

## 1. Towards a discourse on strategic sourcing: research perspectives shaping supply chain management practices in Africa

### 1.1 Introduction

It is not a secret anymore that African markets are increasingly catching the eye of many global actors despite the well-documented political and regulatory risks and infrastructural bottlenecks. [Achour et al. \(2015\)](#) cite several factors, including the changing demographics, sustained gross domestic product (GDP) growth in multiple economies and increased purchasing power among the populations. [Dupoux et al. \(2019\)](#) cite the economic liberalization, rapid industrialization and high technology readiness and adoption in select African countries as some of the drivers of intra-African integration. In fact, several manufacturing firms, mainly from China, India and the UK, have established production facilities for footwear, leather, textiles, ceramic tiles, vehicle assembly and manufacturing in East, West and Southern Africa (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2015).

In addition, sourcing from Africa for such strategic reasons as low-cost labor, access to cheap materials, free-trade agreements, etc., has presented an opportunity for African firms to participate in global value chains driving local economic development ([Gereffi and Lee, 2012](#)).

Yet despite the glowing promise, the literature on the development, nature and structure of supply chains in Africa in the context of global integration is largely dominated by business and industry reports. We found only a handful of empirical literature on this subject, specifically three studies that address this theme directly. First is a literature review study by [El Baz et al. \(2019\)](#), which sought to establish the theoretical and scholarly positions taken by researchers who study topics within logistics and supply chain management (SCM) in Africa. They conclude that:

- the literature presents unique SCM dimensions (such as culture) that have not been well studied; and
- the absence of a theoretical basis for most studies results in “theory dressing and matching.”

The second study is another literature review by [Kauppi et al. \(2018\)](#), which sought to establish the level of current knowledge about sourcing and supply management on the African continent. They conclude that the distinctive characteristics of Africa provide a unique research context, just like Russia and China, and as such the study of concepts, such as purchasing, sustainability, global supply chain integration, etc., should elicit dimensions unique to Africa, such as culture and ethics. The third one is an empirical study by [You et al. \(2018\)](#), which compares Chinese and Finish firms’ interactions with African firms in a global supply chain context. They question the relevance and application of Anglo-Saxon contextually grounded theoretical frameworks to such contexts and therefore conclude that:

- global sourcing practices must be adaptable to the local sourcing environments in Africa; and
- both Chinese firms and Finish firms have different entry goals – while Chinese firms are politically driven, the Finish firms were social-impact driven in the interactions with their Africa-based suppliers.



Therefore, to further this debate and, in part, add to the body of knowledge on sourcing in Africa, and integrating indigenous African firms into the global supply chains, we proposed this special issue (SI) to the journal of global operations and strategic outsourcing. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first SI on this important subject.

The aim of the SI was to provide new knowledge and a better understanding of:

- how foreign firms experience the sourcing environment in Africa;
- the idiosyncrasies and challenges that inhibit African firms' participation in global supply chains;
- what motivates foreign firms to invest in developing supply sources on the African continent; and
- how African suppliers strategically position themselves to compete in global supply chains.

This discourse on the participation of African firms in global supply chains is very important for both Africa's long-term development and the global economy. It supports the aspirations of Africa Agenda 2063 as well as the sustainable development goals. [Gereffi and Lee \(2012\)](#) demonstrate that global supply chains have powerful players who shape the distribution of profit and risk in industries. This power can be used to create new mass markets and drive industry-wide technology and skills growth. [Achour et al. \(2015\)](#) show that foreign expansion, the basis for the formation of international dispersed production networks, provides significant opportunities for middle-market firms to rapidly expand, diversify their business and test out their new business models and innovations.

So, this SI and the current papers contribute to the ongoing discourses on sourcing and SCM in Africa. It focuses on the peculiarities in the behavior and supply chain practices of the indigenous African firm. The goal is to develop a better understanding of the behavior and practices of African firms as they engage in global supply chains and even more specifically how African suppliers at the periphery of global supply chains can strategically integrate and compete effectively in global value chains.

This paper is organized as follows. First, we present a preview of the four research articles that constitute the main contributions of the SI. Thereafter, we contrast the methods and arguments made in these four articles with each other and with other literature that we found on this subject (mainly [El Baz et al., 2019](#); [Kauppi et al., 2018](#); [You et al., 2018](#)). Then, we draw lessons and propose future research directions from the findings of these papers, and at the end of the paper, the conclusion is presented.

## 2. Preview of the four special issue research articles

The SI received several promising papers; the four published articles are summarized below.

The paper by [Mayounga \(2021\)](#), entitled "Strategic sourcing in Africa: The case for the labor market," explores labor acquisition trends and opportunities for integrating African countries into the global supply chain. The author argues that Africa's geographic distance to Asia, Europe and the Americas provides the continent an opportunity to become the next vital hub for investments. Foreign direct investment (FDI) in China has increased substantially over the past years, mostly targeted at the society's cheapest social structure, which has transformed China into a global factory. Africa, on the other hand, has attracted less FDI over the same period, during which investment in the Chinese economy has seen substantial growth. However, Africa's economic growth potential has never been in doubt, as the continent has seen expansion in infrastructure and political stability in parts of the continent that were previously unstable has spurred economic activities and growth. The

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influx of FDI in Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana, Cote D'Ivoire, Uganda and other countries on the continent in recent years testifies to Africa's potential as the next hub for investment. The author argues that, as Africa works to close its infrastructure gap, its labor market's value becomes significant to the outside world.

The author uses qualitative research methods, specifically, content analysis, where data from 55 nations and territories in Africa are analyzed. The author suggests that Africa's labor market enhances the continent's integration into the global supply chain despite its challenges in other areas. Several factors make Africa a more competitive destination for FDI and labor sourcing. The author develops a framework that organizes the key strategic sourcing factors for labor supply into three pillars – soft, mixed and hard. The factors that make Africa an attractive option for labor supply and integration into the global supply market are identified as regulatory policies, ease of doing business and the political/legal environment. The author identifies investments in infrastructure, political stability and security and technological development as the “hard pillar.” Factors such as literacy, joblessness (which is a resource/opportunity that can be harnessed) and language, among other factors, constitute the “mixed pillar.” These factors impact on each other, whereas the soft pillar factors and the hard pillar factors impact on the mixed pillar factors. The global supply chain sourcing decision for labor is therefore influenced by the various key factors identified and discussed in the paper.

The paper by [Eyaa and Ryan \(2021\)](#), entitled “Determinants of opportunism in Uganda's manufacturing sector: A comparison of two sectors,” investigates the antecedents of opportunism regarding environmental uncertainty, power asymmetry and information sharing. The authors use transaction cost and relational contracting theory as the theoretical foundation of the study.

The literature suggests that under conditions of uncertainty, market players may engage in opportunistic tendencies at the expense of their business partners to realize gains in the immediate term instead of waiting for future gains that cannot be guaranteed. In addition, a power imbalance increases the possibility of “self-interest” and the risk of opportunism because the few players in the market become powerful and can exploit business partners or customers to their own advantage. The exploitation of the other partners becomes more critical amid the lack of information, hence the need for crafting appropriate governance structures to control and minimize opportunism according to the prescription of transaction cost economics. Based on the review of the literature, the authors developed a model with testable hypotheses, which were estimated.

The study's context is the agricultural and non-agricultural manufacturing sectors in Uganda. The authors used a survey research design for the study and sought to find answers to the research questions regarding the impact of environmental uncertainty, power asymmetry and information sharing on opportunism in the agricultural and non-agricultural manufacturing sectors of Uganda. The authors investigate how the contextual factors within the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors influence opportunistic behavior. Lastly, the authors' objective was to examine the implications of the study's findings for management and government policy formulation and implementation. The authors estimated the conceptual model using multiple regressions and found support for the impact of environmental uncertainty in increasing opportunism in the agricultural sector, while the impact of power asymmetry in increasing opportunism was supported in the non-agricultural sector. The paper makes insightful contributions to the opportunism literature and highlights company strategies and policies that can be implemented to reduce the impact of environmental uncertainty, the abuse of power and to improve information sharing.

The paper by [Sharma and Naude \(2021\)](#), entitled “Interdependence analysis of supplier relationship challenges in the South African automotive industry,” investigates the relational challenges faced by manufacturers of automobile components (ACMs) and their suppliers in the South African automotive industry. The authors’ primary concern is the dependence (similarities) of the challenges faced by ACMs on those faced by their suppliers, which the authors argue affects the global competitiveness of that sector. Sharma and Naude argue that the automotive sector, which is one of the biggest contributors to the South African economy, struggles against foreign competition, which has well-organized supply networks and is more cost efficient.

The authors analyze the relationship between the challenges faced by ACMs and their suppliers using the multi-criterion decision-making technique known as interpretive structural modeling (ISM) and provide a roadmap for how the identified challenges can be addressed. First, they identify eight factors from literature, which they subject to five experts under the Delphi technique method and conduct ISMs pair-wise comparison and dependence assessments. The factors include difficult relationships with customers, difficulty in building trust between the organization and their customers, absence of advance communication about market demand, excessive slow-moving inventory, pressure by OEMs to reduce prices, little/no assistance from customers in complying with their requirements, rapid changes in demand (in terms of quantity) patterns and high dependence on the business of one specific customer.

The conclusions from the dependency power and driving power matrix suggest that being too dependent on one customer is the most significant challenge ACMs and their suppliers face, while better communication, rapid change in demand and dependence on a single customer are independent problems but have a lesser feedback loop and do not create instability by ripple effects in the supply chain. The authors suggest that ACMs and their suppliers require diversification of the respective customer portfolios to reduce the risks and dependencies.

The paper by [Kaupa and Naude \(2021\)](#), entitled “Critical success factors in the SCM of essential medicines in the public healthcare system in Malawi,” is different: it looks at the inefficiencies in public sector supply chains. The authors investigated the reasons behind the regular stock-outs of essential medicines at both the Central Medical Stores Trust and in public health facilities in Malawi. They use exploratory methods to identify the critical success factors in the SCM of essential medicines and how significant they are to the public pharmaceutical supplies system in Malawi. Their findings suggest the following:

- with respect to the selection of medicines, the availability of back-end information on disease patterns, their associated treatments, their prevalence and cost are starting points for public health-care systems in Malawi;
- for supply chain actors who conduct demand forecasting and planning, effective collaboration and coordination, skilled and experienced people and availability of financial resources to purchase those medicines are significant factors at that stage;
- the supply chain actors involved in the procurement of medicines require most adequate financial resources, system efficiency, robust supplier capacity, skilled and experienced procurement professionals and overall good governance; and
- supplier chain actors involved in warehousing and distribution, an efficient distribution system, enough storage space, robust IT and warehouse systems, as well as good skills and top management support seem to be most important factor in this chain.

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While different parts of the supply chain require different critical factors, it appears that collaboration and coordination, skills and experience and governance factors are the most prevalent across the entire pharmaceutical supply chain in Malawi; hence, they are common cause of vulnerability in these supply chains.

### 3. Methods and basis for theoretical arguments

The summary of the four articles shows that strategic sourcing and SCM practices in Africa draw from the broader (global) SCM discourses. We found the same concepts and terminologies existing in the current SCM body of knowledge, including, among others, power, trust, uncertainty, collaboration and integration in supply chains, sourcing, procurement, buyer–supplier relationships, etc. This is conceptual universalism, also mentioned by You *et al.* (2018), which was expected. However, we wonder about the epistemological and ontological assumptions that inform the research which focuses on Africa as the context.

This question requires one to assess the ontological and epistemological pluralism of research about strategic sourcing and SCM practices in Africa. If one argues that African problems are unique to African contexts (Dupoux *et al.*, 2019), then we can also argue that methodological as well as theoretical eclecticism in research can be an important cog in finding unique ways of solving African problems in non-traditional ways. This way, research in which Africa is the context that is largely underrepresented in the management sciences literature can contribute in new, unique ways than those previously documented. You *et al.* (2018) argue that theories and arguments from the West tend to not work in Africa. Kauppi *et al.* (2018) are surprised that the concept of *ubuntu*, which like *guanxi* is to China and *blat* is to Russia, addresses the cultural idiosyncrasies in business relationships in Africa, has not featured a lot in the literature involving global sourcing or SCM practices in Africa. In what follows, we assess the concept.

Looking at the two literature reviews (El Baz *et al.*, 2019; Kauppi *et al.*, 2018) as a benchmark, we note the following aspects. The findings of El Baz *et al.* (2019) show that logistics and SCM research where Africa or an African country is the context are dominated by surveys (41%), case study research (30%) and generally various mixed methodology approaches. In addition, most studies reviewed were grounded in theories from strategic management (28%), marketing (20%), economics (17%) and organizational behavior (15%). These findings mirror those of Kauppi *et al.* (2018), who show that surveys and case studies were dominant research methods in studies of sourcing in Africa and that most of the 57 articles they reviewed had no theory except for a few with varied economic and organizational behavior theories. From the ontological and epistemological perspectives, the two literature reviews (El Baz *et al.*, 2019; Kauppi *et al.*, 2018) show different viewpoints. Let us define these two problematic terms first. Ontology concerns the understanding of the nature of reality, while epistemology is about understanding and explaining how we know what we know (Moon and Blackman, 2017). Later in Table 1, we shall demonstrate and explain these two concepts.

The study of El Baz *et al.* (2019) reports that surveys are the dominant research method and describes theory matching as well as theory dressing as the main characteristics of the theory used in this research. These can be associated with ontological realism where reality is often seen through the cause-effect lens, compared to idealism where reality emerges from social cues hence socially constructed. There is evidence and examples of idealism, but they are not as significant as realism. The epistemological stance portrayed by the authors could be described as objectivist, which means that meaningful reality is independent of what is being studied.

**Table 1.**  
Theory, methods,  
ontological and  
epistemological  
assumptions from  
the SI contributions

	Mayounga (2021)	Eyaa and Ryan (2021)	Sharma and Naude (2021)	Kaupa and Naude (2021)
Research questions/objectives	The objective of this study is to explore the labor acquisition trends that attract most companies and to describe critical global supply chain sourcing decisions for the labor supply in Africa.	What is the impact of environmental uncertainty, power asymmetry and information sharing on opportunism engagement in the agricultural and non-agricultural manufacturing sectors in a developing economy? What contextual factors within the agricultural and non-agricultural sector manufacturing sector and the national context influence the impact of the identified antecedents on opportunism in a developing economy?	What challenges exist between South African automotive manufacturers and their suppliers, and how are these challenges related?	What are the critical success factors in the supply chain management of essential medicines, and how significant are they to the public pharmaceutical supplies system in Malawi?
Theory	No explicit theory	Transaction cost economics theory and relational contracting theory	No explicit theory	No explicit theory
Method(s)	Qualitative content analysis	Survey	Interpretive structural modeling	Exploratory and descriptive methods
Analysis level within the supply chain	Supply chain	Buyer–supplier dyad	Buyer–supplier dyad	Supply chain
Ontological assumptions	Embedded in relativism	Embedded in realism	Embedded in realism	Embedded in relativism
Epistemological assumptions	A subjectivist view of the research problem	An objectivist view of the research problem	An objectivist view of the research problem	An objectivist view of the research problem

The study of [Kauppi et al. \(2018\)](#) reports that surveys are the dominant method, which is strongly associated with ontological realism and epistemological objectivism, but the authors question the lack of theoretical grounding for most of the studies they reviewed, which perhaps points to structural realism. The epistemological stance could also be described as subjectivism ([Moon and Blackman, 2017](#)).

In sum, there appears to be a strong sense of conceptual universality, which many could argue is a positive sign towards an alignment of debates on strategic sourcing and SCM practices in Africa with the most current debates going on within the discipline in general. However, the need for theoretical eclecticism and methodological pluralism should be a signal for the literature to develop context-specific research to solve context-specific challenges ([El Baz et al., 2019](#)). As shown in [Table 1](#), the SI exemplifies this deficiency, for which we shall argue for the value of multiple ways of knowing.

Theoretical eclecticism is a solution to the challenge of very few recycled theories, which also applies to the monotony in the methods used. This challenge demonstrates the reality that there exists one common way of knowing – i.e. epistemological universality. But this perception is dangerous ([Miller et al., 2008](#)). It oversimplifies complex research problems and limits the potential of local knowledge that could contribute to novel and even better understanding of research emerging from Africa, hence the significance of epistemological pluralism. Besides, it is important to remember the famous saying that “Africa is not a country.” It is important to remember that there exists a close link between the way we know, and the methods we use, i.e. that helps us define the methods we use and choose the appropriate methods.

#### 4. Lessons learned

##### *4.1 Contextual characteristics of the African market present unique supply chain challenges*

The four papers reviewed above cite several challenges that affect the participation of African firms in sourcing and global supply chains. [Mayounga \(2021\)](#) cites cheap labor but a relatively less-skilled resource mass compared to countries like China and India as one reason. [Eyaa and Ryan \(2021\)](#) cite environmental uncertainty that is known to increase opportunism among actors in the same supply chain as another reason. [Sharma and Naude \(2021\)](#) also cite several challenges that can be summarized as the low integration between suppliers and their customers, characterized by low trust and poor communication. Other previous studies ([Dupoux et al., 2019](#); [Kauppi et al., 2018](#); [Oke et al., 2009](#); [Sennoga et al., 2019](#); [You et al., 2019](#)) have cited the biggest challenges as the undeveloped logistical systems, political risks, low credibility of the supply, poor supplier relationships, poor infrastructure, supplier apathy, social concerns, bureaucracy and corruption challenges. However, [Achour et al. \(2015\)](#) show that these obstacles are slowly disappearing, partly owing to the increased trade and customs integration and high technology adoption. This explains the sustained high GDP growth, diversified and exponential export growth and the demographic changes that are driving purchasing power shifts.

As a result, there is reduced fragmentation and relatively better integration among African firms. [Dupoux et al. \(2019\)](#) cite an example where “it costs less to ship a car from Paris to Lagos than from Accra to Lagos” to emphasize the logistical complexity and infrastructural challenges that exist in these kinds of supply chains. But African governments and African firms are doing something about it.

Intra-African green field investments increased twofold in 2016 compared to 2007; there were 418 intraregional M&A's in 2016 compared to 238 in 2007, and intra-African exports accounted for US\$65bn in 2016 compared to US\$41bn in 2007 (Dupoux *et al.*, 2019). In addition, their study shows that at least 85 indigenous large African firms in the financial, consumer and retail, industrial goods, technology and logistics sectors have a footprint in at least ten countries: nine African corporations, including the Dangote Group of Nigeria, Groupe Addoha of Morocco, Equity Bank of Kenya, Smile Telecoms of Mauritius, MTN, Standard Bank, Atterbury of South Africa and Ecobank of Togo, have made significant green field investments in manufacturing, banking and real estate to compete and interact in the same markets with the global MNCs, such as Skypower (Canada), Huawei (China), DHL (Germany), Orange (France), Millicom (Luxembourg), Bharti Airtel (India), Indorama (Singapore), Nestle (Switzerland), General Electric (USA), among others.

In sum, the cliché that Africa is not a country but a series of 54 countries that make up the 1.1 billion market is true. This alone has its own supply chain challenges, but the ongoing intra-African integration is starting to become an important driver for the integration of African suppliers into global value chains. There are lessons that African firms can learn from regional interactions that would enable them to become more efficient global supply chain actors. Intimate knowledge of the local markets can become the basis for new product and business innovations, on which global value chains place a premium.

#### *4.2 Unique supply chain problems require unique and robust methodologies*

Generally, SCM phenomena have been studied from different philosophical viewpoints, which reveals the embedded assumptions, reasons behind the choice of methods and decisions on data analyses and interpretations that researchers make concerning their research. What this SI shows us, even if not comprehensively, is the strong orientation towards objectivism, where “truth” is independent of the researcher. It also shows us the absence of theory and many cases of theory matching, which is a strong indicator of structural realism. The high level of objectivism is what we could not explain. But this is the picture painted by this SI and what we learned from earlier studies, including those of El Baz *et al.* (2019) and Kauppi *et al.* (2018).

Given the nature of the emerging research themes, sourcing in Africa and SCM research where Africa is the context must evolve towards more theory testing and theory development to address the idiosyncratic problems that African firms face, meaning a research shift towards constructivism where meanings emerge from the continuous engagement with world reality and contextual understanding of the problem supersedes external validation of the research results as seen in Figure 1. This assertion does not downplay the importance of objectivism and realism that we see in this SI, which assume researcher independence and the existence of one reality, respectively, but it illustrates rather that the weaknesses in the current research domain is the use of theories that place the research problems out of their contexts.

#### *4.3 Emerging themes and questions for future research*

From the four articles in this SI, we can glean the following broad themes and propose some research questions that scholars who wish to study sourcing and SCM practices in Africa could consider.

*4.3.1 Strategic sourcing in the face of supply chain ad hoc-ism and the emerging gig economy.* Supply chain practice rarely resembles the theoretical abstractions we see in literature (Fawcett and Magnan, 2002). Take, for example, the concepts of trust and information sharing that have been advanced as some of the most important tenets for SC



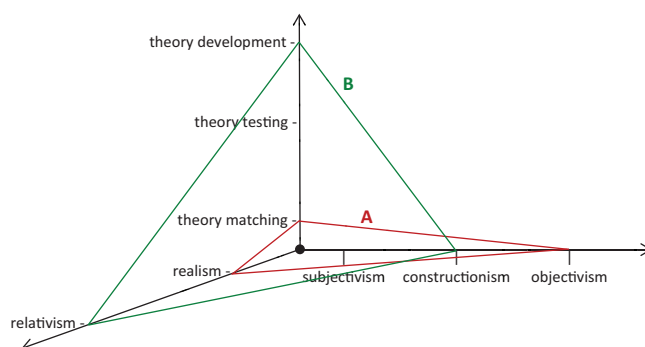
integration. The study of agricultural supply chains in Uganda by [Eyaa and Ryan \(2021\)](#) shows that trust, particularly formal trust, has its own limitations in supply chains that are characterized by high uncertainty, hence the emergence of business relationships characterized by short-term goals. This we have termed “supply chain *ad hoc*-ism.” This phenomenon requires further research.

The study of the labor patterns in most African economies by [Mayounga \(2021\)](#) shows the challenge that high unemployment and low-skilled labor has on the relative competitiveness of African firms in global value chains. The abundance of low-skilled workers, changing labor demographics, less formal structures and high flexibility means that supply chain talent will perhaps be the most competitive lever for African supply chains going forward. Contingent labor will become the common future of the new “gig economy.” Together, supply chain *ad hoc*-ism and the emergence of the gig economy will require new research to:

- examine the supply chain governance models in Africa and how these differ from Western models;
- examine how buyer–supplier relationships are structured in informal sector economies;
- investigate the impact of talent and skill gaps on supply chain development in Africa;
- investigate how the global supply chain actors perceive Africa as a low-cost sourcing destination; and
- investigate ethical issues between suppliers and buyers in dyads and the wider network/value chain.

*4.3.2 Advancing the Ubuntu concept to explain trust, collaboration and the balance of power in supply chains.* The study of [Kauppi et al. \(2018\)](#) wonders why the concept of *Ubuntu*, which essentially is about a unique African value system of collective solidarity and interdependence, is not developed well enough to explain some of the challenges in the contemporary SCM literature. *Ubuntu* emphasizes the role of trust and loyalty among supply chain actors and how they create more value compared to other economic models.

Both [Sharma and Naude \(2021\)](#) and [Eyaa and Ryan \(2021\)](#) address the challenges in interactions between buyers and suppliers, where the former attributes the challenges to actors not valuing each other’s contribution to the relationship, while the latter attributes



**Figure 1.**  
Recommended shift  
from A to B in  
theoretical, ontological  
and epistemological  
positioning

these challenges to opportunism. Both studies feature the failures of *Ubuntu* in nominal terms. So, future research should consider investigating the following:

- how trust, collaboration and interdependence are conceptualized in sourcing relationships in Africa;
- how African culture and embedded value systems influence the supply chain behavior of African firms;
- the extent of socially responsible sourcing practices in Africa; and
- how intra-African supply networks form, develop and change.

*4.3.3 Role of government and the structure of supply chains at the bottom of the pyramid.* The study of [Kaupa and Naude \(2021\)](#) cites several challenges in the supply chains of essential medicines in Malawi, and they propose, among other solutions, that governments need to invest in good infrastructure to simplify and reduce the cost of distribution of medicines to the most remote areas of the country. The study of [Mayounga \(2021\)](#) also cites governments' role in investing in quality education and in good infrastructure that would enhance the economic and logistic competitiveness of African economies. In both these studies, the role of the government as a key actor to regulate economic activity and therefore drive supply chain development is emphasized. Also, these two studies inherently suggest that African governments must provide regulatory certainty, which is essential for markets to work for the poor – this concept has been termed as the bottom of the pyramid (BoP). Based on this, some studies ([Fawcett and Waller, 2015](#); [Kolk et al., 2014](#); [Sodhi and Tang, 2016](#)) demonstrate the use of examples, such as the supply chain opportunities that exist at the BoP. Future research should consider investigating the following:

- how political decisions and governments shape the development of supply chain systems in Africa;
- the supply chain practices of complex and resource dominant sectors, such as healthcare and agriculture;
- how technology and digitalization can be leveraged to drive supply chain innovation for BoP markets;
- the link between infrastructure bottlenecks and inventory strategies in African firms;
- the social enterprise versus business enterprise paradox from the supply chain perspective; and
- how global firms can design scalable and flexible supply chains that work for the customers at the BoP.

## 5. Conclusion

The paper summarizes four papers of a SI on strategic sourcing in Africa published in this journal. The goal of the SI was to provide a better understanding of the behavior and supply chain practices of indigenous African firms as they engage in global supply chains. From a research perspective, it is clear that this topic is still in its infancy, hence the paucity of research on the subject. But we observed several other interesting and positive developments, including the close linkage with the concepts and theories in the advanced literature on the subject. However, the methodological and theoretical arguments are comparably weak – partly because the supply chain problems in Africa are unique to Africa.

There, we argued for a different way to research about the problems indigenous African firms face within the broader supply chain discourse. That way, authors can offer this discourse a richer, more novel and robust perspective than is currently available. We also have proposed a number of research questions, which we have grouped into three broad trends, namely, supply chain *ad hoc*-ism and the expanding impact of the gig economy on supply chains, advancing the *Ubuntu* concept and exploring the role of government and the structure of supply chains at the BoP.

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