Center for Management Science Research
ISSN: 3006-5291 3006-5283 Volume 4, Issue 3, 2026

GREEN SUPPLY CHAIN INTEGRATION AND CARBON FOOTPRINT REDUCTION STRATEGIES IN MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19247135

Keywords

green supply chain integration, carbon footprint reduction, manufacturing industries, resource-based view, dynamic capabilities, circular economy, renewable energy, electrification, digital twins, sustainable sourcing, Scope 3 emissions

Article History

Received: 21 January 2026
Accepted: 05 March 2026
Published: 20 March 2026

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Abstract

Green Supply Chain Integration (GSCI) has evolved into a strategic imperative for manufacturing industries seeking to reconcile economic performance with escalating environmental pressures, including stringent carbon regulations, stakeholder demands for decarbonization, and climate-related risks. This review synthesizes theoretical foundations drawing on Resource-Based View (RBV), Dynamic Capabilities Theory, Institutional Theory, and Natural Resource-Based View to examine how GSCI enables firms to embed environmental considerations across sourcing, production, logistics, and reverse logistics. Key carbon footprint reduction strategies include supplier collaboration for low-carbon materials, energy-efficient manufacturing (LED retrofits, predictive maintenance via digital twins, process optimization), renewable energy adoption (solar/wind onsite generation), electrification of thermal processes, hydrogen and carbon capture utilization and storage (CCUS) pathways, circular economy practices (closed-loop recycling, eco-design), and advanced logistics (electric/hybrid fleets, route optimization). Empirical evidence from global manufacturing sectors demonstrates 15–40% reductions in Scope 1–3 emissions through integrated GSCI initiatives, often accompanied by cost savings via resource efficiency and enhanced brand value. Challenges such as initial investment barriers, supplier resistance, measurement complexity, and regulatory fragmentation are addressed, alongside emerging enablers like Industry 4.0 technologies and collaborative platforms. The analysis underscores GSCI's role in building long-term resilience and competitive advantage in a low-carbon economy.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Strategic Evolution of Green Supply Chain Integration in Global Manufacturing

The contemporary manufacturing landscape is undergoing a fundamental transformation, driven by the dual imperatives of economic competitiveness and environmental stewardship.

Green Supply Chain Integration (GSCI) has emerged as a critical strategic framework for organizations navigating this complex terrain (Govindan et al., 2015). Far from being a peripheral concern of corporate social responsibility, GSCI represents a core organizational capability that enables firms to reconfigure their internal and external processes to achieve significant reductions in carbon footprints while maintaining or enhancing profitability (Dubey et al., 2017). The integration of environmental thinking into supply chain management encompasses the entire product life cycle, from initial design and raw material sourcing to manufacturing, distribution, and end-of-life management (Zhu et al., 2013).

At its theoretical core, GSCI is increasingly viewed through the lens of Organizational Capability Theory (OCT) and the Resource-Based View (RBV) (Barney, 1991). These perspectives suggest that green integration is not a static state but a dynamic capability that allows enterprises to manage the high levels of environmental uncertainty characteristic of the modern global market (Teece, 2007). By fostering deep collaborative networks with suppliers and customers, manufacturing firms can develop unique, inimitable green assets that provide a sustainable competitive advantage (Hart, 1995). This shift toward a dynamic perspective is essential in an era where regulatory pressures, such as China's dual carbon strategy and the European Union's Emission Trading System (ETS), are placing unprecedented demands on industrial transparency and performance (Zhang et al., 2020).

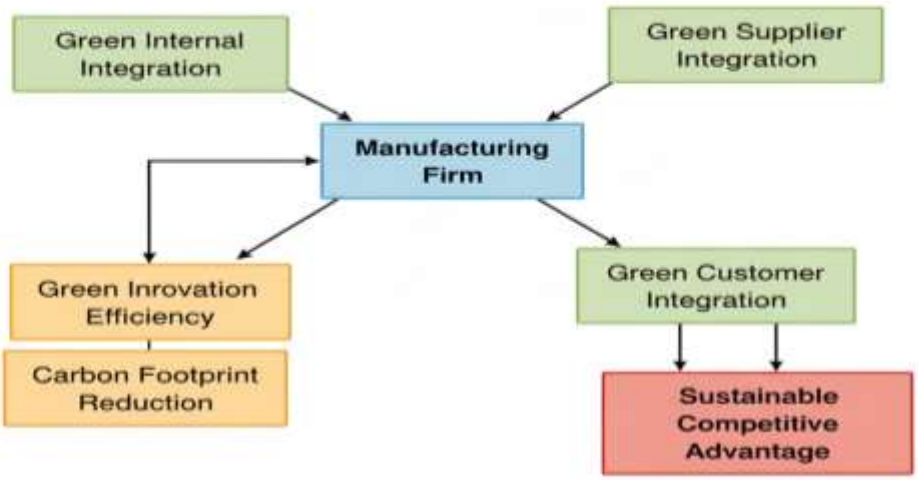
The transition toward green integration is further complicated by the need for ambidextrous innovation. This theoretical framework posits that successful firms must balance exploratory green innovation the pursuit of long-term, radical shifts in technology and business models with exploitative green innovation, which focuses on short-term incremental improvements in energy efficiency and waste reduction (He & Wong, 2004; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013). This dual focus is particularly relevant in emerging economies, where firms face the acute challenge of balancing rapid industrial growth with the urgent need for decarbonization (Khan et al., 2022).

Table 1: Primary Dimensions of Green Supply Chain Integration (GSCI)

Dimension of GSCI	Operational Scope	Key Collaborative Activities	Performance Impact
Green Internal Integration	Intra-firm departments	Cross-functional environmental audits, green R&D coordination, internal waste tracking	Enhances innovation speed and foundational green culture (Zhang et al., 2022).
Green Supplier Integration	Upstream supply chain	Joint environmental goal setting, technical support for green processing, shared material coding	Facilitates high-quality material sourcing and reduces Scope 3 risks (Lo et al., 2018; Nusa et al., 2025).
Green Customer Integration	Downstream value chain	Eco-design feedback loops, joint product recovery programs, green marketing alignment	Aligns product features with market demand and regulatory mandates (Yang & Singhdong, 2024; Zhang et al., 2022).

The interaction between these dimensions and corporate performance is often mediated by green innovation. Research indicates that GSCI positively promotes both the quantity and quality of corporate green innovation, with the impact on quality being particularly pronounced in digitally transformed supply chains (Yang & Singhdong, 2024). This relationship is further strengthened by green value co-creation, where partners across the supply chain work together to generate environmental benefits that none could achieve in isolation (Chowdhury, 2023). Furthermore, industrial intelligence has been shown to significantly facilitate the green transition, although government interference can sometimes hinder these positive effects by imposing rigid structures that stifle innovation (Singhdong, 2024). Green supply chain integration requires coordinated collaboration across internal and external partners. The conceptual framework illustrating these relationships is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Green Supply Chain Integration (GSCI) in Manufacturing



2. Carbon Footprint Landscape in Manufacturing: Sources and Projections

To develop effective reduction strategies, it is necessary to understand the primary sources of carbon emissions within the manufacturing sector. These are generally classified according to the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol into three scopes (World Resources Institute & World Business Council for Sustainable Development, 2004). Scope 1 encompasses direct emissions from owned or controlled sources, such as on-site fuel combustion. Scope 2 covers indirect emissions from the generation of purchased electricity, steam, heating, and cooling (GHG Protocol, 2015). Scope 3 includes all other indirect emissions that occur in a company's value chain, including both upstream and downstream activities. In manufacturing, Scope 3 emissions are often the most significant, averaging 11.4 times higher than a company's direct operational emissions (CDP, 2021).

Manufacturing emissions are predominantly generated through fuel combustion for heat and through industrial processes that chemically transform raw materials (IPCC, 2019). Combustion emissions typically account for approximately 75% of manufacturing's direct emissions, with the remainder coming from process-related by-products (IEA, 2022). The intensity of these emissions varies significantly across different industrial sub-sectors, with the chemical and refining industries standing as the largest contributors, accounting for 59% of the sector's total greenhouse gas emissions in 2021 (World Bank, 2023; UNIDO, 2022).

Table 2: Carbon Intensity and Mitigation Potential of Industrial Materials

Industrial Material/Process	Primary Emission Driver	Estimated Carbon Intensity	Mitigation Potential
Primary Aluminum	Electrolysis (Electricity use)	10 tonnes CO2e per tonne produced (CarbonChain, n.d.)	Switching to renewable power grids and recycling (CarbonChain, n.d.).
Crude Steel (Blast Furnace)	Coke combustion & iron reduction	2 tonnes CO2e per tonne produced (CarbonChain, n.d.)	Transitioning to Electric Arc Furnaces (EAF) (CarbonChain, n.d.; CBO, 2024).
Cement & Lime	Calcination (Chemical breakdown)	63% of emissions are process-related (CBO, 2024)	Carbon capture and storage (CCS) and alternative clinkers (CBO, 2024).
Chemical Manufacturing	High-heat combustion & feedstocks	Variable (Highly intensive subsectors)	Electrification of heat and bio-based feedstocks (CBO, 2024).

Historical trends show a general decline in manufacturing emissions in developed regions like the United States, where emissions fell by 17% between 2002 and 2021. This decoupling of growth from emissions was largely driven by a decrease in emissions intensity the amount of carbon released per dollar of output (CBO, 2024). A prime example is the shift in the steel industry from basic oxygen furnaces to electric arc furnaces, which emit roughly one-third as much CO2 per ton of steel (WSA, 2023). However, the net effect of technological shifts remains complex; while iron and steel production intensity decreased, the chemical industry's emissions intensity increased over the same period due to a shift toward more carbon-intensive sub-industries (UNIDO, 2022).
Looking forward, emissions from manufacturing are projected to increase by 17% between 2024 and 2050, driven by the projected growth in the output of emissions-intensive industries (World Bank, 2023). This trend underscores the urgency of integrating advanced carbon reduction strategies. The mathematical representation of emissions intensity (I) is a critical metric for monitoring this progress, defined as:
I=EVI = \frac{E}{V}I=VE
where E represents the total CO2e emissions and V represents the value added or units of output (IPCC, 2019). Reducing intensity through technological adoption, such as electrification and hydrogen fuel, is the primary pathway to meeting long-term climate targets, although these technologies currently face barriers related to high costs and infrastructure availability (Khan et al., 2022).

3. Technical Pathways to Carbon Reduction: Efficiency and Renewables

The technical engine of decarbonization in manufacturing rests upon three pillars: energy efficiency improvement, the transition to renewable energy sources, and the electrification of industrial processes. These strategies target the reduction of Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions while providing the operational basis for broader Scope 3 initiatives (Mavarick, 2025)

3.1 Energy Efficiency and Operational Optimization

Energy efficiency remains the most immediate and cost-effective strategy for reducing carbon footprints. In manufacturing facilities, significant savings are achieved by replacing aging equipment with high-efficiency machinery and optimizing operational processes to eliminate waste (EEA, 2021). Weatherization of industrial buildings including sealing air leaks, adding insulation, and upgrading windows can cut HVAC energy use by up to 40% (U.S. Department of Energy, 2021). These improvements not only reduce emissions but also improve indoor air quality and worker comfort (Kumar et al., 2019).

Operational optimization is increasingly supported by digital tools. For example, replacing traditional lighting with LED systems can reduce lighting-related energy consumption by up to 80%. On the production floor, advanced motor systems and heat pumps are replacing less efficient technologies (Li et al., 2021). Heat pumps, which operate by transferring heat rather than generating it, can be two to three times more efficient than conventional electric resistance heaters (EEA, 2020). Furthermore, the implementation of predictive maintenance through industrial intelligence helps ensure that equipment operates at its design efficiency (Dubey et al., 2017).

3.2 Transition to Renewable Energy

The substitution of fossil fuels with renewable energy is a cornerstone of deep decarbonization. Manufacturers are increasingly installing on-site solar and wind power to secure clean energy supplies and enhance resilience to grid outages (Li et al., 2021). In regions like New York, state incentives have accelerated the adoption of community solar, allowing multiple customers to benefit from a single project without installing panels on their own property (Wang et al., 2022) For larger facilities, purchasing renewable energy through Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) or choosing green energy providers that guarantee a 100% renewable fuel mix is becoming standard practice (Greenpeace East Asia, 2022). It is critical to distinguish between high-impact strategies such as funding new renewable projects and low-impact strategies like buying unbundled carbon credits, which some critics argue may only offset emissions rather than fundamentally reducing them (Boise State University, 2025.).

Table 3: Energy Transition Mechanisms and Their Impact

Energy Source / Strategy	Implementation Mechanism	Impact on Emissions Profile
On-site Solar/Wind	Rooftop or property installation	Direct reduction of Scope 2 emissions; enhances resilience (NYSERDA, n.d.).
Community Solar	Subscription to off-site green energy	Accessible renewable energy without capital-intensive hardware (NYSERDA, n.d.).
Heat Pump Systems	Transfer of thermal energy	Significant efficiency gains in water and space heating (NYSERDA, n.d.).
Electrification of Heat	Switching from gas/oil to electricity	Potential for zero-emission heat if paired with renewable grid (CBO, 2024).

3.3 Electrification and Carbon Capture

The electrification of manufacturing processes is a vital strategy for addressing direct combustion emissions. While many industrial processes can technically be electrified, the challenges include the need for massive quantities of electricity and the significant capital costs of plant reconfiguration (Nocito et al., 2020; IRENA, 2021). For industries where high-temperature heat is essential, such as cement or chemical production, hydrogen fuel and Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) are seen as complementary technologies (Schaefer et al., 2021). CCS involves capturing CO2 at the source and either storing it underground or utilizing it in other industrial processes. However, the current scale of CCS in manufacturing remains limited to less than 1% of total sector emissions due to its high cost (Global CCS Institute, 2022).

4. Product Lifecycle and the Paradigm of Eco-Design

Eco-design, or sustainable product design, integrates environmental considerations from the very beginning of a product's life cycle. This approach is guided by the philosophy of Life Cycle Assessment (LCA), which evaluates a product's environmental impact from raw material extraction to disposal (WSA, 2023). By shifting the focus from end-of-pipe waste management to proactive design, manufacturers can eliminate significant portions of their carbon footprint before production even begins (IMD Business School, 2024)

4.1 Modular Design and Material Choice

Modular design involves creating products with interchangeable parts that can be repaired or upgraded individually. This strategy extends the product's lifespan and reduces the frequency of replacement, which is particularly relevant in the electronics and automotive sectors (Baldwin & Clark, 2000). For example, a modular smartphone allows users to replace a faulty battery or camera module without discarding the entire device (Parisi et al., 2020).

Material selection is equally critical. Eco-design encourages the use of renewable materials (e.g., bamboo, cork), recycled materials (e.g., post-consumer plastics, metals), and biodegradable materials (e.g., plant-based plastics) (Fletcher, 2013). Choosing recycled aluminum, for instance, requires only a fraction of the energy needed for primary aluminum smelting (International Aluminium Institute, 2021).

Table 4: Core Principles of Eco-Design and Environmental Outcomes

Eco-Design Principle	**Strategic Objective**	**Environmental Outcome**
Modular Design	Repairability and upgradability	Extended product life; reduced material consumption (IMD Business School, 2024; SCITEPRESS, 2025).
Material Substitution	Use of recycled or renewable content	Lowered embodied carbon; reduced demand for virgin resources (IMD Business School, 2024).
Design for Disassembly	Ease of end-of-life separation	Enhanced recycling rates; simplified reverse logistics (Nusa et al., 2025; SCITEPRESS, 2025).
Lightweighting	Resource minimization	Reduced energy use in manufacturing and transport (IMD Business School, 2024; Nusa et al., 2025).

4.2 Life Cycle Assessment and End-of-Life Planning

LCA provides the analytical framework for eco-design, allowing manufacturers to identify carbon "hotspots" throughout the value chain. By quantifying the greenhouse gas emissions at each stage extraction, production, use, and end-of-life firms can make data-driven decisions about material choices (MDPI, 2025). End-of-life planning is the final component of this paradigm, ensuring that products are designed to be fully repurposed or safely composted. This is often referred to as the cradle-to-cradle approach (Cucuzzella & Salvia, 2018).

Effective end-of-life management requires robust reverse logistics systems. These systems manage the return of products from consumers to the company for repurposing or recycling. In the textile industry, take-back programs allow consumers to return worn-out garments for refurbishment or recycling into new fibers (Soni & Baldawa, 2023). In the automotive industry, shared material coding and design for disassembly allow for the efficient recovery of valuable plastics and metals from end-of-life vehicles (Nusa et al., 2025).

5. Industry 4.0: Digital Transformation as an Enabler of GSCI

The Fourth Industrial Revolution, or Industry 4.0, provides the technological infrastructure necessary to operationalize green supply chain integration at scale. Technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), Big Data Analytics (BDA), Artificial Intelligence (AI), Blockchain, and Digital Twins enable real-time monitoring and optimization of environmental metrics (Challouf et al., 2025).

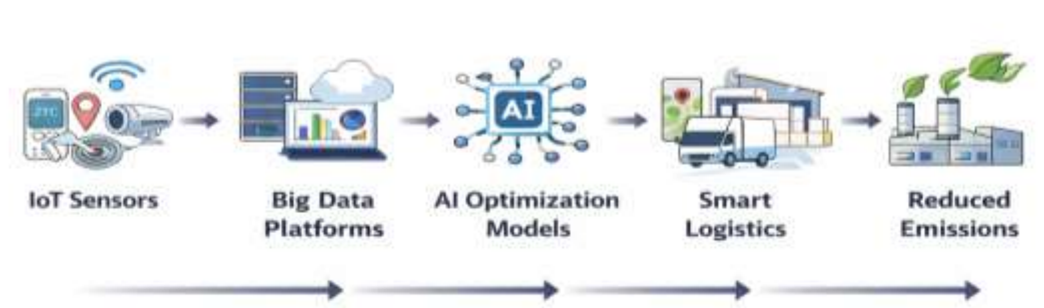
5.1 IoT and Big Data for Real-Time Monitoring

IoT sensors allow for the continuous monitoring of energy consumption, emissions, and inventory levels throughout the supply chain. These sensors provide real-time data on power consumption and equipment health, facilitating predictive maintenance that prevents energy waste (Erixon, 2018). When integrated with cloud computing and Big Data Analytics, this sensory data can identify inefficiencies invisible to traditional management systems (Mavarick, 2025).

5.2 AI and Machine Learning for Optimization

Artificial Intelligence and machine learning models are leveraged to optimize logistics and routing, directly reducing fuel consumption and associated emissions. In manufacturing, AI can optimize process parameters in real-time to minimize chemical waste and energy use (Textile School, 2025). Furthermore, AI-powered demand forecasting prevents overproduction one of the primary sources of waste in manufacturing (Chowdhury, 2023). Advanced analytics enable dynamic optimization of supply chain operations. The AI-driven architecture for logistics and production optimization is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Digital Supply Chain Optimization Using AI and Big Data



5.3 Blockchain for Transparency and Traceability

Blockchain technology provides a decentralized, immutable ledger that enhances transparency and trust across the supply chain. It allows stakeholders to independently authenticate sustainability assertions and confirm ethical sourcing credentials (Govindan et al., 2015).

Table 5: Role of Industry 4.0 Technologies in Supporting GSCI

Industry 4.0 Technology	Functional Role in GSCI	Carbon Reduction Mechanism
IoT Sensors	Real-time monitoring	Continuous tracking of emissions; enables predictive maintenance (Cerexio, n.d.; Challouf et al., 2025).
Big Data Analytics	Insight generation	Identification of carbon-intensive nodes in complex networks (Challouf et al., 2025; Mavarick, 2025).
Artificial Intelligence	System optimization	Precision demand forecasting and logistics route planning (Cerexio, n.d.; Challouf et al., 2025).
Blockchain	Traceability & Trust	Secure documentation of material origins and carbon credits (Challouf et al., 2025).
Digital Twins	Simulation & Modeling	Testing energy footprints virtually to optimize physical assets (Challouf et al., 2025).

6. Sectoral Analysis: Automotive Industry Integration

The automotive industry is a pioneer in the adoption of green supply chain management practices, driven by intense regulatory pressure and the strategic shift toward electric vehicles (EVs). Automotive GSCM involves green purchasing, sustainable transportation, and the implementation of closed-loop recycling systems (Nusa et al., 2025; SCITEPRESS, 2025).

Automakers increasingly collaborate with suppliers to source sustainable materials and reduce the environmental impact of raw material acquisition (Nusa et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2022). This includes the use of alternative materials such as plastics instead of metal to lower vehicle weight, which improves fuel efficiency (Nusa et al., 2025). Achieving true sustainability in the automotive sector also requires greening the entire battery supply chain, from mining to recycling (Textile School, 2025; van Hoek, n.d.).

7. Sectoral Analysis: Electronics Industry and the Renewable Gap

The electronics industry faces unique challenges related to rapid technological obsolescence and complex supply chains. While leading brands have made progress in greening their own operations, there remains a substantial discrepancy between brand goals and supplier practices (Greenpeace East Asia, 2022).

Table 6: Comparison of Renewable Energy Performance in Electronics Firms

Electronics Company	Internal Renewable Target	Supplier Renewable Performance	Strategic Initiative
Apple	100% (Achieved)	Significant progress; targets 100% by 2030	Use of disassembly robots (Daisy); recycled rare earths (SCITEPRESS, 2025).
Samsung Electronics	100% by 2050	Low renewable rates in manufacturing sites	Commitment to 100% renewable energy in US, EU, and China (Manufacturing Today, 2024).
Sony Group	100% by 2030 (Operations)	Working to convey importance to partners	Developed SORPLAS (99% recycled plastic) (SBTi, n.d.).
TSMC (Supplier)	100% by 2050	9.2% renewable usage (2021)	Key semiconductor partner for Apple and Microsoft (Greenpeace East Asia, 2022).

Apple serves as a benchmark for green supply chain integration, integrating environmental protection into every stage from procurement to recycling. However, the brand has also faced criticism for "planned obsolescence" and for relying on carbon offsetting (Boise State University, 2025).

8. Sectoral Analysis: Textile and Apparel Industry Transformation

The textile industry is one of the most resource-intensive sectors, responsible for approximately 1.2 billion tons of CO2e annually. GSCM in textiles focuses on sustainable fiber selection, water and chemical reduction, and circular economy initiatives (Soni & Baldawa, 2023).

Table 7: Green Alternatives and Reduction Benefits in the Textile Industry

Textile Impact Area	Conventional Practice	Green Supply Chain Alternative	Estimated Reduction Benefit
Fiber Production	High pesticide/water use	Organic cotton; bamboo textiles	Reduces pesticide toxicity and water stress (Textile School, 2025).
Dyeing & Finishing	20% of global water pollution	Water-Less techniques; closed-loop systems	Reduction in water consumption and chemical waste (Soni & Baldawa, 2023).
End-of-Life	87% landfilled or burned	Take-back programs; upcycling	Recycling and reuse can reduce waste by 30% annually (Soni & Baldawa, 2023).
Distribution	Fossil fuel-based logistics	Biofuels; optimized route planning	H&M cut transport carbon by 15% through load consolidation (Textile School, 2025).

9. Measurement and Accountability: Environmental KPIs and ESG Metrics

For a green supply chain strategy to be effective, it must be measured against quantifiable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These metrics track progress, ensure regulatory compliance, and demonstrate value to investors and consumers (SCITEPRESS, 2025).

Table 8: Essential ESG KPIs for Sustainability Measurement

ESG KPI Category	Essential Metrics	Purpose of Measurement
Climate / Carbon	Scopes 1, 2, & 3 emissions; Carbon intensity per unit	Monitors absolute emissions and efficiency relative to growth (Tekmon, n.d.).
Energy	Total energy use; % Renewable energy	Identifies areas for reduction and tracks transition to clean energy (Mavarick, 2025).
Circular Economy	Waste diversion rate; % Recycled content in products	Measures progress toward a "zero-waste" manufacturing model (Tekmon, n.d.).
Sourcing	% Suppliers with ISO 14001; Spend with diverse suppliers	Ensures ethical and sustainable practices throughout the value chain (Nusa et al., 2025).

10. Overcoming Structural and Economic Barriers

Manufacturing firms face significant hurdles when transitioning to more sustainable practices. These barriers range from internal cultural resistance to external economic challenges. High initial investment cost of green technologies is a primary barrier, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (ResearchGate, 2017).

Table 9: Key Barriers and Mitigation Strategies for GSCI Implementation

Implementation Barrier	**Primary Driver / Origin**	**Potential Mitigation Strategy**
High Implementation Cost	Expensive hardware and software	Green loans, financial incentives, and long-term ROI focus (ResearchGate, 2017).
Supply Chain Complexity	Globalized, multi-tiered networks	Adoption of blockchain and IoT for enhanced visibility (Challouf et al., 2025).
Resistance to Change	Organizational inertia	Strong top-management commitment and employee training (Nusa et al., 2025; ResearchGate, 2021).
Regulatory Uncertainty	Inconsistent global policies	Alignment with international standards like ISO 14001 (Nusa et al., 2025; ResearchGate, 2021).

11. Synthesis and Future Strategic Trajectories

The journey toward a sustainable, carbon-neutral manufacturing sector requires the deep integration of environmental principles with technological and organizational capabilities. Future strategies must balance the "ambidextrous" need for both exploitative and exploratory innovation (Zhu et al., 2013). Achieving net-zero goals will require a more collaborative approach to decarbonization, where large focal firms provide financial and technical support to help their suppliers transition to renewable energy (Greenpeace East Asia, 2022).

Standardized methods to quantify environmental impacts across the entire value chain are still needed (Khan et al., 2022). By leveraging the power of IoT, AI, and blockchain, manufacturing industries can achieve the real-time visibility and optimization needed to drastically reduce their carbon footprints while fostering a resilient, circular economy (Dubey et al., 2017).

Conclusion

Green Supply Chain Integration represents a mature and increasingly indispensable capability for manufacturing firms operating in an era of mandatory decarbonization, stakeholder activism, and resource constraints. By aligning internal processes with external supplier and customer networks under RBV and dynamic capabilities lenses, organizations can systematically reduce carbon footprints across the value chain while generating economic co-benefits through efficiency gains, risk mitigation, and innovation leadership. Proven strategies ranging from renewable-powered operations and process electrification to circular material flows and data-driven optimization demonstrate that substantial emission cuts (often 20–50% in targeted scopes) are achievable without sacrificing competitiveness. Nevertheless, success hinges on overcoming implementation hurdles: securing capital for green technologies, fostering deep supplier engagement, harmonizing global regulatory requirements, and establishing robust carbon accounting systems. As net-zero commitments proliferate and carbon pricing mechanisms tighten, firms that institutionalize GSCI as a core strategic priority will not only comply with emerging mandates but also capture first-mover advantages in sustainable markets, enhance resilience against climate disruptions, and contribute meaningfully to global climate goals. The path forward demands continued investment in collaborative ecosystems, technological innovation, and leadership commitment to transform green supply chains from compliance exercises into sources of enduring value creation.

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