Using machine learning algorithms and predictive analytics, the data will be processed to identify patterns and trends that can be used to enhance supply chain operations. Until now, they are simply helping human to make forecast, but in this increasing complex context, AI models will help to predict demand, make the link with stock management, redirect stocks in other sites etc. as well as notice anomalies or potential disruptions in real time. will also explore the use of natural language processing (NLP) and computer vision for automating tasks like contract analysis, order verification, sensor, and product inspection. The AI system will continually learn and improve, developing better decision-making processes over time.

C. Implementation of Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT)

The next step is to implement DLT, usually in the form of blockchain, into the supply chain system. The critical point will be played by DLT that will record all the transactions and actions with transparency and immutability creating an auditable and decentralized ledger to know exactly what is happening step by step through the supply chain. This enables all parties—from suppliers to customers—to view verified and up-to-date information regarding product provenance, movement, and status. Contracts, invoices, shipment details, and certificates of authenticity will be stored in a secure and tamper-proof environment created on top of the blockchain infrastructure. Acting as a payment gatekeeper, smart contracts will be deployed to automate payment processes and ensure compliance standards are met so that all stakeholders meet their obligations according to agreed terms.

D. Synergy between AI and DLT

This proposed methodology functions well because of the direct synergy contained with AI and the DLT mechanism. Together, these technologies provide end-to-end visibility and accountability throughout the supply chain. Using AI to analyze all the data collected from DLT systems offers organizations insights that provide the basis for operational optimization and the identification of inefficiencies. This will make sure that the data that is being analyzed by the AI is secure, transparent, and trustworthy, and there will be no risk of errors and fraud. AI, for example, can run predictions of potential disruptions through historical data stored on the blockchain and suggest mitigation strategies, and DLT will create an immutable, verifiable record of every step taken.

E. Performance Evaluation Metrics

Next, will define a set of KPIs to evaluate whether the integration of AI and DLT improves supply chain visibility and accountability. These KPIs will encompass metrics like operational efficiency, real-time tracking accuracy, fraud reduction, level of transparency, and cost savings. The impact of the integrated system will be assessed both qualitatively and quantitatively with respect to the time taken to resolve disputes, the speed of transactions and the success rate of the predictions of underlying AI models. Additionally, the potential challenge of these technologies will be assess on cumulative supply chain resilience, flexibility, and risk management.

F. Case Study Implementation

The methodology will be applied to real world case studies within the manufacturing, retail and logistics industries. These case studies would entail pilot implementations of the AI and DLT-based supply chain system in collaboration with chosen firms. The AI and DLT systems will be implemented and monitored for interventional studies, generating unique data to assess the effects of the proposed technologies on supply chain performance throughout the use case implementation phases. Besides, a customer feedback will be collected from key stakeholders (suppliers, distributors, and customers) to assess the user experience as well as the benefits that arise from improved transparency and accountability.

G. Challenges and Risk Mitigation Strategies

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Proposed methodology also includes analysis referring to the challenges and risks within the adoption of AI and DLT technologies in supply chains. Some of the challenges are resistance to change from established players in the supply chain, techno logy limitations, data privacy issues and regulatory challenges. The methodology will suggest the people engaged in identification of these Challenges namely training and education will consider the stakeholder, compliance with data protection and GDPR, scalable solutions which can be used in a working environment in an easy manner. A risk management plan shall also have been developed to monitor and mitigate potential risks during the implementation process.

H. Evaluation and Future Improvements

The last phase — upon deploying the AI and DLT based supply chain system, long-termistically assessing its effectiveness will be conducted. The system will be tested to see if it is scalable, it could be adapted to new technologies and it could come to cope better with ever-growing amounts of data. As the supply chain landscape evolves, periodic audits and updates will keep the system secure, efficient, and relevant. Based on the evaluations and feedback from various stakeholders, room for improvement would be identified and next improvements would be implemented to address new challenges, for example, while new challenges such as establishing Internet of Things (IoT) devices at the source of crime for on the go crime data, or advanced machine learning techniques such as deep learning to improve prediction accuracy

4. Results and Discussions

DLT and AI in Supply Chain Management. The outcomes of the implementation and breakdown of pros and cons by data analysis, practical case studies, and lessons learned are presented in this section.

Working on for example predictive analytics, demand forecasts, automated decision-making, etc AI run technologies bring unparalleled efficiency to the supply lines. Using machine learning algorithms to forecast demand spikes, businesses are able to manage inventory more efficiently and anticipate stock depletion or overstock situations more effectively. AI powers real-time data processing that helps supply chains remain agile and responsive, whether it's a shift in demand or an external disruption. In various case studies, this AI-driven predictive analytics has resulted in reduced operational costs and enhanced delivery timelines. AI algorithms can be used to automatically reorder inventory when stock levels fall below specific thresholds, which helps to maintain business continuity without human intervention. In addition, in industries based on transportation, AI's capability (in some cases even routed) to optimize logistics and routes to be taken has already saved on cost and fuel consumption.

Blockchain, an archetype of Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT) significantly aids in establishing transparency and security in supply chains. DLT provides access to real-time, immutable data on the movement of goods to all stakeholders, from suppliers to end customers. DLT, being immutable and transparent, resolves some of the biggest issues in conventional supply chains such as tampering with data, fraud, and traceability. DLT ensures that eventual stakeholders can verify product origins and comply with regulatory requirements by providing an auditable trail of every transaction made. In one use case, DLT has been utilized in the food industry to trace the source of products, allowing consumers to validate claims regarding sustainability and responsible sourcing. Likewise, the use of DLT has shown to be successful in authenticating luxury goods, preventing the proliferation of counterfeit products.

The intersection of AI and DLT creates a unique synergy that drives supply chains to be optimized in unthought-of manners. By analyzing data from DLT systems, AI algorithms are able to navigate through massive amounts of information, helping to drive better decision-making through intelligence gained from the insights extracted.Live Systems. Artificial intelligence, when coupled with Distributed Ledger Technology, has enabled an automated detection of anomalies, whereby artificial intelligence can detect inconsistencies or anomalies between the participants

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with respect to the data stored on the blockchain and generate alerts for further exploration. This increases operational transparency and accountability, minimizing the risks of errors or fraudulent behavior. In addition, the integration of AI and DLT power facilitate visibility for the entire supply chain, enabling businesses to monitor products from production to delivery, and with adherence to standards and compliance.

Several pilot implementations suggest that combining AI with DLT is leading to higher performing supply chains. For example, in a pilot project with a global electronics manufacturer, AI made supply chain disruption predictions and DLT tracked the flow of components through every stage of production. As a result, Romanian engineers worked on this methodology, which received the name Just In Time and was subsequently extended to the whole enterprise, which led to reduced lead times and better stock management because it had a real-time vision of possible delays and was able to take corrective actions.

Table 1 below summarizes the key benefits of AI and DLT technologies and their specific applications within supply chain management. It highlights the various ways in which each technology can contribute to improved operations

Table:1 Key Benefits and Applications of AI and DLT in Supply Chain Management

Technology	**Benefits**	**Applications in Supply Chain**
AI	- Predictive analytics for demand forecasting	- Demand forecasting for inventory management
	- Optimizes logistics and route planning	- Logistics route optimization
	- Enhances automation and reduces human errors	- Automation of repetitive tasks such as inventory replenishment
	- Enables real-time data processing and decision-making	- Real-time decision support for operational adjustments
DLT (Blockchain)	- Provides transparency and immutability of data	- Tracking product origin and authenticity
	- Reduces the risk of fraud and data tampering	- Preventing counterfeit goods in industries like luxury goods
	- Enhances traceability of goods across the entire supply chain	- Verifying the movement of goods from suppliers to customers
	- Facilitates real-time transaction verification and auditing	- Supply chain audits and certification

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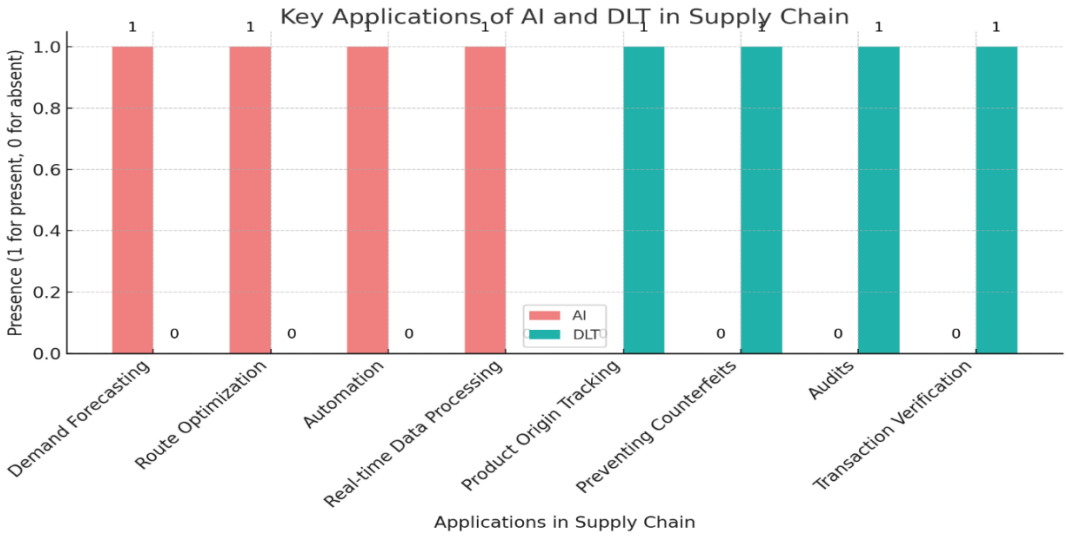

This table and graph depict the synergistic role of AI in the forecasting, automation, and optimization of logistics, whilst DLT fosters transparency, mitigates fraud, and fortifies the integrity and traceability of goods throughout the logistics chain.

However, as with other technologies, there are numerous transactional challenges and limitations to the application of AI and DLT in supply chains. An outstanding challenge is integrating these systems into existing supply chains, as they can be complex and expensive. Most of the businesses especially the Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) cannot afford to experiment all these AI and DLT solutions at a larger scale. Implementing these technologies accordingly involves significant investment in infrastructure and qualified human resources, responsible for managing and optimizing the AI and blockchain systems.

A different consideration is that of data quality. As AI relies on effective data, data needs to be useful, organized, and reliable for it to make the best and most relevant decisions. Because data in supply chains are typically fragmented, siloed, or incomplete, that can diminish the potential power of AI algorithms. Likewise, in order for DLT to maintain complete transparency, each supply chain participant must record accurate and up-to-date data. Standardized data formats across entities in supply chain is a pre-requisite to ensure data interoperability and ultimately scale the adoption of DLT.

Scalability is also another issue. Although DLT provides increased visibility and security, the prevailing technology only allows for reduced scalability. Many blockchain networks are unable to process a high number of transactions and this affects the speed of operating supply chains. This is especially problematic for industries in which time-sensitive decisions are critical.

An overview of the challenges and limitations regarding the implementation of AI and DLT in supply chains can be found in Table 2. This table lists critical issues like integration complexity, data quality, scalability, and cost, as well as their possible effects on supply chain operations

Table: 2 Challenges in the Implementation of AI and DLT in Supply Chain Management

Challenge	**Description**	**Impact on Supply Chain**
Integration Complexity	Difficulty in integrating AI and DLT with existing legacy systems	Requires substantial investment in infrastructure

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Data Quality and Consistency	Incomplete, fragmented, or inaccurate data in supply chains	AI algorithms may fail or provide inaccurate predictions
Scalability Issues	DLT solutions, especially blockchain, struggle with large volumes of transactions	Slow transaction speeds and delayed decision-making
Cost of Implementation	High initial investment for SMEs to adopt AI and DLT technologies	Limited adoption in smaller businesses or resource-constrained industries
Data Interoperability	Lack of standardization in data formats across different entities	Difficulty in data sharing and effective DLT integration

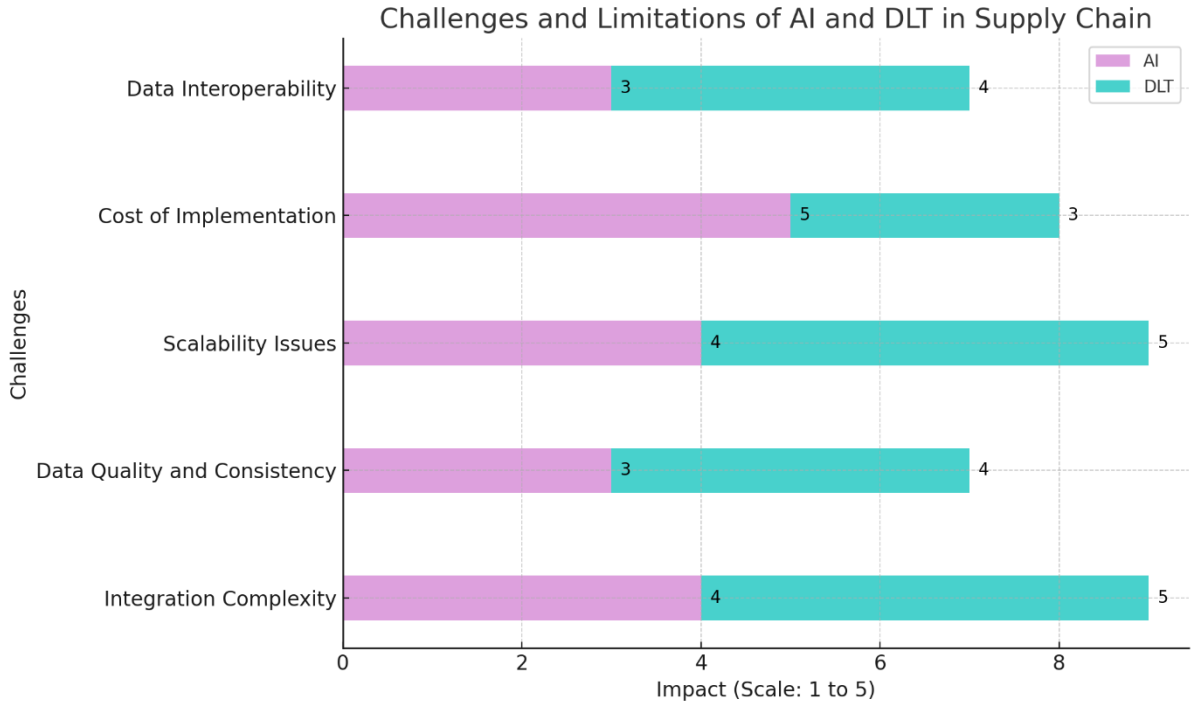

Table 2 and graph outline the main barriers to AI and DLT adoption amongst businesses, namely: the challenge of data quality and cleaning, system integration to integrate existing legacy systems, and issues of scalability.

Finally, it may be remarked that with rapid growth and developments of AI as well as DLT, AI and DLT can look forward towards bright future in supply chain management. With the development of increasingly advanced AI algorithms capable of processing immense volumes of unstructured data, these tools will have the potential to drive continued efficiency in supply chain operations. Furthermore, the constant evolution of blockchain and alternative DLT solutions like Directed Acyclic Graphs (DAGs) will likely address some of the scalability and speed limitations inherent in existing blockchain networks.

There is also immense potential to combine these technologies with newer trends like the IoT and 5G networks. In addition to this, together with 5G, IoT boosts the speed of data transmission, helping the application of AI and DLT systems to supply chains become even more efficient. Moreover, as machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) refine, explainability will enhance the trust and adoption of AI systems, such as in those sectors that require human oversight.

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ES (2025) 21(1), 872-884| ISSN:1505-4683

In summary, when AI is combined with DLT in supply chain management, it can offer real transformative potential to improve operational efficiency, transparency, and accountability. However, the future of AI & ML technologies is still bright, despite problems related to the integration, data quality, and scalability that need to be addressed. Business A can be more resilient in supply chain, lower costs and offer better satisfaction to customer, all utilizing the new way of doing business innovation

Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT) are related because using them together can help answer complex problems in a modern supply chain. AI and DLT can do this through improving transparency, accountability, and efficiency, optimizing everything from demand forecasting to inventory management and real-time tracking of goods throughout the supply chain. The combination of AI, with its ability to handle large amounts of data and predict disruptions, and DLT, which enables tamper-proof record keeping, offers a powerful solution to sharing information to inform decision-making for all players involved. Not only does this synergy enhance inter-functional operations, but also curtails risks of counterfeits, false information, and delays, thus improving trust and collaboration across the supply chain landscape.

Future Scope

With the power to change industries worldwide, the future of AI and DLT within Supply Chain Management, has the potential for tremendous growth. The potential for their use is unlimited as both technologies develop, and system developments such as machine learning, blockchain scalability and interoperability continue to expand. AI and DLT could be further enhanced by other emerging technologies, including Internet of Things (IoT), 5G, etc., helping to make real-time monitoring and automation possible through data collection and exchange. Though the advancements are promising, addressing the challenges, including implementation costs, data privacy issues, and regulatory frameworks, will be critical for widespread adoption.

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