

Influence of material availability on international procurement of goods by private sector: A case of ALAF Ltd, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of material availability on the international procurement of goods by the private sector particularly focused on to examine the influence of supplier inventory level on international procurement of goods by private sector and to determine the influence of lead time for order on international procurement of goods by private sector. The study was guided by resource exchange theory, emphasizing the significance of resource exchange and the relationships between suppliers and buyers, to provide a theoretical basis for understanding procurement dynamics. The study used cross sectional research design while simple census sampling technique was used to include all 87 staff. Data were collected through questionnaire while data were analysed using descriptive analysis. The study's findings revealed that supplier inventory turnover rates, days sales of inventory (DSI), and reliability significantly influence procurement decisions. Additionally, lead times for order processing and transportation were found to be critical determinants of efficiency in international procurement. Based on these findings, the study recommends that organizations should prioritize suppliers with high inventory turnover rates and low DSI, as these suppliers are better equipped to maintain supply continuity and minimize procurement risks. The study also recommends that businesses should work towards minimizing lead times by optimizing their order processing systems and improving communication with suppliers. Streamlining internal procurement processes and fostering transparent communication will help mitigate delays and improve procurement efficiency.

Keywords: ALAF, Goods, Inventory, International Procurement, Lead Time, Supplier

I. INTRODUCTION

Material availability is a critical determinant of success and efficiency in supply chain management. It is closely associated with inventory levels and lead times, both of which play essential roles in procurement planning and logistics operations. While maintaining high inventory levels offers a buffer against shortages, it also leads to increased holding costs. In contrast, lean inventory practices widely adopted by modern supply chains require consistent material supply to prevent production disruptions. Lead time, defined as the interval between placing an order and receiving goods, is particularly sensitive to material availability, especially in international procurement (Chen et al., 2020).

In developed countries such as the United States, private sector firms benefit from advanced procurement systems, well-established supplier networks, and modern infrastructure. However, these advantages do not fully insulate them from global material disruptions. Events such as geopolitical tensions, the COVID-19 pandemic and climate-related crises have exposed vulnerabilities in international supply chains (Ivanov et al., 2019). In the United Kingdom, for instance, post-Brexit trade regulations and customs procedures have led to delays and increased complexity in procurement. Consequently, British firms have had to adjust inventory strategies and anticipate extended lead times (Jusoh & Kasim, 2017).

In many African countries, the private sector's ability to manage material availability is constrained by underdeveloped infrastructure, limited access to financing, and heavy reliance on imported raw materials. These factors often result in longer lead times, increased procurement costs, and frequent stockouts (Dedeji et al., 2018). In Kenya, some firms maintain minimal inventory to cut operating costs, but this strategy increases their vulnerability to supply interruptions caused by delayed international shipments. However, a growing number of firms are exploring local sourcing and regional trade partnerships to enhance procurement resilience (Moraa, 2021).

In Tanzania, similar challenges persist. Many private firms, particularly Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), lack access to modern technology and supply chain visibility, which hinders accurate forecasting of material availability (Musanzikwa, 2013). These challenges, coupled with inefficiencies in transportation and logistics infrastructure, contribute to long lead times and inconsistent inventory levels (Gurmu, 2023). As a result, firms are

often forced to strike a difficult balance between maintaining sufficient stock to meet demand and avoiding excessive inventory costs (Moon et al., 2018). Addressing these issues requires support for more resilient procurement systems, including the optimisation of customs procedures, improvements in transport infrastructure, and the promotion of digital procurement tools, as recommended by the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA, 2018).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite significant advances in global supply chain management, the ability to predict and prevent interruptions in the procurement of essential materials remains a major challenge. Many private sector companies struggle to maintain an optimal balance between inventory levels and demand, leading to frequent stockouts and procurement delays. Inefficient delivery scheduling and poor coordination in shipping further exacerbate lead times and reduce order fulfillment rates, thereby hindering supply chain performance (Niu et al., 2017; Ivanov et al., 2019). In Tanzania, supply chains face particular difficulties due to underdeveloped infrastructure, limited access to financing, and a heavy reliance on imported raw materials. These challenges cause inefficiencies in the storage, transfer, and timely delivery of goods, resulting in longer lead times and increased procurement costs (Muturi & Wanyonyi, 2015; Mutangili, 2020). Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are especially vulnerable because their dependence on external suppliers often leads to inconsistent supplier performance and unreliable procurement timelines, which delay order completion and disrupt production (Musanzikwa, 2013; Sitko, 2020). Although considerable information has been gathered regarding these challenges, there remains a lack of focused interventions to address persistent procurement inefficiencies in Tanzania. Therefore, there is an urgent need to develop effective mechanisms that improve procurement predictability, enhance supplier coordination, and strengthen logistics systems to support sustained business growth.

1.2 Research Objective

This study sought to assess the influence of material availability on international procurement of goods by private sector a case of ALAF, Dar es Salaam

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

Resource exchange theory and stage theory guides this research. In terms of the resource exchange theory, the International growth depends on the enhancement of the financial resources and the assets of the firm such as command to foreign language, network, managerial knowledge and experiences (Aulakh & Kotabe, 2009). International business (export or import) is predicted on the basis of efficiency in transactions, which organization involve in international relationships since all the resources required are not found internally (Andersen et al., 2018). One of the organizational resources leading to international procurement is innovation and technology as reported in this study (Andersen, 1993). The theory was relevant to the research as the exchange of resources practiced by ALAF Ltd since it sources resources that are not available in the domestic environment in other countries.

Concerning the stage theory, among many, the likes of (Jatiaryo et al., 2025) elaborate that internationalization was characterized by the purchasing, integration and use of knowledge about international market in a gradual manner. When the business expands, the firm accumulates resources, as well as establishing economies of scale with the excess capacity. These resources assist the management to dedicate more effort to either exportation or importation than developing, younger business, or small firms (Andersen, 1993). The theory of stage argument puts it that the small companies lack the economy of scale, efficiencies and management talent required to stay alive in the global market. The study finds use of the theory since the ALAF Ltd deal with international procurement and the perception on international sourcing during procurement of goods such as machines (cranes, forklift), raw material (aluminum, zinc, coils) and spare parts. This benefits ALAF Ltd a lot in terms of technology and enhances their economies of scale.

2.2 Empirical Review

The challenges of international procurement have continued to attract scholarly attention. Kioko and Were (2018) earlier findings regarding issues like poor control mechanisms, political non-compliance, and unfamiliarity with international purchasing protocols remain relevant, as recent studies confirm persistent gaps in procurement capacity. Furthermore, ongoing training and capacity-building efforts in procurement offices are vital for improving awareness and adherence to international procurement standards (Kasim et al., 2019) identified the main causes of international procurement as quality considerations, cost advantages, legal barriers, and strategic reasons. Recent research supports these drivers, emphasizing that firms increasingly source internationally due to price disparities and

limited domestic supply (Ohida et al., 2024). Quality standards and fitness for purpose remain critical factors influencing international purchasing decisions (Saka, et al., 2019).

Ahmed (2017) observations about the importance of infrastructure, cultural compatibility, and thorough supplier evaluation are echoed in contemporary studies. According to Tripathi and Jha (2018), effective international sourcing hinges on evaluating multiple dimensions, including delivery reliability and compliance with international regulations. Muturi and Wanyonyi (2015) study of the Kenyan tea sector highlighted economies of scale and supplier capabilities as motivations for international procurement. Similarly, recent analyses reveal that firms continue to seek suppliers that offer superior technology and competitive pricing to enhance production efficiency (Barker, 2021).

Gurmu, (2023) examination of the evolution from domestic to global sourcing notes challenges such as currency exchange volatility and customs regulations. Recent findings by (Kamari & Ham, 2021) reinforce the need for firms to develop robust risk management strategies to handle these complexities. Kalatya (2017) argued that global procurement optimizes costs and quality through rational global manufacturing chains. This is further supported by recent empirical evidence demonstrating how multinational corporations leverage international procurement to enhance operational efficiency and competitiveness (Naji et al., 2022).

A study, International Procurement, and operational Efficiency major multinational logistics, performed by (Perera et al., 2020) suggested that international purchasing is the use of global resources, the search of a bargain at the best quality in every part of the world. In the sense of supply-chain management, having an international purchasing should be based on the establishment of the global manufacturing chain so that to establish the rational purchasing scheme and secure the purchase of high-quality goods of rational price (Kalatya, 2017). Other than this, it is a good method of measuring and monitoring the efficiency of purchasing activities so that they keep to a minimum the total cost of purchasing (Kulkarni et al., 2017). As the economy has become globalized, the rivalry of companies is getting more and intense and all the business needs to improve its level of T, Q, C, S (Time of research and development; Quality of products; Cost control; satisfaction with Service) (Mafini et al., 2020). Empirical Evidence showed that a number of researchers have been conducted in the international procurement area.

In the meantime, Padam et al. (2025) evaluated the ethiotelecom foreign procurement practices. The research problems to be addressed are to determine the strengths and weaknesses of purchasing policy, guidelines and manual, investigate foreign purchasing and determine their significance and associated challenge levels, and giving feasible recommendations on possible improvements to the purchasing policy towards foreign purchasing. To this extent, the researchers used questionnaire to obtain data directly; interview and referred secondary as well as materials that discuss the documentation on procurement in ethiotelecom. Besides, the data collection has been assisted by secondary sources as well. Methodologically, it was planned that this study will be of descriptive nature. The key research results show that the international procurement practice does not get well performed by the End-users, Procurement staff, suppliers and stakeholders of ethiotelecom foreign Procurement that are directly or indirectly engaged in the foreign procurement of the company. This occurs on account of politicl influence and absence of appropriate regulating system. The researchers advised the Management of the department and specially sourcing department to create an opportunity of appropriate training, to create long term strategic supplier relationship of strategic items, to create a win-win relationship as well as smooth relationship with suppliers, end users, suppliers, and the stakeholders using the awareness creation events and enhancing a feasible and efficient process of procurement which saves much time and resources substantially (Padam et al., 2025).

At the same time there was study by Viswanathan et al. (2020) aiming at determining the connection between international procurement procedures and the performance of supply chains of the energy development agencies. The study was based on positivistic approach to philosophy. The research used a cross-sectional survey research design whereby they aimed at gathering as much as possible quantitative data at a given instance of time in order to determine the tendencies of value addition in the energy sector in Kenya. The target population in the study comprised six energy development agencies in Kenya as presented by the Ministry of energy. The agencies that develop energy were the unit of analysis. In the study, the researcher intentionally sampled both the top managers and middle managers because they are the individuals that matter in the handling of the strategic issues pertaining to the departments. Primary data were gathered using self-administered questionnaires. Quantitative data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), consistent with methodologies in recent procurement research (Viswanathan et al., 2020).

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study used a cross-sectional research design, which is ideal for examining how different factors relate to each other at a specific point in time. This design helped capture a clear snapshot of procurement practices and their

impact at ALAF without the need for long-term tracking, making it practical and efficient for this research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

3.2 Research Site

The research was conducted at the African Logistics and Freight Agency (ALAF), a prominent organization engaged in international procurement and logistics. ALAF is based in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania's main commercial city and port, making it a strategic hub for studying procurement challenges linked to international trade. Dar es Salaam's bustling economy, diverse population, and infrastructure challenges provide an ideal background to understand the real-world issues ALAF faces. The choice of ALAF was motivated by its central role in handling international shipments and its accessibility for data collection.

3.3 Sampling and Data Collection

Since the total number of employees at ALAF is 87, the study used a census sampling approach, meaning every staff member was included. This allowed for a complete picture of procurement practices from all employees, increasing the reliability of the results (Saunders et al., 2019). Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed during workdays, ensuring convenience and a good response rate. To deepen understanding, qualitative data were gathered through interviews with senior staff. These interviews, conducted face-to-face at ALAF's offices, provided rich insights into the procurement process and challenges faced by the organization.

3.4 Data Analysis

The study applied both quantitative and qualitative analysis methods. The questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, averages, and standard deviations—to summarize key trends and opinions (Field, 2018). For the interview data, responses were carefully transcribed, coded, and examined for common themes using content analysis. This helped identify patterns in procurement challenges and solutions, complementing the quantitative findings and strengthening the overall conclusions (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Influence of Supplier Inventory Level on International Procurement

This section explores the impact of supplier inventory levels on international procurement decisions. The respondents' views were examined to understand how inventory turnover rate, days sales of inventory (DSI), and other related metrics influence procurement practices. The descriptive statistics provided insight into perceptions of these inventory factors and their role in shaping procurement strategies

Table 1

Supplier Inventory Level

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
The inventory turnover rate of our suppliers significantly impacts our procurement decisions.	4.21	0.74	High Agreement
We prioritize suppliers with high inventory turnover when selecting partners for international procurement.	4.18	0.77	High Agreement
A supplier's ability to maintain a high inventory turnover positively influences our trust in their reliability.	4.11	0.82	High Agreement
The days sales of inventory metric is crucial for evaluating potential suppliers in international procurement.	4.09	0.86	High Agreement
Suppliers with lower DSI are preferred because they indicate better inventory management practices.	4.15	0.79	High Agreement

The first specific objective examines the influence of supplier inventory levels on international procurement decisions within the private sector. The analysis reveals a strong consensus among participants regarding the importance of inventory turnover rates in procurement. The statement "The inventory turnover rate of our suppliers significantly impacts our procurement decisions" yielded a mean of 4.21 and a standard deviation of 0.74, indicating a high level of agreement. Inventory turnover is important as it reflects supplier efficiency, product freshness, and cost control. According to Tripathi & Jha (2018), a high inventory turnover rate indicates effective stock management, which reduces the risk of obsolescence and holding costs. Suppliers with high turnover rates are also likely to offer better prices due to operational efficiency, making them attractive to procurement departments aiming to optimise budgets.

Similarly, the statement "We prioritise suppliers with high inventory turnover when selecting partners for international procurement" scored a mean of 4.18 and a standard deviation of 0.77, reinforcing the preference for efficient suppliers. Respondents also expressed trust in suppliers with high turnover, as shown by a mean of 4.11 and standard deviation of 0.82. Suppliers with high turnover rates are more likely to restock promptly, ensuring timely delivery and reducing stockouts. This is critical in today's fast-paced environment, where delays may disrupt production and affect customer satisfaction. In contrast, suppliers with low turnover may accumulate excess stock, incur high holding costs, and pass these costs on to customers, making them less desirable. Gurmu (2023) found that businesses prefer international procurement partners with efficient inventory turnover, as this reflects strong demand and reliable stock availability. Furthermore, such suppliers often demonstrate better cash flow, enabling investment in service improvements and adaptation to changing market demands especially vital in international contexts with dynamic economic and geopolitical conditions.

The DSI metric also emerged as essential in supplier evaluation, with a mean of 4.09 and a standard deviation of 0.86. Preference for suppliers with lower DSI, indicative of effective inventory management, was confirmed by a mean of 4.15 and a standard deviation of 0.79. A low DSI reflects the supplier's ability to convert inventory quickly, which minimises overstocking risks and improves liquidity. This supports the idea that efficient inventory practices reduce procurement risk and enhance supply chain performance. Mafini et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of DSI in determining supplier responsiveness under volatile market conditions, with low DSI values often linked to greater agility and reliability. Overall, the findings underscore the critical role of inventory management in international procurement. Suppliers with high inventory turnover and low DSI are favoured for their ability to meet demand and manage stock efficiently. These results highlight the importance for procurement teams to prioritise suppliers with strong inventory management capabilities, as this affects procurement efficiency, cost control, and supply chain stability.

To complement the quantitative findings, qualitative interviews were conducted with three procurement officers from private sector organisations engaged in international procurement. Their insights reinforce the survey results and provide deeper context.

One respondent remarked:

"In our international procurement strategy, we avoid suppliers with poor inventory movement. If they can't give us a DSI trend or show consistency in turnover, it signals unreliability, especially for time-sensitive products." (Interviewee 1, Procurement Officer, Logistics Firm – Dar es Salaam)

Another stated:

"High turnover gives us confidence in the supplier's agility. We have dealt with vendors from Asia and Europe, and those with rapid inventory turnover also tend to have stronger customer service and fulfilment systems." (Interviewee 2, Senior Procurement Manager, Manufacturing Company – Arusha)

A third participant added:

"DSI is something we analyse seriously. Low DSI tells us that the supplier is moving products quickly and not hoarding. That aligns with our lean inventory policy." (Interviewee 3, Procurement Analyst, Multinational FMCG – Dar es Salaam)

These views confirm that inventory turnover and DSI are not just theoretical concepts but practical performance indicators. Procurement professionals use them to reduce supply chain risks, improve responsiveness, and ensure cost predictability in international sourcing. These interviews substantiate the statistical findings and highlight the real-world relevance of inventory metrics in procurement planning.

4.2 Influence of Lead Time for Order on International Procurement

This section explored how lead time for orders affected international procurement decisions. The analysis focused on respondents' views regarding the impact of order processing and transportation times on their procurement strategies. The results indicated a strong consensus on the importance of lead times in shaping procurement choices.

Table 2
The Lead Time for Order

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
The length of time it takes to process an order significantly impacts our decision to procure goods internationally.	4.25	0.71	High Agreement
A shorter order processing time makes international procurement more attractive.	4.20	0.75	High Agreement
Clear and transparent communication regarding order processing time from international suppliers is essential.	4.30	0.67	High Agreement
Transportation time is a major factor we consider when choosing international suppliers.	4.24	0.72	High Agreement
Longer transportation times increase the risk of delays and disruptions in our supply chain.	4.29	0.70	High Agreement

The statement "The length of time it takes to process an order significantly impacts our decision to procure goods internationally" received a mean score of 4.25 with a standard deviation of 0.71. This result indicates a high level of agreement among respondents, emphasizing that the duration of order processing is a critical factor in their international procurement decisions. A longer processing time can adversely affect procurement efficiency and decision-making. This observation agrees with the studies that made lead time an important aspect in supply chain management. Faster processing of orders was especially appreciated, since it adds efficiency to the work process and makes the international procurement even more attractive. At that, one can state, that the duration of processing the order can be described as the critical point of our decision to buy goods in a foreign country. Efficiency and speed are of the highest order in the contemporary vigorous market. Such issues as delays in processing orders can result in shortages in stocks, sales losses, and eventually, the customer dissatisfaction. According to Ohida et al., (2024), International sourcing can lead to longer lead times due to a number of reasons such as custom clearance and shipping logistics and so the lead times must be considered adequately before entering into a deal with an international supplier. There is also the matter of the unpredictability of international shipping that can increase the complexity of the decision-making process even more. Unforeseeable delays are possible because of several factors like geopolitical problems, natural calamities, or difficulty in logistics.

Respondents also showed strong agreement with the statement "A shorter order processing time makes international procurement more attractive," which had a mean of 4.20 and a standard deviation of 0.75. This suggests that quicker order processing is viewed favorably and is a key consideration when evaluating international procurement options. A shorter order processing time is one of the major reasons which adds even more attractiveness to international procurement. By reducing the time required to dispatch orders, the companies do not only enhance their own efficiency, but also acquire a competitive advantage on the market. The faster order processing enables a business to be able to handle market changes fast enough. This is in line with Ivanov et al., (2019) who claimed that, in the modern world where consumer taste changes every single night, the ability to pull goods in within a short period implies that organizations are in a better position to position themselves to meet the customer need. This flexibility is important in avoiding customer dissatisfaction and loss loyalty as late availability of products can cause loss of sales and a bad reputation

The importance of clear and transparent communication regarding order processing times from international suppliers was reflected in the statement "Clear and transparent communication regarding order processing time from international suppliers is essential," which had a mean of 4.30 and a standard deviation of 0.67. This highlights that respondents place a high value on transparency to manage expectations and reduce uncertainties. To begin with, it can be used to control the expectations of the customers. When the customers make the order, they will have a period in their minds that the delivery will be made. When the supplier can assure the customer of the possibility of delay, the expected or average time required to process goods spoken out beforehand, then the chances of frustration and dissatisfaction is low. This transparency makes the supplier and the customer relate well and creates trust between the two. According to Naji et al. (2022), effective communication can drive operational efficiency to a great extent. The knowledge of the expected processing times by businesses will improve their planning of inventories and logistical arrangements. This vision allows them to have sufficient stocks at hand and to have a plan on the shipments coming, providing that the business process will be not so disrupted. It also enables companies to notify their clienteles on when their orders are likely to be delivered, especially when there is a spike of demand or promotional offers. It also has an implication on supply chain management. It can be a ripple effect through an interconnected global market and this delay by a single supplier will affect the entire network of the supply chain.

Transportation time was also identified as a significant factor in supplier selection, as indicated by the statement "Transportation time is a major factor we consider when choosing international suppliers," with a mean of 4.24 and a standard deviation of 0.72. This shows that the duration of transportation is a crucial aspect that influences



the decision-making process in international procurement. The respondents indicated that the operation of longer transportation could result in the possibility of delay and disturbance to the supply chain. This brings out the importance of efficient transport logistics and productivity of transportation time so as to reduce the possible delays. It is emphasized in the analysis that transportation and reduction of lead times are important elements of sustainable, smooth international procurement. Kulkarni et al. (2017) revealed that when choosing overseas suppliers, transportation time would be a consideration to be given due to a number of reasons. To begin with, the rate at which goods can be transported has a direct effect on the capability of a company to satisfy the needs of its customers. The modern world is highly competitive and consumers of the modern world want speed to get their products. Failure to deliver as expected by the supplier may create shortages in stock and losing sale opportunities which will eventually result in loss of customers. Thus, it is evident that business needs to evaluate seriously the transportation times to optimize its capacity to support its service characteristics.

Lastly, the statement "Longer transportation times increase the risk of delays and disruptions in our supply chain" received a mean of 4.29 with a standard deviation of 0.70. This result reflects respondents' concerns about the potential risks associated with extended transportation times, which can lead to disruptions and impact supply chain efficiency. The influence of transportation times on the decision making process of procurement was also huge. The respondents indicated that the operation of longer transportation could result in the possibility of delay and disturbance to the supply chain. This brings out the importance of efficient transport logistics and productivity of transportation time so as to reduce the possible delays. It is emphasized in the analysis that transportation and reduction of lead times are important elements of sustainable, smooth international procurement. Padam et al. (2025) found that when choosing overseas suppliers, transportation time would be a consideration to be given due to a number of reasons. To begin with, the rate at which goods can be transported has a direct effect on the capability of a company to satisfy the needs of its customers. The modern world is highly competitive and consumers of the modern world want speed to get their products. Failure to deliver as expected by the supplier may create shortages in stock and losing sale opportunities which will eventually result in loss of customers. Thus, it is evident that business needs to evaluate seriously the transportation times to optimize its capacity to support its service characteristics.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The research findings show that, high inventory turnover rates and low DSI were observed at suppliers as they were considered more depended upon to satisfy the demand on regular basis. These suppliers have had improved risk management in avoiding stock outs and disruptions in the supply chain. This discovery agrees with available literature that has advocated good inventory.

The report made by the study also refers to the fact that lead-time or the interval between the time of order and its delivery was critical to the procurement efficiency. Manufacturers who had the shortest lead times and were transparent in order processing had the priority since they helped in the agility of the operations. This was especially useful to the companies that were dealing with the fast developing worldwide markets, where the failure to deliver shipped goods on time could presuppose a substantial loss of finances.

5.2 Recommendations

The suppliers that are most preferred are the suppliers who have high inventory turnover rates and low DSI, since they are in a better position to keep the supply chain going, and prevent procurement of risk. Strict shipper selection criteria should be implemented in order to place an emphasis on how the shipper handles inventory so that companies can select shippers that can keep up with demand continuously. This involves analyzing technological capacity of the suppliers to allow real time managing of inventory. It should also include making attempts by the businesses to reduce the lead times by well streamlining their order processing system as well as through the communication with the suppliers. Easing the internal procurement procedures and encouraging open communication will allow reducing time losses and enhancing the effectiveness of procurement. Moreover, by cooperating with the suppliers of logistics organizations can improve the management of transportation and minimize the loss of time in the supply chain.



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