

# **A Case Study Approach to Explore Supply Chain Disruptions in Sri Lankan Retail Supermarket Industry**

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## **1. Introduction**

This research study emphasised on investigating the supply chain activities in retail supermarket industry and the disruptive events that can cause supply chain operations. Sri Lankan retail supermarket industry has very little published academic knowledge. This study intended to fill the gap created by lack of academic knowledge in Sri Lankan supermarket chain industry. This study has used international supermarket chains' best practices and related academic literature to develop frameworks to local context in identifying disruptions in retail supply chain. International academic literature was used to identify and define supply chain operations in Sri Lankan supermarket chains and to identify disruptions that are common in the industry.

## **2. Methodology**

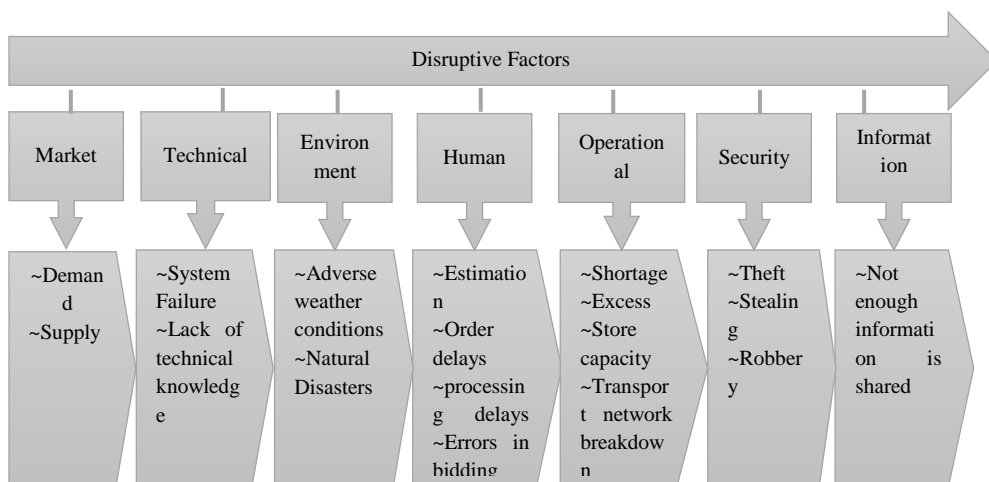
To identify disruptions in supermarket industry, information was collected from three big supermarket chains in the industry. Non-probability convenient sampling method was adopted to select the companies that could be easily accessed with information. Series of in-depth interviews were carried out among operational and managerial level employees to collect extensive information. A semi-structured questionnaire was used as a framework to obtain information while carrying out interviews. Further, to gain more insight in to the studied interviews, unstructured questions were asked to find more case study based information. Any secondary data available on internet as papers, articles etc. were also used in discussions. Triangular method was used to cross-reference and to verify findings between the different sources.

The literature on supply chain risks and vulnerability used to support the base for identifying disruptions in supply chains. Traditionally, studies of supply chain disruptions approached the issues from either demand-side uncertainties or supply

side disruptions (Joonget. al, 2013[1]). Studies later identified further influencing categories to supply chain taking demand and supply as a base. Adegeoke et. al, 2008 [2] identified miscellaneous risks in addition to demand and supply risks. In the process of identifying disruptions in maritime wheat supply chain, Saut,2011[3], identified security and safety, service related factors, infrastructure related issues, market, organisation and relationships, etc., also as disruption points/levels/categories.

### 3. Findings

Figure 1 depicts the key factors that are causing the disruptions in the supermarket supply chains developed by referring to existing research studies on related areas as well as the author’s learning through interviews and discussions during the research.



Source: Author

**Figure 1: Key Supply Chain Disruptive Factors in Supermarket Industry**

Research study identified direct disruptions that are known to supply chain personal as well as that are indirectly disrupting the supply chain flow on which the responsible persons are assigning less focus. Each factor is found in detail using the information collected from primary and secondary sources.

The research study touched on an important aspect of the industry that has never been addressed in any existing research finding or academic knowhow: It revealed that industry personnel lack knowledge in their supply chains, its disruptions and what could be done to mitigate the impacts arising from supply chain disruptions. Identifying disturbances can clear the big picture of the supply chain network’s bottlenecks. This can allow the management to take necessary actions in advance, in order to maintain a smooth flow of quality supply on time, leading to better

customer satisfaction. Identified disruptions could also be used to improve supply chain operations and benefit the Industry. Taking corrective action will help the supermarket industry to improve efficiency levels and will enable higher profits together with highly satisfied set of customers.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The research study identified key factors that are causing disruptions in supply chains of retail supermarket industry. The significance of the factors is being discussed as opposed to the current practices in the supermarkets. Further research to explore this area is highly recommended.

#### **References**

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