

Supply Chain Management after the Post-2020 Crises. Results from an Empirical Analysis

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Abstract

The first years of the 2020s brought forth many significant challenges for supply chains worldwide, impacting all aspects from production to distribution. This article aims to illustrate how disruptions caused by these events have underscored the need to redesign supply chains to better withstand such factors. These disruptions began with COVID-19, which caused significant disruptions in global production operations, resulting in delays in the production of finished goods and shortages of critical components and materials. The subsequent extension of supplier lead times in advanced economies since late 2020 is the most evident manifestation of tensions within global production networks, as indicated by the Purchasing Managers' Index on supplier lead times, which quantifies developments in the time required for input delivery to companies. Following the pandemic, other critical issues have arisen, including: i) difficulties in the logistics and transportation sector, ii) shortages of raw materials, iii) inflation, iv) geopolitical changes, v) labor shortages. This article aims to describe how companies have responded to this series of high-impact events occurring in a short period of time. The analysis was conducted over a period of four consecutive years (from 2019 to 2023) through the distribution of a questionnaire to approximately 160 companies in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) supply chain. The questions aimed to understand the key changes in relationships with customers, suppliers, and key operational activities. The results of each questionnaire were published in an annual report by an Italian journal. Ten main attitudes were highlighted from the analysis of the responses provided. The fragility of global supply chains, particularly in terms of logistics, manufacturing, distribution and demand, prompts supply chain stakeholders to re-evaluate their strategies to mitigate future risks, including investing in digital technologies, automation, diversify their supplier base and improve visibility and transparency in their supply chains.

Keywords: supply chain management, Covid, crisis, disruption, operations