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Exploration of the Problems Faced by Cargo Operations in Sri Lankan Airlines

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In the dynamic realm of supply chain and logistics in the digital age, this study aims to explore the operational challenges within Sri Lankan Airlines cargo operations and propose strategic solutions to enhance operational efficiency. The study focuses on three pivotal areas: documentation, handling perishable cargo, and digitalization. This qualitative study employed thematic data analyses, gathering data by conducting interviews with the Sri Lankan cargo operations management team where a purposive sampling technique was used. Documentation bottlenecks were discovered, emphasizing excessive paperwork, rigorous evaluations prone to human errors, and communication gaps leading to fines. For perishable cargo, challenges such as the absence of a cold chain management system, limited freezer areas, and inadequate storage were identified. Digitalization barriers include outdated tracking systems, lack of cargo checking machines and communication challenges during SLACDP system implementation. The study highlights the urgent need to streamline operations and adapt to the digital era. Proactive recommendations support adopting e-AWB, electronic signatures, and unified communication platforms to revolutionize documentation processes. Upgrading the automated temperature monitoring system is proposed to ensure real-time data alerts for perishable cargo. Collaborations with airlines and freight forwarders are recommended for a steady supply of containers, overcoming space constraints in the cargo warehouse. The need for a modern, cloud-based cargo tracking system and automation tools is emphasized, recognizing the current technological constraints in the developing country context. For future research, the study suggests exploring diverse samples, conducting quantitative studies, and extending the focus beyond a single airline or country.

Keywords: *digitalization, documentation, perishable cargo*