An Exploration on Supply Chain Resilience Capabilities of Tea Exporting Companies: Special Reference to Pre COVID-19 and During COVID-19 Pandemic

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The paper explores how the Sri Lankan tea exporting companies used their resilient capabilities to survive the unexpected disruptions before the COVID-19 pandemic and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers used interpretivism philosophy with a qualitative approach. The study used the purposive sampling technique to select six managers and above level employees in the major tea exporting companies as a sample. The data was collected by having conducted structured interviews and thematic analysis was used as the analysis. The most frequently used supply chain resilience capabilities are: the connectivity of external and internal stakeholders to share information, on-time pick-up and delivery, problem-solving through online platforms and collective learning, and integrated decision making. However it has been found that track and trace system of the companies has not contributed much to the resilience of the supply chain in the respective companies during COVID-19. Furthermore, as a result of the pandemic the physical weekly auctions have been converted to online monthly auctions. As a resilient capability, some organizations have introduced Bubble systems, to separate employees from unnecessary contact.

The study bridges the contextual gap of supply chain resilience literature by having investigated the resilient capabilities used by the Sri Lankan tea exporting companies during the COVID-19. Further the findings contributes to the knowledge by being latest empirical studies conducted on supply chain resilient capabilities in the Sri Lankan context. The current study also contributed to the scares literature on supply chain resilient capabilities in the tea industry both Sri Lankan and global context.

Keywords: *COVID-19, Resilient capabilities, Sri Lankan tea supply chain, Supply chain resilience*

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