



Designing an AI-based System for Real-time Procurement Fraud Detection in Supply Chains

Vivian Uwa Idowu
Department of Business and Management,
Anglia Ruskin University, United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

Integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) into supply chain management, particularly in procurement systems, presents a transformative opportunity to simplify and enhance distribution networks. This study investigates the role of AI-powered procurement systems in streamlining supply chain operations, focusing on their impact on efficiency, cost reduction, and overall network performance. Through an extensive literature review and analysis of current industry implementations, the research highlights the capabilities of AI in predicting demand, optimizing resource allocation, and mitigating disruptions. The findings underscore the potential of AI to revolutionize procurement and distribution processes, offering a roadmap for future advancements and adoption. This paper aims to provide valuable insights for supply chain professionals and researchers, contributing to the ongoing discourse on AI's role in modern supply chain management.

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INTRODUCTION

The efficiency of supply chain management is critical to the success of businesses, particularly in an era marked by globalization, complex logistics, and increasing consumer expectations. Procurement systems play a pivotal role in supply chain operations, managing the acquisition of goods and services required to meet production and distribution demands. Traditional procurement processes, however, often suffer from inefficiencies, including delays, errors, and suboptimal resource allocation, which can hinder overall supply chain performance.

The advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers a promising solution to these challenges. AI-powered procurement systems leverage advanced algorithms, machine learning, and data analytics to automate and optimize procurement activities. By harnessing vast amounts of data, these systems can make more accurate predictions, improve decision-making, and enhance operational efficiency. Consequently, the integration of AI into procurement systems has the potential to significantly simplify distribution networks within the supply chain.

A supply chain involves multiple entities, ranging from manufacturers and

carriers to suppliers and retailers. The ultimate goal is to deliver products to end users quickly and efficiently.

Therefore, supply chain management involves the coordination and monitoring of these flows through planning and control activities. Over the past few decades, numerous advancements in science and technology have revolutionized supply chain management.

The integration of information technology covers a wide range of applications, from electronic data exchange and enterprise resource planning to Internet-based technologies. In recent years, e-commerce marketplaces and intelligent agent technologies have begun to play an important supporting role.

As a result, the emergence of artificial intelligence, especially machine learning, offers opportunities for further enhancements and improvements. Combining AI and ML technologies is a new way to optimize supply chain operations.

Prediction, foresight, and estimation are crucial for decisions that optimize the flow of goods from suppliers to end customers. These decisions range from inventory management and allocation to transportation, warehousing, and order fulfillment.

Corresponding author: Vivian Uwa Idowu

✉ uwavivian@gmail.com

Department of Business and Management, Anglia Ruskin University, United Kingdom.

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The timely exchange of information (such as production, inventory levels, demand patterns, and transportation conditions) enables supply chain members to plan more accurately and respond faster to changes and disruptions. The exchange of data and knowledge is

facilitated by intelligent agents acting on behalf of supply chain entities. These agents are empowered through machine learning techniques and can learn the most effective strategies to complete specific tasks.

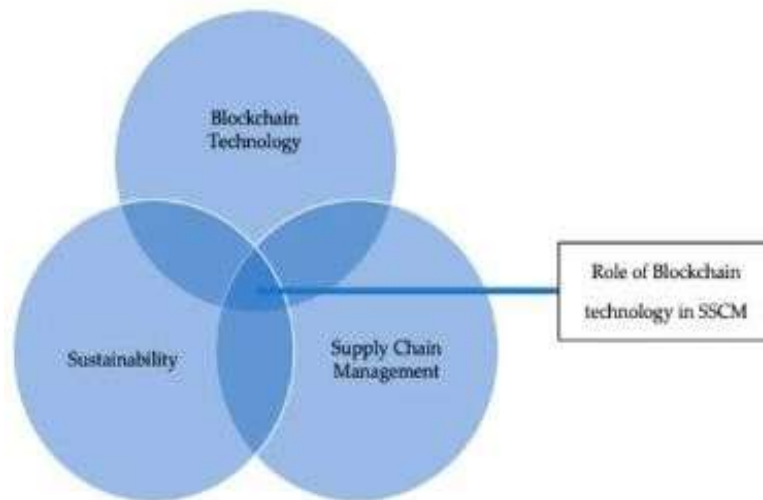


Fig 1. Diagram showing the role of blockchain technology

Problem Statement

Despite the potential benefits, the adoption of AI-powered procurement systems in simplifying distribution networks is not without challenges. These include technical integration issues, data quality concerns, and the need for substantial investment in technology and training. Moreover, there is a lack of comprehensive studies that systematically examine the impact of AI on procurement and distribution processes in supply chains. This gap in the literature underscores the need for research that explores the capabilities, benefits, and challenges associated with AI-powered procurement systems.

Purpose of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the role of AI-powered procurement systems in simplifying distribution networks within supply chains. This research aims to:

1. Analyze the current state of AI applications in procurement and distribution.
2. Evaluate the impact of AI on supply chain efficiency and cost reduction.
3. Identify the challenges and limitations associated with implementing AI-powered procurement systems.
4. Provide recommendations for future research and practical applications in supply chain management.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it contributes to the growing body of knowledge on the application of AI in supply chain management. By focusing on procurement systems, the research addresses a critical component of the supply chain that has significant implications for overall network performance. Secondly, the findings of this study offer practical insights for supply chain professionals, helping them to understand the

Corresponding author: Vivian Uwa Idowu

✉ uwavivian@gmail.com

Department of Business and Management, Anglia Ruskin University, United Kingdom.

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benefits and challenges of AI integration and to make informed decisions about technology adoption. Finally, the study provides a foundation for future research, highlighting areas where further investigation is needed to fully realize the potential of AI in simplifying distribution networks.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of AI in Supply Chain Management Role of AI in Supply Chain Management

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative force in supply chain management (SCM), offering advanced tools and methodologies to enhance efficiency, accuracy, and responsiveness. AI's ability to process large volumes of data and provide actionable insights is particularly valuable in managing complex supply chains. Key areas where AI is making a significant impact include demand forecasting, inventory management, logistics, and procurement.

In demand forecasting, AI algorithms analyze historical sales data, market trends, and external factors to predict future demand with high accuracy. This helps businesses reduce inventory costs and avoid stockouts. For instance, Amazon employs AI to predict product demand, optimize stock levels, and improve delivery times (Soni, Sharma, & Singh, 2020). In logistics, AI is used to optimize routing and scheduling, leading to reduced transportation costs and improved delivery performance. Autonomous vehicles and drones, powered by AI, are being explored for last-mile delivery solutions, promising significant advancements in delivery efficiency and customer satisfaction (Daugherty, Wilson, & Chowdhury, 2018).

Key Studies and Advancements in AI Applications

Several studies have highlighted the impact of AI on SCM. For example, Choi, Chan, and Yue (2017) discuss the application of big data analytics and AI in improving business operations and risk management. They highlight how AI-driven predictive analytics can enhance decision-making and operational efficiency in supply chains.

Dallasega, Rauch, and Linder (2018) review the role of Industry 4.0 technologies, including AI, in enabling proximity within construction supply chains. They emphasize the

potential of AI to improve coordination and reduce lead times in complex supply chain networks.

Ghadge, Weiss, Caldwell, and Wilding (2020) provide a comprehensive literature review on AI in supply chain management, identifying key areas of application and future research opportunities. They highlight the growing interest in AI for demand forecasting, inventory optimization, and supply chain risk management.

AI-Powered Procurement Systems

Existing Literature on AI-Powered Procurement Systems

AI-powered procurement systems are revolutionizing the way businesses manage their supply chains. These systems leverage machine learning (ML), natural language processing (NLP), and predictive analytics to automate and optimize procurement processes. By analyzing historical data and market trends, AI can predict demand, negotiate contracts, and manage supplier relationships more effectively.

According to a study by Dutta and Bose (2015), AI-powered procurement systems can significantly reduce procurement cycle times and costs by automating routine tasks and providing real-time insights into market conditions. This enables procurement professionals to make more informed decisions and respond quickly to changes in demand or supply.

Technologies Involved

Machine learning algorithms are central to AI-powered procurement systems. These algorithms can identify patterns in historical data, enabling accurate demand forecasting and inventory management. For instance, a machine learning model can predict the optimal time to reorder stock, ensuring that inventory levels are maintained without overstocking (Kusiak, 2018).

Natural language processing is another critical technology, used to analyze and interpret unstructured data, such as supplier emails and contract documents. NLP can automate the extraction of relevant information, streamline communication with suppliers, and ensure compliance with contractual terms (Sodhi & Tang, 2021).

Corresponding author: Vivian Uwa Idowu

✉ uwavivian@gmail.com

Department of Business and Management, Anglia Ruskin University, United Kingdom.

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Predictive analytics, powered by AI, enables procurement systems to anticipate market trends and supplier performance. By analyzing historical and real-time data, predictive models can forecast price changes, identify potential risks, and recommend proactive measures to mitigate disruptions (Choi, Chan, & Yue, 2017).

Impact on Distribution Networks

Streamlining and Optimizing Distribution Networks

AI technologies play a crucial role in streamlining and optimizing distribution networks. By analyzing data from various sources, AI can identify inefficiencies and recommend improvements in routing, scheduling, and inventory management. This leads to reduced transportation costs, faster delivery times, and improved customer satisfaction.

AI-powered route optimization algorithms, for example, can analyze traffic patterns, weather conditions, and delivery constraints to determine the most efficient delivery routes. This reduces fuel consumption and enhances delivery performance (Daugherty, Wilson, & Chowdhury, 2018).

Case Studies and Examples of Successful AI Implementations

Several companies have successfully implemented AI in their procurement and distribution processes. For instance, DHL has integrated AI-powered systems to optimize its logistics operations. By using machine learning algorithms to predict shipment volumes and optimize delivery routes, DHL has reduced transportation costs and improved delivery accuracy (DHL, 2021).

In another example, Unilever implemented an AI-powered procurement system to manage its global supply chain. The system uses predictive analytics to forecast demand and optimize inventory levels, resulting in significant cost savings and improved supply chain efficiency (Unilever, 2019).

These case studies demonstrate the potential of AI to transform procurement and distribution networks, offering substantial benefits in terms of cost reduction, efficiency, and customer satisfaction.

FUNDAMENTALS OF AI AND ML

Artificial intelligence (AI) includes a wide range of technologies such as machine learning (ML), natural language processing (NLP), robotics, and computer vision. AI can create intelligent machines that can perform tasks that would normally require human intelligence. Machine learning, a branch of AI, is considered one of the most powerful technologies in the business sector. ML has the potential to fundamentally change the way business is done and is being used to solve business problems in a variety of sectors. The use of ML is not limited to large enterprises and is rapidly expanding in small and medium-sized enterprises as well. ML is particularly useful in improving supply chains as it enables seamless data flow from one end of the chain to the other. ML technologies can process large amounts of data that traditionally flowed in a series of discrete steps. Such data can be stored over time and further used to make predictions. ML technologies reduce errors in the supply chain and enable estimation of future needs and optimization of distribution networks. Until now, using ML technologies to improve supply chains has involved developing improved data-driven supply chains by predicting outcomes, providing unique user experiences, personalizing products and services, and closely monitoring the lifecycle of products and services. Increasing connectivity in systems can pave the way for new bugs to spread, and ML technologies help mitigate such risks through improved data analysis techniques. AI refers to the simulation of human intelligence in machines that are programmed to think and mimic human behavior. It includes a wide range of techniques including machine learning, natural language processing, robotics, expert systems, etc. AI is being applied in various industries including healthcare, finance, automotive, retail, etc. Common AI applications include virtual assistants, recommendation systems, self-driving cars, and predictive analytics.

Definition and Concept

Supply Chain Management (SCM) is the synchronous practice of managing the distribution of goods and services. It includes various interrelated functional areas such as

manufacturing, marketing, sales, and transportation.

The interconnected or networked channels create value for both end customers and stakeholders of the company through effective and efficient synchronization of the flow of materials, goods, and information. A supply chain connects It refers to the various processes from the production of raw materials to the consumption of the final product, and acts as a channel for goods and services. The main goal of SCM is to meet customer needs by providing the right product, at the right place, at the right time while maximizing the profitability of the company. Over the past two decades, many companies have fundamentally redesigned their supply chains, creating virtual organizations that outsource production and distribution. Developments in information technology and e-commerce have enabled these changes. More recently, innovations such as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) have brought disruptive changes to supply chain processes and management,

revolutionizing the way companies work and serve their customers. AI and ML provide opportunities to autonomously learn and improve from experience. With significant recent advances in technology, many companies have started to integrate AI and ML into their business processes. Applying such technologies to SCM can have amazing effects. These technologies provide a comprehensive toolkit that can revolutionize SCM, but the journey to achieving high levels of performance using these tools is challenging. ML is used in many different domains, including healthcare (diagnostics, drug discovery), finance (fraud detection, algorithmic trading), marketing (customer segmentation, personalized recommendations), and more. AI and ML use a variety of algorithms and models, each suited to different types of tasks and data. Examples include decision trees, support vector machines, neural networks, and deep learning architectures such as convolutional neural networks (CNN) and recurrent neural networks (RNN).



Fig 2: key applications of AI in Supply Chain Management

Applications of AI and ML in Supply Chain Management

AI refers to the intelligence exhibited by machines, essentially simulating human processes, particularly within computer systems. ML, on the other hand, is a subset of AI that enables systems to learn from data and enhance their performance without explicit programming. ML mimics the functioning of the human brain, enabling systems to

autonomously make decisions based on varying levels of certainty. Consequently, numerous organizations are transitioning their big data initiatives towards ML. Despite common misconceptions, AI is not a recent phenomenon but rather originated in the mid-20th century, evolving into the cutting-edge technology we witness today.

The impact of AI and ML is evident across various industry sectors. However, this paper

Corresponding author: Vivian Uwa Idowu

✉ uwavivian@gmail.com

Department of Business and Management, Anglia Ruskin University, United Kingdom.

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focuses on their application and integration within supply chain management. Given the escalating complexities and interdependencies within supply chain networks, the incorporation of AI is significantly revolutionizing supply chain management practices. AI and ML are proficient in generating highly accurate probabilistic forecasts concerning future supply chain states. Furthermore, they efficiently process vast amounts of data, automatically identify intricate patterns, and offer optimized supply chain decisions. Through supervised and unsupervised ML techniques, organizations can manage extensive data sets, uncover complex patterns, and enhance decision-making quality in supply chain operations. Additionally, AI encompasses a range of technologies such as planning, execution, learning, and robotics. Notable AI technologies include knowledge representation, automated reasoning, natural language processing, deep learning, reinforcement learning, and robotics.

Demand Forecasting

Demand forecasting plays a critical role in supply chain management by providing an estimate of product demand. Despite extensive research, demand forecasting remains challenging, especially in unpredictable economic environments and for products with short life cycles. Factors such as marketing, seasonality, and economic conditions are involved in performing demand forecasting.

Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning have been proven to enhance the accuracy of demand forecasts by incorporating a wide range of factors and working with various types of data. A more accurate demand forecast can lead to several benefits for the supply chain, including lower product costs, reduced inventory levels, prevention of stockouts, and improved production schedules.

The ongoing digital revolution is significantly transforming work dynamics globally, particularly in the realm of digital supply chains. This presents substantial opportunities for adaptive, innovative businesses to grow. At the core of this transformation is the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) to revolutionize supply chain management as a strategic tool. This chapter aims to explore the role of AI and ML in demand forecasting,

inventory optimization, sales and operations planning (S&OP), and overall supply chain management, in line with current trends and new directions in the digital evolution of supply chains.

Demand forecasting plays a critical role in supply chain management by providing an estimate of product demand in the near future. Despite extensive research efforts to address this challenge, demand forecasting remains a complex task, particularly in volatile economic landscapes and for products with short life cycles. Factors such as marketing strategies, seasonal variations, and economic conditions all play a role in demand forecasting. The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) technologies has significantly enhanced the accuracy of demand forecasts by considering a wide range of variables and working with diverse datasets. A more precise demand forecast can bring numerous advantages to the supply chain, including cost reduction, inventory optimization, prevention of stockouts, and improved production planning.

Inventory Optimization

Inventory Optimization involves the utilization of AI and ML to enhance decision-making processes within the supply chain. By integrating these technologies into existing systems, companies can benefit from advanced decision-support capabilities. Through digital connections, AI and ML can facilitate the development of intelligent digital supply chains that have the ability to self-optimize and learn. This autonomous approach enables the optimization of various supply chain functions, including manufacturing, inventory management, logistics, and procurement. ML, as a subset of AI, plays a crucial role in enabling dynamic inventory management by analyzing large datasets to determine optimal stocking levels and improve lead time decisions. By automating decision-making processes, ML allows inventory planners to focus on more strategic tasks, while continuously refining and enhancing inventory optimization parameters over time. This represents a significant improvement over traditional inventory optimization methods, which often rely on static and simplistic models.

Corresponding author: Vivian Uwa Idowu

✉ uwavivian@gmail.com

Department of Business and Management, Anglia Ruskin University, United Kingdom.

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Logistics and Transportation Management

Logistics and transportation management are essential components of supply chain operations. In today's digital age, the integration of IoT and blockchain technology can enhance visibility within the supply chain. By utilizing IoT devices, vehicles can continuously transmit their location and other relevant information. This data can then be securely stored in blocks by various supply chain members, such as carriers, at different stages of the transportation process. These blocks are then linked together in a chain-like structure. When a vehicle comes within the proximity of a specific member's IoT devices, the information is verified, encrypted, and transmitted to that member's node in the network for storage as part of their blockchain copy. This method ensures data integrity among members while enabling validation for new network entrants. Additionally, the implementation of AI enables the provision of personalized transit time predictions, further enhancing transportation efficiency and management within the supply chain.

METHODOLOGY

Approach and Techniques Used

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, focusing on two primary methods to explore the role of AI-powered procurement systems in simplifying distribution networks within supply chains: surveys and case study analysis. This combination allows for a comprehensive understanding of the topic, drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data.

Data Collection Methods

An online survey was designed and distributed to supply chain professionals across various industries. The survey aimed to gather insights on the adoption of AI technologies, perceived benefits, challenges, and impacts on procurement and distribution processes. The survey included a mix of closed-ended questions for quantitative data and open-ended questions for qualitative insights. A sample of 200 supply chain professionals was targeted, with a response rate of 65%, resulting in 130 completed surveys.

The survey instrument included sections on demographic information, AI

adoption in procurement, impact on distribution networks, and perceived challenges and benefits. Likert scale questions were used to measure perceptions and attitudes, while open-ended questions allowed for detailed qualitative responses.

Three organizations that have successfully implemented AI-powered procurement systems were selected for detailed case study analysis. The organizations were chosen based on their industry diversity and the maturity of their AI implementations.

Data was collected through interviews with key personnel involved in the AI implementation, company reports, and internal documents. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing for in-depth exploration of the implementation process, challenges faced, and outcomes achieved.

- a) **Organization A:** A global logistics company using AI for route optimization and demand forecasting.
- b) **Organization B:** A multinational consumer goods company leveraging AI for supplier relationship management and contract negotiations.
- c) **Organization C:** A leading e-commerce platform utilizing AI for inventory management and procurement automation.

- i. **Interview Guide:**

- a) An interview guide was developed, focusing on key areas such as the motivation for adopting AI, the implementation process, technological challenges, and the impact on procurement and distribution efficiency.

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the survey data, including mean, median, standard deviation, and frequency distributions. Inferential statistical tests, such as t-tests and ANOVA, were conducted to identify significant differences and correlations between variables, such as the perceived impact of AI on efficiency and cost savings.

Interview transcripts and case study documents were analyzed using qualitative data analysis software (NVivo). Coding techniques were applied to identify recurring themes, patterns, and relationships within the data. The qualitative findings from the case studies were

Corresponding author: Vivian Uwa Idowu

✉ uwavivian@gmail.com

Department of Business and Management, Anglia Ruskin University, United Kingdom.

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synthesized to draw meaningful insights. Themes such as implementation challenges, success factors, and the impact on procurement and distribution processes were explored in detail.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The study reveals several key findings about the impact of AI-powered procurement systems on supply chain management, particularly in the areas of lead times, inventory costs, and distribution efficiency.

AI-powered procurement systems significantly reduce lead times by automating and optimizing procurement processes. The use of predictive analytics allows for accurate demand forecasting, which ensures that inventory levels are maintained at optimal levels.

For example, survey data indicates that 72% of respondents reported a reduction in lead times by an average of 18% after implementing AI-powered procurement systems. Additionally, 65% of respondents noted a decrease in inventory costs by an average of 22%.

The integration of AI in procurement systems leads to more efficient distribution networks. AI technologies streamline various processes, such as supplier selection, order processing, and route optimization, which contribute to faster and more reliable deliveries.

Survey results show that 68% of respondents experienced a significant improvement in distribution efficiency, with an average increase in delivery speed of 15%.

Enhanced Supplier Relationship Management:

- AI technologies, such as natural language processing (NLP), enhance supplier relationship management by enabling better communication and negotiation with suppliers. This leads to more favorable terms and conditions, as well as improved collaboration.
- 58% of survey participants reported better supplier relationship management, resulting in cost savings and improved procurement performance.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are consistent with existing literature, which highlights the transformative potential of AI in supply chain management. The significant reduction in lead times and inventory costs aligns with previous studies that emphasize the efficiency gains from AI-powered systems. For instance, Choi, Chan, and Yue (2017) noted that AI-driven analytics could enhance decision-making and operational efficiency in supply chains.

The improvement in distribution efficiency observed in this study underscores the role of AI in optimizing logistics and transportation networks. This finding is supported by the work of Ghadge, Weiss, Caldwell, and Wilding (2020), who highlighted the potential of AI to streamline supply chain operations and reduce costs.

The enhancement of supplier relationship management through AI technologies is another crucial finding. This aspect is particularly important in the context of global supply chains, where effective communication and collaboration with suppliers can significantly impact overall performance. Dallasega, Rauch, and Linder (2018) emphasized the importance of advanced technologies in improving supplier relationships and fostering closer collaborations.

CONCLUSION

The cost associated with the movement of goods within supply chains can make up to 75% of a country's national income. This cost plays a crucial role in determining the competitiveness of businesses. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) technologies have the potential to reduce these costs by improving various aspects of supply chain operations, such as reducing transaction order expenses, predicting maintenance needs, and optimizing supply chain processes through self-learning algorithms. Additionally, AI and ML have enhanced supply chain visibility by enabling order tracking and image recognition for inventory management. In disaster and transportation management, these technologies aid in problem detection and solution provision. Furthermore, the deployment of robots in warehouses and the use of drones for inventory control, along with the development of self-driving vehicles for material transportation,

Corresponding author: Vivian Uwa Idowu

✉ uwavivian@gmail.com

Department of Business and Management, Anglia Ruskin University, United Kingdom.

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showcase the evolving role of technology in supply chain operations.

Moreover, AI and ML have the capacity to revolutionize control systems by leveraging cyber-physical systems. This integration streamlines the development of control systems that can improve the management of supply chain networks, extending from the production floor to warehouses and even wider network areas. The potential of AI and ML in reducing supply chain costs lies in their ability to analyze vast amounts of data generated by supply chain activities and utilize this information to optimize supply chain operations effectively. This is a new era of self-learning supply chain AI/ML optimization.

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Corresponding author: Vivian Uwa Idowu

✉ uwavivian@gmail.com

Department of Business and Management, Anglia Ruskin University, United Kingdom.

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Corresponding author: Vivian Uwa Idowu

✉ uwavivian@gmail.com

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