

Analysis of Trends in the Export of Tea from India

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Abstract

The study focused on the trends in exports, volume-value of tea export of India in a decade. The study utilizes a quantitative approach to follow a descriptive and exploratory design relying on secondary data gathered in the form of published reports and official statistics and analysed using the MS Excel tool. The findings show that there has been a tendency of moderate yet unstable growth in the tea exports, whereby there have been significant changes in the volume of exports as well as in the export earnings during the time of study. The results indicate that there is a variance between volume and value, which depicts better price realization and progressive difference to value-added and specialty tea segments, and also specific seasonal fluctuations associated with production cycles. The study finds that the tea export industry of India has the strength and adjustment abilities to endure global competition, volatile prices, and climatic changes owing to diversification and strategic repositioning in the global value chain.

Keywords: Tea Exports, Export Growth Trends, Price Realization, Seasonal Variation, Global Competitiveness

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

India was involved in the exportation of different kinds of agricultural products over decades. Agriculture and other related industries were able to sustain 55 percent of the population in the country. Among the commodities that were part of the agriculture industry was tea since it was the second most used drink in the world after water (Sivanesan 2013). The tea production was conducted in nearly every corner of the world, with such countries like China, India, Iran, Sri Lanka, Japan, Bangladesh, etc. leading in tea production, and India was the biggest user of tea in the world (Saha et al., 2021). India was growing about 1.2 million tons of tea annually and out of these; half was actually consumed by the Indians themselves and half of the tea actually exported to other nations. The significant quantity of the imported team consisted of Russia, Iran, UAE, Pakistan, USA, Egypt, etc. The tea production helped in generating employment to both Indian citizens, both directly and indirectly, over a long period of time (Gikunju).

The British were the key creditors to the establishment of the tea industry in India, having been the ones to discover the potential of tea in India. Tea was grown in such states as Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. In India, the amounts were inclined to be restricted to the first five states in a significant way in Tripura, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh (Sekar 2022). Despite the fact that India was a top producer of tea, the future of the country in terms of exporting tea was not good, as the demand was growing and the yield process was declining, and the country was incapable of competing with the major tea-exporting nations (Mishra et al., 2012). The tea that was produced was consumed by approximately 85 percent of the total households in India and consumption was caused by the rise in population, urbanization as well as the rising incomes and living standards of the Indian citizens. It was found that the tea was income-elastic and had a higher elasticity in the developing countries (Parte et al., 2022). This also led to an increase in share of India to

such developing countries in the context of exports. The outlook on tea seemed promising and was dependent on the possibility of India to better the export strategy and bring export surplus closer by increasing the yield.

In the year 1953, the tea board of India was established to help in developing the tea sector in India. The board was based in Kolkata and had over 17 offices in the rest of the states. The jurisdiction of this board was to control the producers, manufacturers, exporters, etc. by different control orders under the Tea Act (Deka and Goswami 2020). The board was more engaged with the production and productivity in enhancing the quality of tea and marketing promotion (Liu 2020). It concerned the study and creation of the industry and carried out the field-directed operations connected with the promotions including common participation in the organization, arrangement of the buyers and sellers meet, and the hosting of delegations of trade (Vidya, 2018). The market survey was also carried out by the board as it analyzed and identified consumer behavior and presented information that was relevant and accurate to the importers and exporters.

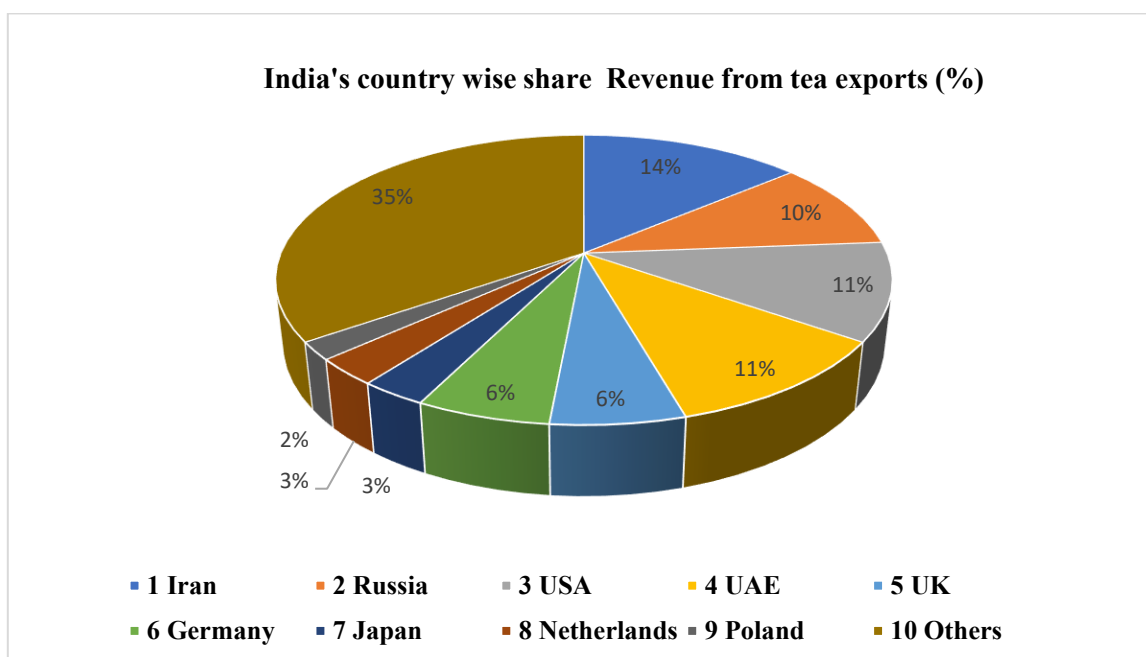
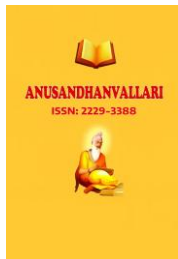


Figure 1: Share revenue from tea export

Source: Tea Board of India

1.2 Trends, Competitiveness, and Policy Dynamics in India's Tea Export Sector

Export structure of Indian tea points at the great differences regarding the type of product as well as the markets of destination. CTC tea also contributes a big percentage of export volume especially to those nations where strong and blended teas are favoured. On the contrary, the orthodox and specialty teas, such as the Darjeeling and organic, are priced higher in the European and North American markets (Langford 2021). Indian tea is still being imported to traditional markets like Russia, Iran, and the United Kingdom, but the growth of the Indian tea market to emerging parts of the West Asian and African markets has been seen in export data. This geographical diversification has decreased reliance on fewer countries and has contributed to the stabilization of the performance of exports (Islam et al., 2021). Moreover, the increased popularity of packaged and branded tea globally has facilitated the shift toward the high-value chain by the Indian exporters, reinforcing India as a leader in terms of bulk tea and a luxury tea in the global markets (Zohora et al. 2022).



The realisation of prices and international competitiveness will always be the primary focus when analysing the trends of the exports of tea in India. Export earnings are subject to variations not only in the level shipped but also in international price variations, exchange rate variations and the quality image. The positive exchange rate generally contributes to the competitiveness of Indian export, and because of this, its tea is relatively cheap in the international market (Saikia & Hussain 2022). But the increasing costs of production, wages of workers or costs of transportation can influence the profit margins and price elasticity. The Indian export strategy is cost-efficient and product-differentiated compared to the competitor countries like Kenya and Sri Lanka. Orthodox teas typically achieve high prices because of their distinct flavour profiles, whereas CTC teas serve the market of high volumes (Saxena et al., 2023). To maintain export growth, it is then necessary to maintain the quality and follow the international food safety standards and the marketing strategies that focus on the Indian heritage and geographical designation of tea.

Policy interventions and government assistance have been a major influence to the performance of tea export. The Tea Board of India has enabled more international outreach through export incentives, market promotion schemes, and with the help of the Tea Board. What has become available is trade agreements and minimal tariff barriers in certain markets which have offered more opportunities in export volumes expansion (Ravi Kumar et al.,). Simultaneously, the changing climatic conditions, pest infestation, and change in the consumer preference towards green and herbal teas are among the difficulties that affect the sustainability of exports over the long run. To reinforce the further development of the export trends, India should focus on sustainable cultivation activities, technological modernization, and product innovation (Tantri 2021). Gaining a more dominance in the high growth segment like organic and specialty teas, and the enhancement in branding activities and the utilization of digital trade platforms can result in increasing the global market share of India, and tea exports keep playing a significant role in the export economy of the country.

1.3 Challenges Affecting Tea Export Performance

India has a reputation of poor performance regarding tea exports, which largely depends on the various structural, economic and environmental challenges. The strong competition in the world market especially by the key tea exporters like Kenya, Sri Lanka, and China who usually present the lowest production costs or specialization in markets is one of the main limitations. The price sensitivity of international market also restricts the capacity of Australia to increase its export volumes, especially in bulk tea segments (Islam et al., 2021). International price volatility and exchange rate also create further uncertainty as directly as export earnings and profitability are concerned. In addition, the cost of production in the country, particularly the labour wages in the main tea-producing states such as Assam and West Bengal, is on the rise, which compounds the overall cost of the Indian tea, making it less competitive in terms of prices (Deepika 2021). Delays and high transportation costs due to logistical inefficiencies, congestion of ports and high export costs are also on the list of factors favouring delays and increasing the cost of exports to India to react to changes in demand in the global market (Saxena et al., 2023).

There are also environmental and regulatory factors that are also a big threat to performance in tea exports. Climate change has also resulted in unpredictable weather conditions in terms of rainfall, rise in temperature and infestation of pests which have negative impacts on the yield and quality of tea. As the market of exports requires uniform quality parameters, any change of taste, smell, or leaf structure can diminish the global availability (Langford 2021). Also, strict food safety standards, level of pesticides residues and certification in developed markets pose compliance pressure to small and medium tea producers. There are also the chances of geopolitical tensions and trade restrictions in key importing nations, which could also disrupt the established trade routes (Hajra 2021). The demand patterns of tea all over the world are also affected by the shift in consumer preferences in herbal, green, and alternative drinks. To overcome these problems, it is necessary to

support the implementation of strategic policies, invest in eco-friendly cultivation methods, quality management systems, and develop new marketing programs to defend and increase the market share of India in the world tea export market (Gupta et a.,).

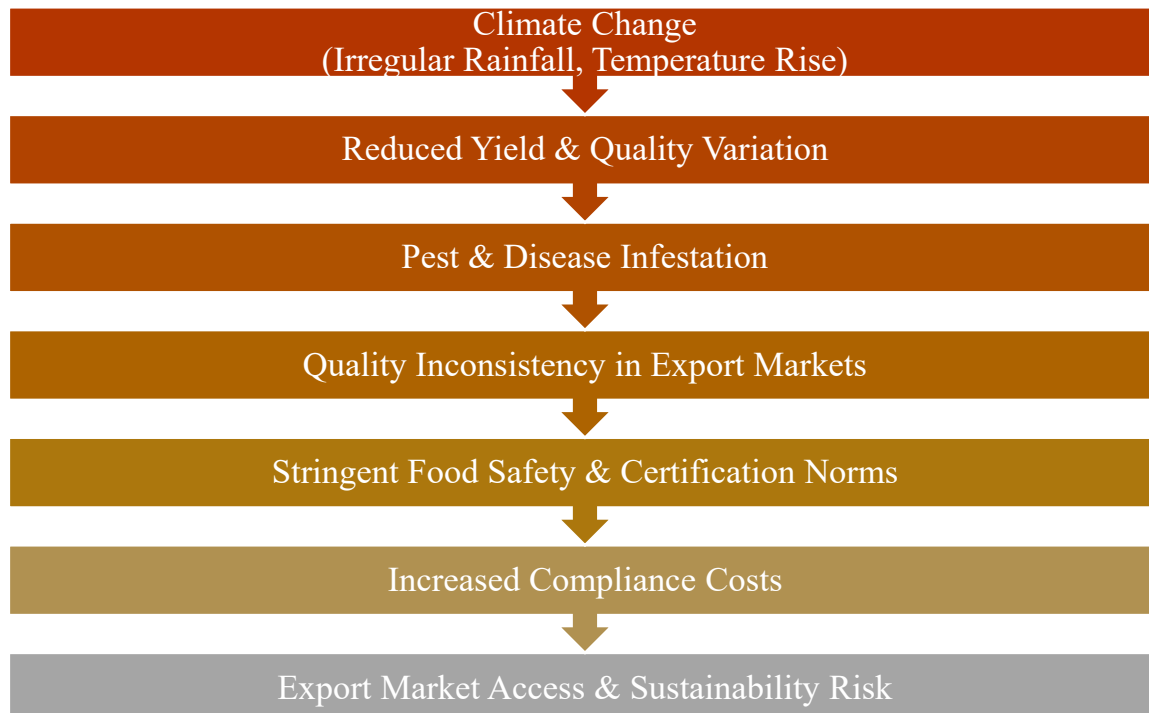


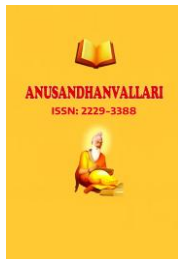
Figure 2: Environmental and Regulatory Challenges in Tea Exports

Source: Author's own compilation

2. Literature Review

Subashini, G., & Dinesh, N. (2020) focussed on the determinants that had an effect on the export performance of the tea sector. India was the initial country to introduce tea, and it was a great national pride. This was largely because it was a leader in terms of a foreign exchange earner and input to the country GDP. India has been able to capture the position of world leader in terms of tea production, consumption and export with a contribution of 31 percent to the global production. Over the last few years, the industry was more efficient in the global industry and competition by low-cost manufacturers. The focus of the study was to determine the relationship between the internal and external variables that influenced the results of the tea industry in Coonoor as far as export is concerned. This study has compared demographic make-up of respondents and the tea industry in general.

Pandey, A. K., et al., (2021) investigated the treatment of fungi in world tea industry- challenges and opportunities. All over the world tea plants were subjected to various diseases which attacked their roots, stems and foliage. Foliar infections such as blister blight, grey blight and brown blight were of importance because they adversely affected the buds and two youngest leaves, which led to the decrease in the number of harvestable shoots. The use of fungicides and microbial biocontrol agents, application of fungal elicitors of plant defense, application of resistant cultivars, etc. mitigated the effects caused by fungal infestations to tea plants through management actions. The study surveyed the known knowledge on major fungal diseases, which



affected tea crops, genetic diversity of the same, damage caused, their economic impact as well as the need of new ways of controlling the diseases in the background of the rising climate change.

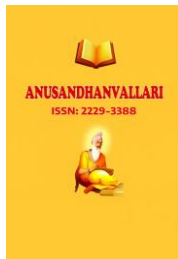
Maity, S., & Sinha, A. (2021) analyzed the changing growth trend in the exports of tea in India. The impacts of trade liberalization on the tea exports in India had also been analyzed. The analysis was completely based on secondary data which had been taken out of successive editions of Handbook of Statistics on Indian Economy published by reserve bank of India. The data had been compiled between 1987-1988 and 2018-2019. The analysis of the first objective had been facilitated by Poirier Spline function methodology. On the other hand, in the study of the second objective, the study calculated the index of openness of trade. According to the study, the Indian tea industry had been positively impacted by trade openness in the beginning but as time progressed, the rate of tea exports had slowed down. Surprisingly, the growth rate of the Indian tea exports became far less than the period before the year 2002-2007.

Alahakoon, Y., et al., (2022) examined sustainability issues and the future direction the tea business appeared to be heading to. The tea industry in less developed countries such as Sri Lanka was crucial in terms of earning foreign income, providing the women with employment, and preserving fragile ecosystems. However, those challenges and solutions of the tea industry had not been analyzed well. This study reviewed the sustainability challenges in the economic, environmental and social aspects, and examined the practices being used by the Ceylon tea industry. The readings identified the approaches used by the tea plantation firms in Sri Lanka to address those issues, which included cost-cutting measures, agricultural activities that resisted climate changes, operational mechanisation, product development, community engagement and improvement, and biodiversity protection.

Deka, N., et al., (2022) derived findings of the application of organic farming to a number of STGs in Assam, India. This was very great especially to the rural economy of the tea producing countries because one of the largest parts of the tea business is the small tea growers (STGs). The need to encourage STGs to adopt environmentally sustainable agricultural methods was necessary in order to deal with some of the issues that include livelihood, health risks, and climate change effects. It made use of mixed methods research. Production of organic tea facilitated better education and environmental awareness, networking, and business startups in comparison to the conventional practices. Besides, quantitative research developed essential areas of impact that affected smallholder adoption of organic methods, outlining the need of policy interventions in the education and income perception. The results had significant policy and practice implications in terms of improving sustainability of smallholder farmers in developing countries, which relied on cash crops.

Sreedhar, S. (2023) presented thorough study on the various determinants that affected prices of Indian tea exports and provided critical information that could be used to make strategic decisions in a competitive global market. This study examined and studied the historical data of 2015 to 2021 based on the regression analysis and automated line of modelling to explain the association between these variables and their effects on the export pricing of Indian tea. Global tea market was one of the key regions in international trade and India had become a significant player. Export of Indian tea brought a lot of improvement in the economy and reflected the Indian culture. The complexity of Indian tea exports was affected by various factors including auction prices, inflation, the fluctuation of exchange rates, production, seasonal fluctuations, exports and interest rate.

Gikunju, C. K. strategic management strategies that were analysed and enhanced the effective running of the tea enterprise in the Mount Kenya region with focus on the problems faced by the smallholder tea farmers who failed to get fair prices to their quality products. The methodology that was used included a descriptive and explanatory study design, with a population consisting of 117 members of the management teams of various positions in the tea industry. A census was already done and reliability assessed through pilot studies. The



findings showed that the techniques could explain the 84.1 performance variances. The investigation recommended that the tea producers should invest in the research and development of the technology adoption, increased the marketing strategies, and developed sustainable commercial connections to increase the earnings of the farmers and sustained their competitiveness in the international tea trade.

Maitra, S. inspected the Noorbari tea estate in the Sonitpur district of Assam occupying 1 km² (approximately 250 acres) and having a perimeter of 5.97 km. The analysis was based on time series analysis of Breaks of Additive Season and Trend algorithm (BFAST) to determine seasonal and trend of satellite-derived vegetation indices such as the Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) and Green Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (GNDVI). The results identified the usefulness of multi-spectral satellite data in the constant and large-scale observation of plantation crops. The time series analysis of vegetation indices was a viable solution that was cost effective to tea estate managers and agricultural planners as it offered an opportunity to monitor crop health and mitigate possible risks in their early stages.

3. Methods & Materials

The research methodology identified in the study is quantitative research approach aimed at investigating the topic of study in a systematic and objective way. The research design has been a descriptive and exploratory one to examine the patterns, trends, and underlying relationship in the study area, which is the global context. The study is founded solely on secondary data, which has been gathered by consulting the relevant published materials, reports, and databases within 10 years, which guaranteed the thorough temporal analysis. To process and interpret the data, the statistical software like the MS Excel has been applied to tabulate, graphically represent, and conduct simple statistical analysis, whereas the MS Word has been applied to document and present the results.

4. Hypothesis of the study

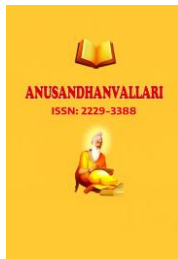
H1: There is a significant growth trend in the export of tea from India over the last 10 years.

H2: There are significant fluctuations, patterns, or seasonal variations in the volume and value of tea exports from India.

5. Result based on objectives

Objective 1: To examine the growth and trends in the export of tea from India over a specified period of 10 years.

According to the empirical findings the export of tea in India during the ten years of the study shows that the growth of tea exports follows the trend of moderate but not steadily increasing growth. Trend analysis illustrates that the volume of exports has been gradually growing throughout the decade, but there are certain years when temporary decreases were observed because of the global economic uncertainties, volatility of prices in the foreign market, and the change in the import demands among the key trading partners (Hajra 2021). The general trend shows that there is a stable export performance, although it had short-term fluctuations. It is also important to note that the export earnings were registered to have rather high growth than the physical export volumes over the years, which suggests a better price realization and a better value capture in the foreign markets (Islam



et al., 2021). This quantity-value discrepancy highlights the importance of the dynamics of prices and product positioning to the export performance formation (Saha et al., 2021).

Moreover, the findings indicate a slow but steady structural transformation in tea exports composition which was typified by progressive rise in the role played by value added and specialty tea categories of the exports. The increase in demand of packaged, branded and premium varieties has been a positive impact on the export earnings because of the changing global tastes (Mila et al., 2022). Nevertheless, periodic fluctuations in export revenues were due to changes in the exchange rates, international competition, and compliance with the requirements of the regulatory bodies on a year-to-year basis (Langford 2021). The long-term pattern indicates that the tea export industry in India has proven to be resilient and with adaptive capacity which has been aided by market diversification, quality improvement procedures and strategic repositioning in the world tea value chain.

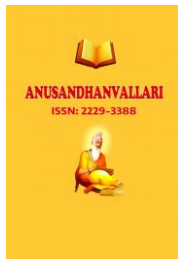
Objective 2: To analyse the volume and value of tea exports from India and identify fluctuations, patterns, and seasonal variations.

The examination of the quantity and price of the tea exported by India during the study period will show specific variations and distinguishable patterns. The volume of exports shows periodic changes, and there are years when the volume of shipment is higher because of positive demand in the global market and competitive prices, and there are also years when the export volume is smaller because of unstable situations on the global market, and supply restrictions (Sahu et al.,). Export value, in its turn, tends to change by a relatively sharp percentage in comparison to volume, as prices in the international market, exchange rates, and the product structure change (Mallik and Ghosh 2022). In a few cases, the export earnings were boosted even with small variations in the physical quantity which points to the realization of improved prices and the increase of premium and value-added types of tea in the export basket. Such a volume-value discrepancy highlights the importance of pricing patterns and product differentiation when it comes to the overall export performance (Hajra 2021).

There are seasonal changes in the trend of exporting since production of tea in India is highly tied to agro climatic conditions and plucking seasons. The highest levels of export are usually coincided with high production seasons in the largest tea-producing areas, Assam, West Bengal, and Tamil Nadu, and thus it leads to periodical increases in export (Vetri Selvi and Karunakaran 2020). On the other hand, lean working days are one of the reasons of temporary dispatches slows in exports. These seasonal changes along with world demand cycles and stock manipulations in the importing countries bring about patterns in export data which are cyclical. In general, the short-term oscillations may be observed, but the big picture is the stability of the structure due to the diversified markets and changing export structure (Jayasinghe and Kumar 2020).

6. Discussion

The study results are mostly in line with the previous empirical and theoretical works on tea export performance and competitiveness. The identified average though unstable growth pattern may attest to the claim by Mishra et al. (2012) that the structural shifts and dynamic global demand conditions have contributed to the growth of tea exports in India. The discrepancy between export value and export volume determined in the present research can be harmonized with the processes of pricing that Islam et al. (2021) identified as determinants of export earnings due to the importance of competitiveness and achieving the value in the export earnings. Equally, the effects of exchange rate changes, the auction prices, and the effects of the inflation pressures as explained by Sreedhar (2023) gives additional evidence to the changes in the export value that occurred at the time of the study. The reorganization of the value-added and specialty tea structure supports the argument of Langford



(2021) about the changes in the Indian tea value chain and the growing significance of branding and market positioning. In addition, seasonal and climatic factors affecting export trends are echoed by Jayasinghe and Kumar (2020), who highlighted how the production of tea is affected by changes in climate as a risk. In general, the discourse indicates that the performance of the tea exports in India is determined by a multi-dimensional mixture of pricing systems, structural change, weather, and strategic adjustment to an ever-growing competitive global marketplace.

7. Conclusion

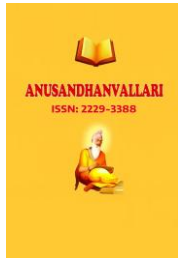
In conclusion, the study confirms that the performance of the Indian tea exports in the decade is observed as a trend of moderate yet stable growth with certain discernible volatility in its volume and value. The findings reveal that, although export amounts had periodic changes following the change in demand globally, weather and competitive factors, export earnings depicted a little better performance in the selected years, as the price was better realized and there was a gradual shift to value-added and specialty tea segments. The dislocation of the volume and value needs to be highlighted to emphasize the significance of price, exchange rate changes, and product differentiation in determining export performance. In addition, seasonal patterns associated with the agro-climatic conditions serve to substantiate the structural sensitivity of tea exports to production cycles. The findings in general support the study hypotheses in that they confirm the presence of a distinguishable growth trend and substantial fluctuations, which further demonstrates the ability of the Indian tea export industry to adapt to an ever more competitive and dynamic global trading environment.

➤ Implications, Limitation, and Future research directions

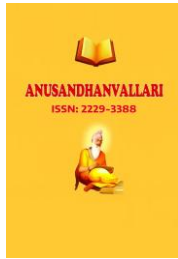
The study results have a significant policy and managerial implication especially on the significance of strategic diversification, value addition and quality improvement to support the growth of the tea exports in India in a competitive global market. Export stability and price realisation can be improved by strengthening branding efforts, marketing specialty and organic tea products, investing in climate resistant farming methods, and making logistics processes more efficient. Nevertheless, the researchers are constrained by its use of secondary data and aggregate data on export, limiting the study to micro-level analysis of firm-performance, regional imbalance and consumer behavior dynamics. The ten-year period though being adequate in the sense of detecting the overarching trends might not be adequate in detecting long-run structure breaks or in detecting regime shifts in terms of policy. Further studies might involve use of primary data, use of sophisticated econometric modelling methods and conduct comparative studies with other key rival tea-exporting nations in order to gain a clearer insight into the determinants of competitiveness. Also, a study of the consequences of sustainability requirements, online trading systems, and the changing trends of global consumption would give a deeper understanding of the future prospect of the tea export business in India.

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