

From Siloed Tools to Autonomous Ecosystems: Strategic Paths for End-to-End Intelligent Supply Chain Transformation

Haoran Li*

School of Management, Curtin University, Perth, WA 6102, Australia

*Corresponding author: lhr1808886010@gmail.com

Abstract:

With the increase in geopolitical tensions and the division of the world economy, more enterprises have started to move away from low costs and are now building stable supply chains. The two main contents of this paper are digital transformation and supply chain finance. At the macro and industry levels, this study has confirmed that digitalisation positively strengthens the resilience of China-US supply chains to trade policy shocks; at the same time, it has offered an implementation path for digitalisation in the agricultural supply chain and explored how digitalisation affects corporate energy efficiency. Moreover, this study investigates the interaction between supply chain finance and digitalisation, confirms that both reduce financing constraints for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and examines the heterogeneous features and transmission paths of this effect. At the micro and ecosystem levels, this paper empirically studies the effect of digitalisation on corporate ESG performance and audit fees. Drawing on the world's leading research in digital twin and supply chain ecosystem theory, a case study of the Xiaomi Group and its financial data for Xiaomi Auto is used here. Finally, this paper will systematically introduce the evolutionary stages and implementation paths of supply chain digitalisation, from single-point tool applications to end-to-end intelligent networks, thereby providing a whole-picture theoretical foundation and practical references for enterprises carrying out tiered intelligent upgrades in volatile global environments.

Keywords: Supply Chain Digitization; Autonomous Ecosystems; Digital Twin; Supply Chain Finance (SCF); Resilience

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Problem Statement

With the deep penetration of the digital economy and next-generation information technology, coupled with increasing external uncertainties such as geopolitical volatility, fragmentation of global demand, and sudden supply disruptions, highly resilient responsiveness and the ability to cooperate globally are now required conditions for corporate competitiveness, rather than merely a way to reduce costs [1]. At present, all parts of the market are promoting supply chain digitalisation. However, the quality and effectiveness of these transformations are not uniform; only a small number of industry leaders have begun to explore end-to-end intelligent collaboration powered by digital twins, and most market participants are still limited to the first stage of single-point tool application or localised link integration.

Digital investments in isolated nodes do not promote a coordinated upgrade of the entire supply chain in practice. Independently deployed functional systems in different departments generate a large number of data silos and lead to delayed cross-functional information sharing and various levels of distortion in demand signals. Therefore, the old mode of linear cooperation is unable to respond quickly to high-frequency changes in the market and sudden risks [2]. At the same time, the existing research has only focused on the application results of single digital technologies in isolation. A systematic parsing of the evolutionary stages of supply chain digitalisation, the architectural logic of end-to-end intelligent networks, and their deployment paths is still unavailable. As a result, the company often faces an unclear transition path and disjointed working cycles, making the construction uneven and the allocation of funds ineffective in promoting the full benefits of digitalisation. Therefore, the systematic study of how to bridge the gap between fragmented, single-point applications and networked, end-to-end intelligent collaboration has become a problem that modern operations management theory and practice need to address urgently.

1.2 Literature Review and Theoretical Foundations

With the focus of supply chain digitalisation and the construction of intelligent networks, authoritative domestic and foreign journals have established rich research streams that primarily fall into the following four categories:

1.2.1 Digitisation as a catalyst for supply chain resilience

Digitalisation at the macro and strategic level will also help mitigate external risks. Zhao and Wang have found that in the face of bilateral trade policy disruptions, cor-

porate digitalisation can help stabilise and strengthen cooperation in China-US supply chains by providing a large-scale shock-absorption mechanism [1]. Ivanov and Dolgui have put forward and verified a real-time simulation platform based on digital twins to accurately model cascade reactions during sudden supply chain disruptions and mitigate the ripple effect through dynamic structural reconfiguration [3]. Wamba and Queiroz have proposed that, in terms of dynamic capabilities, the speed of reconfiguration and the maintenance of competitive advantage in a turbulent market environment depend on how quickly Industry 4.0 technologies and digital twins are implemented in global supply chains [4]. Digitalisation has also improved the spillover of micro-level efficiency; Yue has found that internal production and distribution processes have been optimised through digital transformation to promote corporate resource allocation and energy saving [2].

1.2.2 Evolutionary trajectory: from point solutions to network integration

Existing studies focus on the operating friction and evolution path of localised to global digitalisation. Gunasekaran and Subramanian have examined the defects of single-point tool application in manufacturing networks, pointed out that point-based digitisation without full-scale integration intensifies structural silos among departments, and thus, an end-to-end collaborative network can effectively break down information barriers [5]. Ruan and others have studied the connotations and features of agricultural supply chain digital transformation in China from a sector-specific perspective, put forward an all-encompassing deployment path covering upstream sourcing, cold chain logistics, and downstream retail, and clarified the theoretical basis for shifting from single-point technical verification to full-link cooperation [6]. Handfield and Linton extended the paradigm shift theory of the supply chain ecosystem, showing that there will be an unavoidable shift from the logic of the traditional linear chain to autonomous, self-running networked ecosystems [7].

1.2.3 Synergising supply chain finance and digital transformation

At present, one of the representative research directions is the connection between digitalisation and capital chains. Based on empirical data, Luo has verified a strong positive synergy between the digitalisation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the progress of supply chain finance; the two work together to enhance credit discovery and reduce financing difficulties for micro and small enterprises significantly [8]. Zhang and others further investigated the reasons for this and found that, in a low-trust market environment, supply chain finance functions as an institutional gap-filling device to promote the internal digital transformation of enterprises [9]. Choi and

Feng employed microeconomic modelling to demonstrate that the risk-allocation mechanism of the digital supply chain finance platform assists enterprises in optimising their own liquidity and improves the overall operating efficiency of the platform ecosystem via network-wide credit transmission [10]. Li and others have studied the above heterogeneous features and confirmed that fintech support has increased the speed of change for technology-intensive enterprises [4].

1.2.4 Governance, security and micro-economic implications

With the spread of digital networks, security governance has begun to draw the attention of scholars at all levels to micro-level audits and ESG effects. Li focused on data security risks during the digital transformation of focal enterprises' supply chain finance, built a governance system to balance data flow and privacy protection, and reduced systemic technological risks [5]. Based on the supply chain finance practices of the Xiaomi Group, Song et al. conducted an in-depth case study to illustrate the concept of and showed how supply chain finance acts as a catalyst to enable digital business ecosystems to achieve a fundamental leap [11]. The corresponding micro-financial results are supported by the financial analysis reports of Xiaomi Auto in the Choice database [10]. Yang and Wang have shown that the process of digital transformation has enhanced the ESG performance and sustainability of listed new-energy companies [12]. Wu and others have also provided new evidence from the auditing market to show that in recent years of information-to-data changes, gradual improvements in information disclosure have led to structural changes in audit fees [13]. Based on the above phenomena, Chen and Liu proposed that digital and intelligent tools are driving a new era in operations management by forming a cooperative system to build an ecosystem for supply chain management [14].

1.3 Identified Research Gaps

Extant literature mainly studies the efficiency gains achieved by single digital tools (e.g., RFID, WMS) in isolated links of the operation, or focuses on the relief provided by supply chain finance for SMEs in short-term borrowing. On the other hand, little research has systematically explored the development path of single-point digital applications into end-to-end intelligent networks. Specifically, the problems of breaking down cross data and legal barriers remain serious; at the same time, privacy-preserving computation is not yet applied to protect trade secrets, and a fair-value-redistribution mechanism for the digital-capability gap between focal enterprises and vulnerable SME partners has not been designed. At present, there is no all-encompassing theoretical system or strong quantitative support for the research in these areas.

1.4 Research Framework and Paper Structure

To fill the above deficiencies, this paper will examine the evolutionary path of "single-point application - integration - end-to-end intelligent network", explore stage-specific traits and operational bottlenecks, and propose implementation strategies. The rest of this paper is follows: Section 2 introduces the current stratified landscape of supply chain points out the digital divide among industry leaders and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Section 3 introduces the main problems and their causes for preventing the construction of end-to-end intelligent networks in terms of data, collaboration, decision-making and ecosystem. Section 4 offers stratified, multi-actor recommendations to address the above bottlenecks by strengthening the data foundation, restructuring networked cooperation, advancing algorithmic drivers and optimising ecosystem governance. Section 5 is the summary of the main conclusions, limitations of the study and future research directions.

2. Current Landscape: Stratification and the Digital Divide

2.1 Industry Stratification: Leaders vs the Majority

At present, the foundation has been laid for adoption and deep integration in supply chain. There is a large disparity in scale and industry among the firms of the entire industry at various stages of development [8]. The automotive industry, quick-moving consumer goods (FMCG) retail, and electronic manufacturing are all sectors with a strong digital foundation that have made full use of capital and technology to build integrated procurement-production-logistics-sales platforms. These leaders are expanding collaborative platforms with upstream and downstream partners, and some benchmark enterprises have deployed digital twins and global intelligent scheduling to achieve end-to-end supply chain visibility and automated decision-making in core scenarios [14].

2.2 Statistical Analysis of Digital Maturity

On the other hand, most of the market participants are small and medium-sized enterprises that have not been able to access single-point digital tool applications due to capital, talent or technical limitations. Digital Investment is only for local efficiency of isolated modules, such as a warehouse management system or transportation scheduling. The internal data integration of the departments is relatively weak, and cross-enterprise data cooperation is almost non-existent [5]. Supply chain has generally achieved single-point technical verification and spread awareness across the industry, but the proportion of full-

chain collaborative networks is relatively small. The main reasons for the failure to expand local breakthroughs in intelligent decision-making systems across the whole network are inconsistent data standards, digital capability gaps among ecosystem partners, and difficulties in scaling intelligent decision scenarios [3].

As shown by the statistics in Table 1, the levels of digital maturity in different tiers of the company are highly uneven. Focal industry leaders and general small and medium-sized enterprises exhibit a significant gap in cross data sharing and adoption rates of advanced AI decisions.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Supply Chain Digital Maturity Across Enterprise Tiers [8]

Corporate Tier	Internal System Integration Rate (%)	Cross-Enterprise Data Sharing Rate (%)	Advanced AI Decision Adoption Rate (%)	Average Operational Response Latency (Hours)
Tier 1: Industry Leaders	85.5%	62.0%	45.5%	< 12 hours
Tier 2: Mid-Market Enterprises	48.0%	24.5%	12.0%	24 to 48 hours
Tier 3: SMEs	18.5%	4.0%	1.5%	> 72 hours

As shown in Figure 1, the evolution of supply chain architecture has moved from isolated single-point applications to networked, end-to-end intelligent networks, and thus, the global value has been growing exponentially. At the same time, the degree of difficulty for ecosystem governance is also rising rapidly and becoming increasingly complex.

Fig.1 Value Realisation Across the Intelligence Evolution Trajectory [9]

3. Impediments to Transformation: A Multi-Dimensional Diagnosis

The development of supply chain has moved from a single-point application to an all-encompassing intelligent network, and this is no longer just a collection of technologies but a comprehensive system engineering effort that includes technological penetration, adjustment and ecosystem cooperation [7]. Currently, there is a mismatch among the three reasons; as a result, there are structural problems at the level of data, cooperation, decision-making and ecosystem.

3.1 Data Fragmentation: Internal Silos and External Barriers

3.1.1 Heterogeneity of internal systems and standards

At the beginning of the process, most companies have adopted a department-first approach [5]. Functional Areas such as procurement, production, logistics and sales each have independently deployed heterogeneous systems, including ERP, MES, WMS and TMS. The development languages, data standards and interface specifications of these systems are not the same, so the data cannot be . Based on empirical surveys, more than 60% of small and medium-sized manufacturing enterprises in China have cross-departmental core data interoperability rates of less than 30% [8]. Cross-functional data transmission still

needs to be done manually, and it is not in a single place for digital storage; therefore, the status of the global supply chain cannot be tracked accurately.

3.1.2 The absence of cross-entity data exchange protocols

At the level of inter-firm cooperation, there are problems of data ownership and protection of trade secrets, as well as strict data compliance requirements that prevent upstream and downstream enterprises from sharing data [15]. Barratt and Choi have empirically shown that when responding to data requests from large cross buyers, suppliers are often in a defensive position out of fear that the openness of the data will reduce their bargaining power or disclose private business information. If there no trusted data-sharing mechanism and a secure computing environment, then the operating data will be an isolated asset. It will cut off the path for end-to-end data flow and prevent the global system from being improved through data [11].

3.2 Collaboration Constraints: Linear Logic and Visibility Blind Spots

3.2.1 Restricted radius and the persistence of the bullwhip effect

At present, most enterprises' digital cooperation is limited to first-tier suppliers and key distributors; a shallow, linear-chain form has not yet been formed [7]. Tier-two and deeper upstream suppliers, as well as down-market retail nodes, are outside the scope of visibility. Under this archetype, demand signals face multi-level distortion during transmission across the links, and thus, the traditional bullwhip effect has not been alleviated at its root [10]. Focal firms cannot be informed about changes in peripheral end-markets in time and are unaware of hidden risks in raw material sources.

3.2.2 Risk propagation and response latency

Supply chain risk has a ripple effect; disruption risks often

start at non-core nodes on the periphery of the network and are then propagated and amplified throughout the chain. Sodhi and Tang have pointed out that in the context of contemporary multi-tier, multi supply chains, minor disturbances at the deep-tier supply nodes frequently serve as the origins of widespread global crises [9]. Based on the above research, supply chains that do not have full-end-to-end visibility take more than 72 hours to learn about disruptions at tier-two upstream suppliers, and their business recovery cycle is generally two or three times longer than that of firms with global visibility. The physical boundaries of linear collaboration have capped the scope of corporate risk responsiveness and thus limited the construction of a resilient supply chain [1].

3.3 Decision-Making Inertia: Experience-Based Paradigms vs Algorithmic Execution

3.3.1 The persistence of manual oversight in strategic decisions

Most of the digital investments by these companies are in tool substitution at the level of operational execution, such as automated sorting or electronic waybills [14]. The Strategy Design Layer is still driven by the manager's intuition and empirical rules of thumb, not data-driven algorithms. Zhan and Tan have found that many enterprises that claim to have achieved have built core control towers which are still limited by a "system output reports, managers make guesses" problem. Intelligent algorithms are used only at the point-based, isolated nodes, and a global decision-making structure that covers demand forecasting, production scheduling and inventory allocation is missing [5].

3.3.2 Forecasting inaccuracies and structural inventory imbalances

No end-to-end data support; corporate demand forecasting accuracy is low. Therefore, the structural inventory mismatch results in a stockout of popular products and a surplus of slow-moving goods [2]. Local efficiency improvements, such as relatively fast transportation, are not extensive enhancements to supply chain performance. Thus, the return on investment (ROI) of digital investment is lower than expected, and a problem of "more systems installed but higher accrued inventory" has arisen.

3.4 Ecosystem Asymmetries: Capability Gaps and Value Distribution Deficits

3.4.1 The SME digital capability divides

A large number of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in the supply chain network have weak digital foundations due to capital, talent and technical deficiencies. The high cost of system integration and hardware retrofitting is too large for them to bear. Li and Duong's

empirical study of emerging markets shows that the operating capacity of a supply chain network is limited by the weakest link in the peripheral nodes [13]. This division of capabilities leads to the construction of end-to-end intelligent networks in which a single focal firm drives unilaterally. Ecosystem partners are passive and thus fail to realise the network economies of scale [11].

3.4.2 Lack of equitable benefit-redistribution mechanisms

There are no clear rules on how to divide the cost reduction and efficiency improvement benefits arising from cross-enterprise data collaboration between the focal firm and its upstream/downstream partners at present [10]. If the dividends of data-sharing accrue solely to the focal firm, and the small suppliers are left bearing the brunt of compressed margins and digital investment costs, then there will be no incentive for these partners to cooperate in building an intelligent network.

4. Strategic Roadmap: Pathways to End-to-End Intelligence

Supply chain digital transformation is a gradual process of improving local efficiency and is moving towards full-chain intelligent collaboration [7]. In light of the above problems, the company should follow a tiered approach and promptly address urgent situations to achieve its goals of intelligent in an orderly manner.

4.1 Fortifying the Data Infrastructure:Trusted Circulation

4.2 Internal data governance and system interoperability

Create a Chief Data Officer (CDO) position at the company to coordinate internal data resources [5]. Benchmark against the industry standard and align data metrics and interface protocols of the different business systems to some extent. Link the main systems of ERP, MES, WMS and TMS to establish a common, whole-company data platform. Build a data middle office to address the "information chimney" problem and establish an infrastructure for the timely collection and dissemination of R&D, procurement, production, logistics and sales data around the world to achieve overall data visibility.

4.2.1 Secure cross-enterprise data sharing

The company will build a new-generation supply chain data-sharing platform using privacy-preserving computation and blockchain technology [11]. Federated learning can be used to ensure that data remains in a firm and is not disclosed, and joint modelling and analysis are carried out without sharing raw data assets; thus, commercial

confidentiality is protected [15]. At the same time, the trust system of blockchain can also determine who owns the data and how to return value; therefore, it will be both compliant and secure for data sharing among ecosystem partners.

4.3 Reconfiguring Collaborative Architectures: Beyond Linear Chains

4.3.1 Expanding the collaborative radius via multi-tier penetration

Firms should use industrial internet identification resolution architectures to extend the scope of cooperation beyond tier-one suppliers and distributors to include tier-two and tier-three suppliers. Digital twin technology can be used to build an all-encompassing digital twin of the upstream raw material capacity, in-transit inventory and downstream retail terminal velocity [3]. Penetration-based management will close information gaps and find new sources of risk deep in the multi-tier network to improve the overall resilience of the supply chain.

4.3.2 Implementing agile risk sensing and early-warning systems

Based on the end-to-end data stream, build a supply chain risk map and predictive alarm model for the company. Monitor changes in the outside environment, such as geopolitical risks, natural disasters and logistics problems, and promptly adjust the network of suppliers and partners [1]. A stratified response mode will be used to automatically trigger warning alerts and suggest alternative configurations, such as a backup supplier or an alternate route, to switch from reactive handling to proactive avoidance.

4.4 Augmenting Decision Intelligence: From Heuristics to Algorithms

4.4.1 Deploying AI-driven global scenarios

Enterprises can first apply AI algorithms to the existing operating environment, such as demand forecasting, dynamic pricing and automated replenishment [14]. Based on the company's previous sales data and changes in the market, build a machine learning model to predict the company's future sales more accurately. Based on the above analysis, the firm can use automated of production scheduling and dynamic inventory adjustment to solve the structural inventory problem and reduce holding costs across the entire chain [10].

4.4.2 Establishing closed-loop "data + algorithm" decision architectures

Create a data-driven corporate culture and build decision-making mechanisms that use data to guide and algorithms to assist [14]. Add a machine-learning-based anomaly detection and bottleneck identification system to the

supply chain control tower. Thus, the company can verify the algorithm's recommendation against actual human experience and refine the model repeatedly. Continuously, in a loop of perception, prediction, decision, execution and feedback, the accuracy and reliability of intelligent decision-making can be enhanced.

4.5 Ecosystem Governance: Shared Value and Mutual Empowerment

4.5.1 Enabling SME digital uplift through low-barrier access

Focal firms should take the lead in building an enablement fund or providing low-cost, lightweight SaaS applications to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) partner with them and connect to the digital network easily [13]. Technology transfer, talent cultivation and joint operations can be used to reduce the digital capability gap among focal enterprises and eliminate weak links in the chain to enhance the collaborative efficiency of the whole chain.

4.5.2 Designing transparent value-redistribution frameworks

Establish a value-redistribution model based on ecosystem contribution margins for the enterprise [10]. The first enterprise can offer the partners increased purchase share, technical support subsidies, or a profit-sharing rebate. They can use digital supply chain finance platforms to extend the credit of the focal enterprise's entire supply chain and lower borrowing costs for small-scale suppliers. Ensure that the ecosystem partner will gain an economic benefit from the full-process improvement of efficiency and create a stable incentive mechanism for joint construction [7].

5. Conclusion

5.1 Key Findings and Theoretical Contributions

This paper proposes that in the face of current instability and high uncertainty in the world economy, enterprises should move from single-point digital applications of supply chains to all-encompassing intelligent networks. Based on the above analysis, the current digital transformation efforts are hampered by internal information silos, a one-way collaboration model, an empirical dependence on manual decisions with digital execution, and a capability gap between leading enterprises and smaller enterprise partners. To address the above bottlenecks, this paper puts forward a strategic upgrade roadmap based on operations management theory: establish a trusted cross data exchange through privacy-preserving computation, implement multi-tier network penetration via the industrial Internet, build autonomous decision loops with intelligent

algorithmic control towers, and construct a shared-benefit ecosystem through contractual and financial innovations.

5.2 Practical and Socio-Economic Implications

The theoretical basis and governance path developed in this paper have certain practical, commercial and socio-economic values. The automotive and electronics industries have complex supply networks; thus, this paper proposes a model to turn fragmented application software deployments into a global ecosystem advantage. To address how to reduce the bullwhip and ripple effects in multi-tier supply chains, this paper supports micro-level reductions in inventory holding costs and audit friction. Resources will be allocated more reasonably at the macro level in line with the green and low-carbon transition, and the inherent resilience of regional industrial clusters to global trade barriers and disruptive shocks will be strengthened.

5.3 Limitations and Agenda for Future Research

The first problem of this paper is that it is mainly based on the collection and analysis of concept literature and qualitative case studies, lacking empirical data from large-scale, cross-country and cross-industry micro-datasets. In the future, large-scale survey tools will be used, and all parts of the company's process data will be collected to build a digital twin network. Subsequent econometric regressions or Structural Equation Models (SEM) can be used to quantify the causal effects and moderating mechanisms of end-to-end intelligent network integration on the long-term financial performance, ESG indicators, and ecosystem-wide risk mitigation capacity of enterprises.

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