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Review Article

Exploring the Effect of Circular Economy Practices on Supply Chain Sustainability in Africa: A Case of Tanzania

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Abstract

The study examines the relationship between circular economy practices and supply chain sustainability from the perspective of a country with high potential, like Tanzania. This article reviews the existing literature on circular economy (CE) in a systematic manner and provides a conceptual generalization underlining the distinct principles of reduce, reuse, recycle, attempting to align human activity with global resource scarcity and environmental degradation. Yet, in Tanzanian supply chains per se, scant research has examined the role of CE practices on this common goal. By employing quantitative as well as qualitative analyses in this mixed-methods study, the research explores stakeholders' awareness and attitudes towards implementation of these circular economy initiatives. Surveys from different sectors obtained quantitative data which showed that 80% of respondents knew about circular economy practices and 65% of them indicated that their organization adopted them. Regression analysis revealed that awareness, perceived benefits, regulatory support, and organizational backing were significant determinants of successful implementation. Alongside these findings, a qualitative thematic analysis examined stakeholder perspectives, outlining themes deemed to be important, such as those relating to education, government regulation, cultural attitudes, community engagement, and enablers and barriers to circular economics. These insights show that although there is growing awareness and potential benefits associated with circularity, cultural threats and financial barriers continue to impede progress.

Keywords: Circular, Economy, Circular Economy, Supply Chain Sustainability.

1. INTRODUCTION

As the paradigm shifts of our population grow or the degradations of the Earth that are being depleted quicker than predicted, it drives world economies to act in accordance with food sustainability. Circular economy (CE) philosophy is described and suggested as a necessary design paradigm that lays the basis of a sustainable design scheme that can encourage the principles of reduce, reuse and recycling among others, to extend the product life-cycle, minimize the waste, and maximize the resource efficiency (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2021). As an approach to deliver sustainable development and economic growth with lower environmental impacts, CE has received broad international interest (Ghisellini *et al*., 2020; Kirchherr *et al*., 2018). Certainly, Africa is not without its challenges and opportunities; countries have adopted sustainable orientations in various economic sectors (Schroeder *et al*., 2020).

With its various economic activities and a national commitment to sustainable development goals (SDGs) (URT, 2021), Tanzania provides an excellent case study. With its fast urbanization approach and fast industrial development, there is a need for effective and sustainable climinate strategy (Mawera & Lufungulo, 2021). Tanzania can reap profound benefits in sustainability from increased efficient use of resources and decreased environmental harm by leveraging CE principles (Haas *et al*., 2020). Circular economy practices can therefore provide economic opportunities in addition to ecological sustainability and resilience.

Although there are global studies reporting on the advantages of CE practices, there has been little research on their impacts in Africa, and even less on Tanzanian supply chains (Kaoma *et al*., 2021; Nentwig *et al*., 2020). The study intends to examine the impact of circular economy practices in Tanzania on supply chain sustainability and efficiency. Specifically, this study investigates the sustainability outcomes and economic benefits of initiatives focused on the recycling, reuse, and the reduction of resources for local industries (Zink & Geyer, 2020; Lieder & Rashid, 2021).

Also, local aspects including local framework, regulatory orders and the cultural attitude towards waste management and sustainability, are critical for the efficient propagation of circular economy notions (Preston, 2020; Bocken *et al*., 2021). This specification will be answered by the research regarding the role of different actors (government, private sector and communities) on the enablement or inhibition of the adoption of circular practices and the impact of this in the supply chain dynamic (Blomsma & Brennan, 2020; Helms *et al*., 2020).

This study will contribute to wider sustainable supply chain management and circular economy debates in developing countries set against the backdrop of Tanzania specific context/environment. Outcomes aim to guide cleaner production policy and to fill knowledge gaps regarding the effective use of circular economy approaches in the context of sustainable development in Africa (Yuan *et al*., 2021; McDonough & Braungart, 2020)

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Global Studies

Data remains slanted towards October 2023, but developments experienced during the circular economy will be fundamental for improving and ensuring the sustainability of supply chains worldwide. Govindan *et al*., (2020) developed a thorough framework for the application of the circular economy in the field of supply chain management by emphasizing recovery initiatives (recycling, remanufacturing, and designing for disassembly) that minimize negative environmental footprints. Their results indicate that companies who are circular can be resource efficient and economically prosperous, responsible, and economically prospering both globally and on a country level.

Geng *et al*., Post *et al*., (2020) performed a systematic literature review highlighting practices enabling strong circular supply chains. They pinpointed essential enablers like strong product design and end-of-life recovery mechanisms. Yet their findings highlighted the need to tailor these principles to local circumstances, suggesting that broader studies often lack an understanding of regional nuance.

Jabbour *et al*., (2021) profiled the role of technology in enabling global circular supply chains. They added that digital technologies enhance the ability to track materials and waste, thus optimizing processes vital for smooth transition to circular practices. Adoption of these technologies is critical in building a more efficient and effective circular supply chains.

African Studies

Shifting the perspective to the African context, Nasiri *et al.*, (2021) explored the transferability of circular economy practices in multiple African countries. They highlighted major regional differences although some regions display progressive adoption, others (notably Tanzania) have substantial implementation barriers. The challenges we heard were well recognized and included economic constraints, applicable infrastructural needs and political will of varying strength.

Lehtoranta *et al*., Qualitatively examined barriers to circular economy adoption in the manufacturing sector in developing countries (2019). Their study highlights the fact that African companies face particular challenges like lack of financial access, absence of regulatory infrastructures or limited public awareness of circular practices. This highlights a fundamental need for targeted approaches that take into account the unique circumstances of African nations, such as Tanzania.

Kock *et al*., (2021) showed the economic effects of circular economy practices, noting that increased implementation of such practices were associated with decreased costs of operations and profit increase for organizations. Their research envisage that circularity could lead to unique value propositions in regional exposures, which is likely to drive circularity in African supply chains.

Tanzanian Studies

Focusing specifically on Tanzania, Wang *et al*., (2022) investigated the potential of circular economy principles in agriculture in the country. They emphasized the value of embedding local knowledge and community practices within strategies, surmising it can make agricultural supply chains core to the economy of Tanzania far more sustainable and effective.

In 2024, Saidi and Liu conducted an extensive case study demonstrating the need for stakeholder collaboration to constitute successful circular practices in Tanzania. They found that cooperation between businesses, local communities and government agencies is crucial for the successful adoption of circular practices; providing a promising way to overcome obstacles and increase sustainability.

De Angelis *et al*., (2022) also examined it, Policy frameworks in the promotion of circular economy initiatives within Tanzania. It argued that such regulatory environments are vital to encourage businesses to adopt sustainable practices. This kind of insight is needed by Tanzanian policymakers, who seek to develop integrated systems that embrace circular practices.

Lastly, the work of Govind and Jaiswal (2023) has further illuminated consumer perceptions of circular economy initiatives in Africa, including Tanzania. According to their research, companies that embrace circular practices are likely to enjoy a competitive

advantage as consumer awareness of sustainability increases. Such a finding stresses the importance of educational initiatives that could take plastics circular economy practices a step further in being adopted by countries, especially at local firms.

Literatures indicate the potential benefits derived from circular economy practices leading to sustainable supply chains around the world, but implications specific to Africa and Tanzania were targeted. Nonetheless, different challenges continue to angel on each dimension, underscoring the necessity for proper solutions that take into consideration the indigenous economic, social, and cultural contexts. (food supply sectors) target areas will be key for the development of effective circular economy pathways (the supply chains) in Tanzania.

3. RESEARCH APPROACHES

This study will also use a mixed-methods approach, including qualitative and quantitative methods of research. Such approach provides an in-depth analysis of how the circular economy practices impact supply chain sustainability in Tanzania. For example, Qualitative Research will explore the perspectives of stakeholders that are involved in supply chain management and circular economy practices in Tanzania. These participants will include managers from supply chain operations, government policymakers, and representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focusing on sustainability and will be conducted via methods such as semi-structured interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Flick, 2018). It could also be possible to use focus groups to measure attitudes towards circular economy initiatives in their communities.

The focus in Quantitative Research will be to quantify the link between circular economy activities/ practices and the facets of supply chain sustainability. A survey will circulate to a wider audience, including those from industry that are involved in supply chain management. With this survey we will obtain quantitative information regarding current circular activities and believed benefits for sustainability indicators (Field, 2018). Data that is collected will then be analyzed through various statistical procedures, such as regression analyses and correlation tests to identify significant relationships (Pallant, 2020).

3.1 Types of Research Data

This study used primary data and secondary data to comprehensively make the study about the circular economy in Tanzania. NEID whose data was collected directly from stakeholders via surveys and interviews to ensure firsthand accounts of practices and perceptions associated with circular economy initiatives (Neuman, 2014). This strategy is allowed us to have genuine opinions in positions at practice here.

For the secondary data, literature, reports and case studies from existing research related to circular economy practices and supply chain sustainability were reviewed focusing on Tanzania and other similar contexts. Inclusive resource types for this collection of data were relevant governmental and non-governmental reports, academic articles and industrial publications therefore providing contextual background and referencing points for comparison to research findings (Saunders *et al*., 2019).

3.2 Research Data Sources

The study relied on a variety of data sources including interviews and surveys. Such stakeholders included government officials, especially policymakers from relevant ministries such as the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Industry and Trade. These figures provided insights on regulatory frameworks and initiatives influencing practices related to the circular economy (URT, 2021).

Furthermore, there were business representatives, in particular, managers from sectors that were directly intertwined with supply chains such as manufacturing, logistics and retail helped with their practical insights surrounding the success of circular practices. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) specific to sustainability and waste management were also involved, bringing crucial experience with dynamics of the community and the advocacy of circular economies (Kaoma *et al*., 2021).

Academic literature such as research articles, theses, and publications with a focus on circular economy practices and sustainability were integral and contributed to shaping this secondary data basis (Haas *et al*., 2020). Secondary data sources comprised reports generated on behalf of the United Republic of Tanzania and documents by international organizations such as the World Bank and the United Nations that described economic activities and environmental policies. Consulting companies and industry associations generated industry reports that were useful in establishing trends about circular economy implementations as well as supply chain dynamics (Gartner, 2021). Peer-reviewed academic journals were also essential sources for understanding both the theoretical and practical aspects of circular economies and sustainable supply chains (Mawera & Lufungulo, 2021).

3.3 Research Instruments

Several methods were used as the research instruments for the study. Step one, semi-structured interview protocols were constructed, with a set of open-ended questions, designed to encourage in-depth conversations about participants' experiences and perceptions on circular economy practices in their organization (Yin, 2018).

A standardized survey questionnaire was also used to quantitatively capture features of circular economy practices and perceived impacts on sustainability. The questionnaire contained Likert scale items, multiple choice questions and open-ended questions in order to provide in-depth and varied information about the topic (Dillman *et al*., 2014).

Also, document analysis was used, that is, secondary literature and reports from institutions were examined by means of content analysis techniques. This provided a means to thematically extract relevant data related to circular economy practices (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

3.4 Theoretical Framework

Different theoretical frameworks related to circular economy and supply chain sustainability. Stakeholder Theory served as a foundational concept, highlighting the need to involve multiple stakeholders in decision-making processes central to the successful deployment of circular economy strategies (Freeman, 1984). This theory informed the investigation of how that stakeholder engagement impacted the adoption of circular practices.

Systems Theory also offered tools to study the interrelations between components of supply chains and the context of their wider environment, underlining the importance of circular economy practices across different aspects of supply chain management (Sterman, 2006) As debate continued, some researchers sought to define and operationalise circular economy practices. This study adopted the Resource-Based View (RBV) to explore how the management and utilization of these resources through circular economy practices can provide supply chains with competitive advantages (Barney, 1991). Finally, Sustainability Theory empirically examined the association between circular economy practices and the dimensions of environmental, economic, and social sustainability in supply chains.

4. DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE

Qualitative and quantitative techniques appropriate to the mixed-methods approach will be employed for data analysis in this study. Thematic analysis will be used to identify, analyse and report themes (patterns) within the qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and focus groups [40]. This method provides a comprehensive insight into many stakeholders across the circular economy and its impact on supply chain sustainability. The process will step through familiarizing with the data, coding, developing and reviewing themes to check whether they accurately represent the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). 48 such as NVivo, that can help in the organization and coding of qualitative data for thematic analysis39--42 by systematically identifying themes and insights.

For the quantitative data, statistical analysis will be conducted on survey data collected from the study to explore relationships between circular economy practices and supply chain related variables. The first step will involve descriptive statistics, delivering baseline information regarding demographic characteristics and general trends in the responses. Recommendation to use inferential statistical methods such as regression analysis and correlation tests will be performed to determine the significance and strength of the relationships among variables. Statistical software, like SPSS or R, will be employed for communicating and testing the data in this manner (Field, 2021).

4.1 Data Credibility

Authenticity of the data acquired in this research study is of utmost importance to have valid and reliable results. Multiple strategies will be available to improve data credibility. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods will be employed through triangulation to gain a better insight into the research problem. The study enables wider perspectives and diminishes the impact of methods bias by pursuing study evidence through triangulation of strategies using holistic evidence from interviews and correlating evidence from survey (Flick, 2021).

In the qualitative phase, member checking will be included, permitting participants to review and offer feedback on the accuracy of the themes and interpretations derived from their interviews. Doing so allows for accurate representation of participants' perspectives and changes to be made according to their apprehensions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Pilot tests will also help identify and correct any survey instruments issues prior to wider dissemination of surveys. Question clarity and appropriateness will be improved through feedback from a small sample of respondents, enhancing the overall validity of the survey (Dillman *et al.*, 2014).

4.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

Statistical methods used in quantitative data analysis are descriptive analysis, regression modeling, and other relevant analyses were performed on data obtained from file reviews, surveys and secondary sources of circular economy practices in Tanzania.

Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive analysis offered a summary of the basic features of the dataset regarding stakeholders' perceptions of circular economy practices.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	90	60%
	Female	60	40%
Age	20-29 years	30	20%
	30-39 years	67	45%
	40-49 years	40	27%
	50 years and above	13	8%
Position	Manager	105	70%
	Non-manager	45	30%

Source: Research data 2025

Interpretations:

Table 1 describes the demographic characteristics of survey respondents. Of the participants, 60% were male and 40% were female, suggesting a relatively balanced gender ratio. The largest age cohort by response was the 30-39 range, making up 45 percent of respondents, which indicates younger professionals flexed their influence within the organization. Notably, 70% of respondents were in managerial roles, reflecting a focus on perspectives from leadership roles that are critical in making decisions about circular economy practices.

Table 2: Awareness and Implementation of Circular Economy Practices

Variable	Yes (n)	Percentage (%)	No (n)	Percentage (%)
Are you aware of circular economy practices?	120	80%	30	20%
Has your organization adopted circular practices?	98	65%	52	35%
Reuse and Recycling initiatives implemented?	109	73%	41	27%

Source: Research data 2025

Interpretations

Table 2 provides an overview of the level of awareness and implementation of circular economy practices among the respondents. With 80% indicating awareness, it can be expected that all stakeholders are closely aligned with circular economy practices. Additionally, 65% of respondents indicated their organizations had implemented circular practices, with reuse and recycling ranked as the most prevalent initiatives (73%). It suggests a welcome move towards cohesive word monitoring, whilst also highlighting the fact that 35% of organisations have failed to adopt these practices (which highlights areas of further engagement and education).

Regression Analysis

To assess the relationships between various factors influencing the adoption of circular economy practices, multiple regression analysis was conducted.

Table 3: Regression Analysis Results

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients (β)	Standardized Coefficients (β)	t-value	p-value
Awareness	0.35	0.24	4.50	<0.001
Perceived Benefits	0.40	0.28	5.75	<0.001
Regulations	0.25	0.18	3.00	0.003
Organizational Support	0.30	0.23	4.00	<0.001

Source: Research data 2025

Interpretations:

The output from the regression analysis is detailed in table 3, indicating the contributions of independent variables to the dependent variable circular economy implementation level. Each of the predictors was positively related to implementation levels, such that:

- Awareness: The unstandardized coefficient is 0.35 ($p < 0.001$), meaning that for each one-unit increase in awareness, the level of implementation increases by 0.35 units. This implies that rising awareness is indeed an important enabler of circular adoption.
- Perceived Benefits: Perceived benefits (Coef. 0.40, $p < 0.001$) had the greatest positive effect. This finding suggests that organizations that recognize the advantages of circular practices are more likely to implement them effectively.
- Regulations: This variable provided a coefficient of 0.25 ($p < 0.05$) indicating that supportive regulations also positively affect the adoption of circular practices but to a slightly lower degree than awareness and perceived benefits.
- Organizational Support: The significance of internal organization support has a coefficient of 0.30 ($p < 0.001$). This finding highlights the importance of leadership and resource

allocation in cultivating a culture of sustainability.

- The regression model together explained 68% of the variance of level of implementation of circular economy practices ($R^2 = 0.68$), which means the level of fit was strong, showing that these four variables significantly determine the differences between organizations in the level of implementation of circular economy practices.

Other Analyses were: Besides descriptive and regression analyses, the study employed:

Factor Analysis:

This method was used to identify hidden relations among different survey items related to barriers and facilitators of Circular economy practice. The four main factors identified from the analysis were: regulatory barriers, financial barriers, levels of awareness and education and market readiness. This indicates that targeting these areas might could be used to increase circular practices adoption.

Correlation Analysis:

Pearson correlation coefficients were determined to explore interrelationships among main variables. There were strong positive correlations between awareness and implementation ($r = 0.62$), and between perceived benefits and organizational support ($r = 0.57$). This correlation further suggests that with higher awareness and perceived benefits, the implementation of circular economy practices can be enhanced.

Demographic t–Tests:

T–tests were performed to assess differences in mean levels of implementation among demographic groups. Results suggested that managerial roles had been implemented more than non-managerial roles and significance level. Key take away as critical is the role that leaders can play in fostering internal adoption of the circular economy.

Conclusion

A qualitative analysis of the data helped to highlight factors motivating the uptake of circular economy practices in Tanzania. The descriptive analysis revealed an overview of the awareness and implementation of circular economy practices among stakeholders, and of these, a generally constructive viewpoint of circular economy initiatives. Results of the regression analysis revealed which factors were key drivers of successful adoption, most notably, the level of implementation was strongly driven by awareness, perceived benefits, regulatory support and organization support.

Other analyses, such as factor analysis, correlation, t-tests provided valuable insights into the barriers and facilitators around stakeholder engagement with circular economy practices. Awareness, perceived benefits and implemented circular economy activities are strongly correlated to each other, which indicates that improving education and communication might significantly increase circular economy practice.

Quantitative results highlight the need for building sustainability culture through greater awareness and education, supportive regulations, and organizational support. These insights can serve as a strategic foundation for Tanzania's policymakers and businesses as they navigate the challenges of integrating circular economy practices into their supply chains. This would mean to achieve a higher implementation of circular economy practices that enhance sustainability and economic resilience in the region, undertaking targeted initiatives aligned with the identified factors would serve as key game-changing interventions in reaching this goal.

4.3 Qualitative Data Analysis

Apart from the quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis was performed through thematic analysis to understand stakeholders perspective towards circular economy practices in Tanzania. This analytical approach involved identifying, analyzing and reporting themes in the qualitative data collected via interviews and open-ended survey data.

Thematic Analysis Framework

Thematic analysis involved: 1) familiarity with the data, 2) generation of initial codes, 3) search for themes, 4) review themes, and 5) definition and naming of themes. This approach helped to gain in-depth knowledge and understanding of the perspectives and experiences of stakeholders related to circular economy practices.

Key Themes Identified:

Familiarity and Knowledge of Circular Economy

Participants often cited awareness and education on circular economy concepts as fundamental. For widespread adoption, proper knowledge of the practices associated with the circular economy is needed, according to many stakeholders.

One Interviewee Stated:

"If no one knows what circular economy is, they won't see the value it brings to the table. More education, more outreach is going to make this work."

This area emphasizes the need for more information sources and training workshops implemented across several sectors.

The Role of Government and Regulation

Many of the responses identified the fundamental importance of government policy as a driver for circular economy action. A lot of people said

there was a need for supportive rules that incentivized sustainable practices.

One Participant Pointed Out:

"Policymakers have to put more conditions on the table to encourage companies to embrace circularity. Regulations can really change things."

This highlights the relationship between regulatory frameworks and the successful execution of circular economy initiatives.

Cultural Norms and Practices

Cultural beliefs related to sustainability, resource use 和 management were a common theme. Cultural values were highlighted as both potential catalysts and barriers to applying modern circular economy practices by many respondents.

A Participant Remarked:

"We're always respected resources in our culture. "But sometimes modern practices can clash with what people know."

A theme is the necessity of converging traditional knowledge with modern strategies for sustainability in unifying approaches.

A healthy third sector 2023-10-23 Community Involvement and Engagement.

Community involvement pervaded the data. To make the circular economy more relevant and accepted, stakeholders highlighted the need to involve local communities in its initiatives.

One Respondent Noted:

"Community buy-in: That's everything. "If the community is engaged from the outset, they will back the changes."

It also reinforces the importance of bottom-up efforts in mobilizing community and systems-level change to embed circularity.

Perceived Benefits and Barriers

Respondents mentioned different advantages like cost savings and better sustainability of circular economy implementation. But they also addressed major hurdles, such as cost and the need for technological leaps.

One Business Executive Wrote:

"Except we know that circular practices can save money in the long run, and the upfront investments are sometimes still too high for smaller companies."

Such a focus points to both the upside of stakeholder perceptions but the challenges that remain.

Conclusion on Thematic Analysis

Researcher provided the 1st structural questions for the interviews on information for Circular economy stringuing, thereby eliciting ontological meanings about industrialization dilemmas in Tanzania. The results contribute to better understanding of the diversity of stakeholder experiences and the multiple contextual factors that shape adoptions of circular practices.

In general, the analysis showed that there is a wide agreement on the potential advantages of circular economy practices, yet several obstacles still exist. These factors include stakeholder awareness and understanding, government involvement, cultural approaches, community participation, and financial aspects that need to be addressed for successful circular economy implementation.

The thematic analysis reveals the need for focused education campaigns, regulatory support, and increased community involvement. This allows policymakers and business leaders to create an enabling environment to unlock the potential of the circular economy in Tanzania.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The implications of these findings will be discussed based on qualitative thematic analysis supported by quantitative data analysis on circular economy adoption in Tanzania.

Based on the quantitative analysis a clear assessment emerged on the level of awareness and adoption among stakeholders. Some 80% of respondents said they were aware of circular economy practices, and 65% said their organization had started to implement some kind of circular practice. Regression analysis indicates that key enablers, including stakeholder awareness, perceived benefits, regulatory support, and organizational backing, significantly contribute to improving these practices' implementation with a considerable amount of variance ($R^2 = 0.68$). The idea is that gaining such quantitative evidence reflected the growing need to improve awareness about and secure enabling policy frameworks, as ways to enhance the uptake of sustainability in supply chains.

From another side, qualitative thematic analysis elucidated the contextual factors surrounding these quantitative findings. Stakeholders highlighted the need for education and awareness as a common denominator for successful adoption and corroborated the quantitative findings on perceived benefits as a barrier to adoption. Cultural attitudes and values were found to be essential in determining individuals' relationships to the circular economy, with respondents calling for synergistic solutions that combine traditional practices with contemporary sustainability initiatives. Also, community engagement was found to be a central

theme, demonstrating that local engagement is necessary to create buy-in and support for circular involvement.

Critically, both analyses converged on the theme of government regulation. Participants had an explicit need for improved regulation efforts that promote the uptake of circular economy practices, and this was evidenced in the quantitative results, where a strong correlation was found between perceived regulatory support and levels of implementation.

Overall, the synthesis of qualitative and quantitative findings highlights a multifaceted approach needed to increase the adoption of circular economy practices in Tanzania. The quantitative data shows the statistical significance of what influences implementation, while the qualitative stories reveal human experiences and cultural practices that underlie how these factors come into play.

Because after all, you are only as good as your last solution! This enhanced understanding of the circular economy enables a holistic view of its benefits beyond mere resource management, allowing for the development of supply chains that are not only sustainable but also contribute to economic growth, societal well-being, and environmental stewardship.

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