



WEBINAR REPORT

SUPPLY CHAIN DIGITALIZATION: CHALLENGES & SUCCESS FACTORS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The webinar on Digitalization in Supply Chain Management in Africa emphasized the transformative potential of digital technologies to enhance efficiency, foster innovation, and drive regional integration. The discussion covered the significance of digitalization, available tools, challenges unique to Africa, and opportunities for growth. Digitalization can revolutionize supply chain management in Africa by improving efficiency, supporting innovation, and promoting regional trade. Tools like AI and machine learning automate tasks and provide insights, cloud computing enhances data accessibility, and predictive analytics improves decision-making.

However, challenges such as limited infrastructure, high costs, and a digital skills gap must be addressed. Opportunities include leveraging mobile technology for scalable solutions, using real-time analytics for informed decisions, and fostering public-private partnerships to boost logistics and innovation. By tackling these barriers and seizing opportunities, Africa can achieve sustainable growth and efficient supply chain operations through digital transformation.

INTRODUCTION

This report provides an in-depth overview of the roundtable discussion on Digitalization in Supply Chain Management in the African Context. The event, held on 28th November 2024, highlighted the transformative potential of digitalization to enhance supply chain efficiency, foster innovation, and drive regional integration. The discussion also explored the role of advanced tools such as artificial intelligence (AI), predictive analytics, and mobile technology in revolutionizing supply chain processes. Alongside these opportunities, the webinar addressed critical challenges such as infrastructure gaps, financial constraints, and the shortage of skilled professionals. This report captures key insights shared by the speakers, synthesizes recurring themes, and concludes with actionable recommendations for advancing digital adoption in Africa's supply chains.

EVENTS OVERVIEW

The webinar featured three distinguished speakers: Zoe Ogbeifun, Head of Logistics & Distribution at Transnet Engineering; Tonny Britou, Group Supply Chain Enablement Manager at Transnet SOC Ltd; and Risuna Manganyi, Group Materials Manager at Minopex. Attended by 108 participants from 315 registrations, the event boasted an 34.3% attendance rate, reflecting strong interest in the topic. The audience demographics were diverse, comprising 60% industry professionals, 25% academics, and 15% students, indicating the widespread relevance of digitalisation across different stakeholder groups.

The speakers highlighted how advanced tools such as artificial intelligence (AI), predictive analytics, and mobile technology are reshaping supply chain processes. They also addressed critical barriers, including infrastructure gaps, financial limitations, and a digital skills deficit, which must be overcome to unlock the full potential of digital transformation in Africa.

KEY INSIGHTS FROM PRESENTATIONS

Zoe Ogbeifun: The Importance of Digitalization in Supply Chains

Zoe Ogbeifun emphasized that digitalization is no longer an option but a necessity for organizations striving to remain competitive in the rapidly evolving global market. She outlined three key benefits of digitalization:

1. **Organizational Agility:** Enhancing responsiveness to market changes and supply chain disruptions.
2. **Sustainability:** Encouraging efficient resource utilization and environmentally responsible practices.
3. **Regional Trade Integration:** Facilitating smoother cross-border trade and fostering inclusive economic growth.

Ogbeifun highlighted how digitalization reduces inefficiencies, minimizes errors, and drives innovation, urging organizations to adopt a proactive approach. “Digitalization,” she noted, “is not merely about survival—it is about thriving in an increasingly competitive environment.” Her presentation concluded with a call to action, encouraging businesses to assess their readiness for digital transformation and take decisive steps to build future-proof supply chains.

Risuna Manganyi: Digital Tools and Technologies: Practical Applications

Risuna Manganyi presented a practical perspective, focusing on specific digital tools that are transforming supply chain management in Africa. She highlighted three primary applications:

1. **Procurement Automation:** Streamlining processes such as demand forecasting, sourcing, and contract management to enhance efficiency and reduce manual intervention.
2. **Predictive Analytics:** Leveraging data to anticipate future trends, optimize inventory management, and support strategic decision-making.
3. **Cloud-Based Document Management:** Enhancing data accessibility and reducing errors through centralized, automated documentation systems.

Manganyi emphasized that digital tools are not intended to replace human expertise but to augment it. By automating repetitive tasks, these tools free professionals to focus on complex problem-solving and strategic planning. She also stressed the importance of adopting a systematic approach to digitalization, addressing immediate operational challenges while planning for long-term scalability.

Tonny Britou: Strategic Leadership and Broader Digitalization Approaches

Tonny Britou expanded on the role of leadership in driving digital transformation. He argued that successful digitalization requires more than technology—it demands visionary leaders who can align digital strategies with organizational goals. Britou highlighted key technologies such as AI, machine learning, and real-time analytics, emphasizing their potential to enhance decision-making and operational efficiency.

However, he cautioned against over-reliance on digital systems, noting the risks associated with cybersecurity vulnerabilities and system failures. Britou urged organizations to develop robust contingency plans and invest in employee training to build digital literacy and resilience. He concluded with a call for public-private partnerships to bridge resource gaps, foster innovation, and drive large-scale adoption of digital solutions in African supply chains.

SYNTHESIS OF KEY THEMES

Opportunities in Digitalization

The webinar highlighted significant opportunities for digital transformation in Africa. Mobile technology, widely accessible across the continent, was identified as a crucial enabler of digitalization. Sectors such as agriculture and mining stand to benefit immensely from technologies like remote-controlled systems, IoT, and predictive analytics. These tools can enhance safety, improve productivity, and facilitate better supply chain integration.

Challenges to Overcome

Despite the opportunities, several barriers hinder the widespread adoption of digital technologies:

1. **Infrastructure Gaps:** Limited access to reliable internet and technological infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, remains a significant challenge.
2. **Financial Constraints:** High costs associated with adopting and maintaining digital solutions pose a barrier for many organizations.
3. **Skills Deficit:** A lack of professionals with the expertise required to implement and manage digital tools hampers progress.
4. **Policy and Legislative Barriers:** Outdated regulations often slow the pace of digital transformation, particularly in the public sector.

Future Trends

Emerging technologies such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and IoT are expected to revolutionize supply chains by enhancing transparency, efficiency, and end-to-end visibility. Additionally, AI-driven analytics will play a critical role in risk management, compliance, and strategic planning.



WRECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WAY FORWARD

To unlock the full potential of digitalization in African supply chains, a strategic and integrated approach is required. The following recommendations outline actionable steps:

1. **Implement Integrated Digital Platforms:** Organizations should unify data from procurement, finance, and logistics through integrated platforms to streamline operations and enhance decision-making.
2. **Foster Policy Reforms:** Governments and industry stakeholders must prioritize policy reforms to remove legislative barriers and create a supportive environment for digital transformation.
3. **Invest in Workforce Training:** Continuous capacity-building programs are essential to equip employees with the skills needed to leverage digital tools effectively.
4. **Leverage Accessible Technologies:** Mobile technology and other cost-effective solutions should be utilized to bridge gaps in connectivity and access.
5. **Develop Scalable and Resilient Systems:** Digital transformation should be viewed as a long-term investment, with a focus on building systems capable of adapting to market changes and future disruptions.
6. **Strengthen Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaborative efforts between the public and private sectors are critical to fostering innovation and addressing resource gaps.

CONCLUSION

Digitalization has the power to revolutionize supply chain management in Africa, offering immense opportunities for efficiency, innovation, and regional integration. However, achieving this potential requires addressing significant challenges, including infrastructure gaps, financial constraints, and the digital skills deficit. By adopting integrated platforms, fostering policy reforms, and investing in training, organizations can build agile, resilient supply chains that are prepared for the future. Embracing digitalization as a strategic, long-term investment will enable African businesses to remain competitive in a rapidly evolving global economy.



ABOUT AISCR

AISCR is a premier non-profit and independent research institute with 501(c)(3) status, registered in the State of Texas, USA. Our mission is to advance supply chain management professionalisation and disseminate knowledge that fosters inclusive growth and sustainable economic development. Through rigorous research, publications, comprehensive education, and impactful outreach initiatives, we empower individuals, organizations, and communities to navigate and optimize supply chains effectively for Africa and beyond.