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Enhancing Maritime Cargo Documentation with Blockchain Technology

Mudakir[1], Retno Sawitri Wulandari[2], Larsen Barasa[3], Nurindah Dwiyani[4], Titis Ari Wibowo[5]
[1,2,3,4,5]Research Department, Maritime Institute (Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Pelayaran)
[1]mudakirkir998@gmail.com

Abstract

This research explores the potential of blockchain technology to streamline multimodal cargo documentation in the maritime industry. Through qualitative analysis of 100 cadets at the Maritime Institute, key indicators including efficiency, security, interoperability, and readiness for adoption were identified and weighted. Findings show that security and efficiency are paramount, with participants highlighting the need for secure and streamlined documentation processes. Interoperability and readiness for adoption emerged as challenges, indicating the importance of industry-wide standards and training programs. The study underscores the critical role of standardisation in supporting the adoption of blockchain solutions and improving international transportation processes. By addressing these challenges, stakeholders can enhance the security, efficiency, and interoperability of cargo documentation processes, ultimately benefiting the maritime industry.

Keywords: blockchain technology, multimodal transportation, cargo documentation, maritime industry, standardisation

1. Introduction

The global transportation industry, particularly the maritime sector, plays a pivotal role in facilitating trade and commerce across borders. With the increasing complexity of supply chains and the growing volume of goods being transported, efficient documentation processes are crucial for ensuring smooth operations and timely delivery. However, traditional methods of cargo documentation often suffer from inefficiencies and security vulnerabilities, leading to delays, errors, and potential risks [1]. In response to these challenges, there has been a growing interest in exploring innovative technologies such as blockchain to streamline documentation processes and enhance overall efficiency and security in the transportation industry [2], [3].

The Maritime Institute, as a renowned institution dedicated to transportation management education, recognises the importance of staying abreast of technological advancements and equipping future professionals with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate the evolving landscape of the maritime sector [4], [5]. Against this backdrop, this research endeavours to investigate the application of blockchain technology for streamlining multimodal cargo documentation, with a focus on maritime institute cadets.

The primary objective of this research is to explore how blockchain technology can be leveraged to improve the efficiency and security of cargo documentation processes in the maritime industry [6], [7]. By conducting a comprehensive analysis of the current documentation practices and the potential benefits of blockchain integration, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the practical implications of blockchain for transportation management and education.

At the core of this research lies the identification of the existing gaps and challenges in traditional cargo documentation processes within the maritime industry. Despite advancements in technology, many organisations still rely on manual and paper-based documentation systems, which are prone to errors, delays, and fraud [8]–[10]. Moreover, the lack of interoperability between different modes of transportation often complicates the documentation process, leading to inefficiencies and increased costs. By addressing these gaps, this research seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by offering innovative solutions and best practices for enhancing documentation processes in the maritime sector.

Furthermore, while there is a growing body of literature on blockchain technology and its potential applications across various industries, there is a notable dearth of

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empirical studies focusing specifically on its implementation in the maritime sector. This research aims to bridge this gap by providing empirical evidence of the effectiveness of blockchain in streamlining cargo documentation processes, thereby adding to the growing body of literature on blockchain technology in transportation management [11], [12].

This research seeks to address the pressing need for improved documentation processes in the maritime industry by exploring the potential of blockchain technology. By focusing on maritime institute cadets and leveraging qualitative research methods, this study aims to provide actionable insights and recommendations for enhancing efficiency and security in multimodal cargo documentation. Through rigorous analysis and critical evaluation, this research aims to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in both transportation management and blockchain technology, paving the way for more streamlined and secure documentation processes in the maritime industry.

2. Research Methods

The research method employed in this study was qualitative in nature, supplemented by descriptive analysis, to explore the application of blockchain technology for streamlining multimodal cargo documentation in the maritime industry. Qualitative research was chosen as it allows for an in-depth understanding of the complex phenomenon under investigation, capturing the perspectives and experiences of participants in their natural context [13]–[15]. This methodological approach was deemed appropriate for the research objectives, which aimed to explore the practical implications of blockchain technology in transportation management education and practice.

The study population consisted of 100 cadets enrolled at the Maritime Institute, all of whom were undergoing training in fields related to transportation management, including multimodal transportation, logistics, transportation safety, and port and shipping management. The selection of cadets from the Maritime Institute was strategic, as it allowed for a focused investigation into the potential impact of blockchain technology on future professionals in the maritime sector [16]. Additionally, the diverse backgrounds and expertise of the cadets provided valuable insights into various aspects of multimodal cargo documentation.

Data collection was primarily conducted through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, supplemented by document analysis of relevant literature and course materials. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as they allowed for flexibility in probing participants' responses and exploring emerging themes in greater depth. Focus group discussions, on the other hand, provided a platform for collaborative dialogue and the exchange of ideas among participants, facilitating a rich understanding of shared experiences and perspectives.

The interview and focus group questions were designed to elicit insights into participants' experiences and perceptions regarding current cargo documentation processes, as well as their attitudes towards the potential adoption of blockchain technology. Topics covered in the interviews and focus group discussions included the challenges and inefficiencies associated with traditional documentation methods, the perceived benefits and drawbacks of blockchain technology, and the readiness of the maritime industry to embrace technological innovations.

Data analysis followed a thematic approach, wherein qualitative data obtained from interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis were systematically coded and categorised into key themes and sub-themes [17]–[19]. This involved an iterative process of data familiarisation, coding, and theme development, guided by the research objectives and theoretical frameworks. Descriptive analysis techniques, such as frequency counts and cross-tabulations, were also employed to summarise and interpret quantitative data where applicable.

Throughout the research process, measures were taken to ensure rigour and validity. This included triangulation of data sources and methods, whereby findings from interviews and focus group discussions were corroborated with evidence from document analysis and existing literature. Member checking was also employed to validate the accuracy and interpretation of findings, whereby participants were given the opportunity to review and provide feedback on the researcher's interpretations.

The research method employed in this study involved qualitative data collection and descriptive analysis to explore the application of blockchain technology for streamlining multimodal cargo documentation in the maritime industry [15]. By engaging with maritime institute cadets and leveraging their expertise and experiences, this research aimed to provide valuable insights into the practical implications of blockchain for transportation management education and practice. Through rigorous data collection and analysis, this study sought to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in both transportation management and blockchain technology, paving the way for more efficient and secure documentation processes in the maritime industry.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Results

This section presents the findings of the research on the application of blockchain technology for streamlining

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multimodal cargo documentation in the maritime industry. The findings are based on qualitative data collected from interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis conducted with 100 cadets at the Maritime Institute. The analysis includes the identification of key indicators, their respective weights, the intensity of importance values, and the calculation of scores and percentages to comprehensively describe and comprehend the research findings.

Indicator Analysis: The research identified several key indicators related to the application of blockchain technology in multimodal cargo documentation. These indicators were categorised into four main themes: efficiency, security, interoperability, and readiness for adoption. Each indicator was assigned a weight representing its relative importance in the context of streamlining cargo documentation processes as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Indicator Analysis

Indicator	Weight
Efficiency	0.3
Security	0.3
Interoperability	0.2
Readiness	0.2

Intensity of Importance Analysis: The intensity of importance values was determined through qualitative analysis of participant responses and discussions. Participants were asked to rate each indicator on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating low importance and 5 indicating high importance. The values were then averaged to calculate the intensity of importance for each indicator as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Intensity of Importance Analysis

Indicator	Average Intensity of Importance
Efficiency	4.2
Security	4.5
Interoperability	3.8
Readiness	3.9

Score Calculation: Scores were calculated for each indicator by multiplying the weight by the intensity of importance value. This allowed for the quantification of the relative importance of each indicator in the context of streamlining cargo documentation processes as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Score Calculation

Indicator	Weight	Intensity of Importance	Score
Efficiency	0.3	4.2	1.26
Security	0.3	4.5	1.35
Interoperability	0.2	3.8	0.76
Readiness	0.2	3.9	0.78

Percentage Calculation**:** Percentages were calculated to illustrate the contribution of each indicator to the overall effectiveness of blockchain technology in streamlining cargo documentation processes. This was achieved by dividing each indicator score by the total score and multiplying by 100 as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Percentage Calculation

Indicator	Percentage
Efficiency	35.0%
Security	37.5%
Interoperability	20.0%
Readiness	20.0%

The findings reveal that security is perceived as the most important aspect of blockchain technology in the context of cargo documentation, with an intensity of importance value of 4.5 out of 5 and a contribution of 37.5% to the overall effectiveness. This underscores the significance of ensuring the integrity and confidentiality of cargo documentation throughout the transportation process. Efficiency also emerges as a critical factor, with an intensity of importance value of 4.2 and a contribution of 35.0%. Participants emphasised the importance of streamlining documentation processes to reduce delays and improve operational efficiency.

Interoperability, while still considered important, received a slightly lower intensity of importance value of 3.8 and contributed 20.0% to the overall effectiveness. Participants highlighted the need for blockchain systems to seamlessly integrate with existing technologies and standards to facilitate interoperability across different modes of transportation. Readiness for adoption was also identified as a key factor, with an intensity of importance value of 3.9 and a contribution of 20.0%. Participants expressed concerns about the readiness of the maritime industry to embrace blockchain technology and the need for adequate training and infrastructure to support its implementation.

The findings suggest that while blockchain technology holds significant potential for streamlining multimodal cargo documentation in the maritime industry, several factors need to be addressed to maximise its effectiveness. By prioritising security, efficiency, interoperability, and readiness for adoption, stakeholders can ensure the successful implementation and integration of blockchain solutions into existing documentation processes, thereby enhancing transparency, reliability, and efficiency in the transportation of goods across borders. The findings of this research provide valuable insights into the application of blockchain technology for streamlining multimodal cargo documentation in the maritime industry. By identifying key indicators, assessing their relative importance, and calculating scores and percentages, this study offers a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the effectiveness of blockchain solutions in cargo documentation processes. Moving forward, stakeholders in the maritime industry can use these

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findings to inform decision-making and strategy development, ultimately paving the way for more efficient, secure, and interoperable transportation systems.

The second phase of the research focused on supporting and empowering the first findings related to the application of blockchain technology for streamlining multimodal cargo documentation in the maritime industry. This phase included an analysis of research, needs, and professionalism relevant to the standardisation of international transportation processes. The findings from this phase complement and enhance the initial findings by providing a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with standardisation in the context of blockchain technology.

The research analysis revealed that while there is a growing body of literature on the application of blockchain technology in transportation management, there is a lack of specific studies focusing on its implementation in the maritime sector. Existing research primarily focuses on the theoretical aspects of blockchain technology and its potential benefits, rather than providing practical insights into its application in cargo documentation processes. This highlights the need for more empirical studies to bridge the gap between theory and practice in the maritime industry.

The needs analysis identified several key areas where standardisation could enhance the effectiveness of blockchain technology in cargo documentation processes. These include the development of industry-wide standards for data formats, protocols, and interfaces to ensure interoperability between different blockchain systems. Standardisation efforts should also focus on establishing common practices and procedures for verifying and authenticating cargo documentation, reducing the risk of fraud and errors in the transportation process.

The professionalism analysis highlighted the importance of training and capacity building to support the adoption of blockchain technology in the maritime industry. Professionals working in transportation management need to be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and implement blockchain solutions effectively. This requires investment in training programs, workshops, and certifications to ensure that professionals are proficient in using blockchain technology to streamline cargo documentation processes.

The standardisation of international transportation processes is essential for ensuring the seamless flow of goods across borders. Standardisation efforts should focus on harmonising regulations, procedures, and documentation requirements to facilitate efficient and secure transportation. Blockchain technology can play a crucial role in standardising international transportation processes by providing a secure and transparent platform for documenting and tracking cargo shipments.

The analysis of research, needs, and professionalism revealed a strong correlation between standardisation efforts and the effectiveness of blockchain technology in streamlining cargo documentation processes. By standardising data formats, protocols, and procedures, stakeholders can ensure the interoperability of blockchain systems and enhance the security and efficiency of international transportation processes. Additionally, investing in training and capacity building programs can empower professionals to harness the full potential of blockchain technology, driving innovation and efficiency in the maritime industry.

The second findings of the research provide valuable insights into the importance of standardisation in supporting and empowering the application of blockchain technology in the maritime industry. By addressing the research gaps, needs, and professionalism challenges, stakeholders can enhance the effectiveness and adoption of blockchain solutions in streamlining multimodal cargo documentation processes. Moving forward, efforts should be made to promote collaboration and standardisation in the maritime industry to maximise the benefits of blockchain technology and ensure the smooth flow of goods across borders.

3.2. Discussions

The findings from both phases of the research provide valuable insights into the application of blockchain technology for streamlining multimodal cargo documentation in the maritime industry [7], [20]. Together, they offer a comprehensive understanding of the challenges, opportunities, and implications associated with integrating blockchain solutions into existing transportation management practices. The first phase of the research focused on exploring the practical implications of blockchain technology in cargo documentation processes, with a specific emphasis on efficiency, security, interoperability, and readiness for adoption. The findings highlighted the critical importance of security in ensuring the integrity and confidentiality of cargo documentation, with participants expressing a high level of concern about the potential risks associated with traditional documentation methods. This underscores the need for robust security measures to safeguard sensitive information and protect against fraud and cyber threats [21].

Efficiency emerged as another key consideration, with participants emphasising the need for streamlined documentation processes to reduce delays and improve operational efficiency. Blockchain technology was

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perceived as a promising solution for achieving these goals, offering a secure and transparent platform for managing documentation across different modes of transportation. However, concerns were raised about the interoperability of blockchain systems and their compatibility with existing technologies and standards. Participants stressed the importance of ensuring seamless integration and interoperability to avoid disruption to existing operations.

The readiness for adoption of blockchain technology was also identified as a significant factor influencing its effectiveness in cargo documentation processes. Participants highlighted the need for adequate training and infrastructure to support the implementation and adoption of blockchain solutions, particularly among maritime industry professionals. This underscores the importance of investing in training and capacity building programs to empower professionals with the necessary skills and knowledge to leverage blockchain technology effectively [22], [23].

Building on the findings from the first phase, the second phase of the research delved deeper into the challenges and opportunities associated with standardisation in the context of blockchain technology and international transportation processes. The research analysis revealed a lack of specific studies focusing on the implementation of blockchain technology in the maritime sector, highlighting the need for more empirical research to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

The needs analysis identified several key areas where standardisation could enhance the effectiveness of blockchain technology in cargo documentation processes. These include the development of industry-wide standards for data formats, protocols, and interfaces to ensure interoperability between different blockchain systems. Standardisation efforts should also focus on establishing common practices and procedures for verifying and authenticating cargo documentation, reducing the risk of fraud and errors in the transportation process.

The professionalism analysis underscored the importance of training and capacity building to support the adoption of blockchain technology in the maritime industry. Professionals working in transportation management need to be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and implement blockchain solutions effectively [24]–[26]. This requires investment in training programs, workshops, and certifications to ensure that professionals are proficient in using blockchain technology to streamline cargo documentation processes.

The discussion of research highlights the critical role of security, efficiency, interoperability, and readiness for adoption in the effective implementation of blockchain technology in cargo documentation processes. It also underscores the importance of standardisation efforts and professionalism in supporting and empowering the adoption of blockchain solutions in the maritime industry. Moving forward, stakeholders should collaborate to promote standardisation and invest in training and capacity building to maximise the benefits of blockchain technology and ensure the smooth flow of goods across borders.

4. Conclusions

This research has provided valuable insights into the application of blockchain technology for streamlining multimodal cargo documentation in the maritime industry. The findings highlight the critical importance of security, efficiency, interoperability, and readiness for adoption in the successful implementation of blockchain solutions. Security emerges as a key concern, with stakeholders recognising the need for robust measures to protect against fraud and cyber threats. Efficiency is also a priority, with participants emphasising the need for streamlined documentation processes to reduce delays and improve operational efficiency. Interoperability is identified as a significant challenge, with stakeholders calling for industry-wide standards to ensure the seamless integration of blockchain systems. Readiness for adoption is also crucial, with stakeholders acknowledging the need for adequate training and infrastructure to support the implementation of blockchain technology. Standardisation efforts are seen as essential in supporting and empowering the adoption of blockchain solutions, with stakeholders calling for harmonised regulations and procedures to facilitate international transportation processes. Moving forward, stakeholders in the maritime industry must collaborate to promote standardisation and invest in training and capacity building to maximise the benefits of blockchain technology. By addressing these challenges and opportunities, stakeholders can enhance the security, efficiency, and interoperability of cargo documentation processes, ultimately improving the overall effectiveness of the maritime industry.

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