

The Challenges and Way Forward in the New Normal Scenario: Logistics and Transportation Perspectives



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The COVID-19 pandemic has left its footprint all over the world and no country, society, industry, nationality, or religions were exempted from, so is the logistics and transport sector (LTS) that is particularly vulnerable to economic shocks since LTS is a derived demand of global trading. While transport is a common term, the acquired meaning of logistics is ambiguous making a clear understanding about logistics necessary to assess the impact of Covid 19 Pandemic which paved the way to new normal scenario (NNS). The word 'logistics' was originally used for the activity of moving equipment, supplies and people for military operation. Later as a general term it began to mean the practical organization that is needed to make a complicated plan successful when a lot of people and equipment are involved. In business, it began to mean the business of transporting and delivering goods. In military operations logistics make an indispensable contribution to win a war. However, overcoming and fighting the challenges created by covid-19 need even more strategies than fighting a war. Health authorities warn about new varieties of virus every other week despite huge vaccination efforts. Therefore, identifying the challenges and recommending way forward in the NNS from logistics and transportation perspectives will help all stakeholders nearly in all sectors.

Harvard experts say. "A lot of firsts are happening. "It's even easy to reduce road congestion if you just sabotage the local economy." However, some of our adaptations have only accelerated already existing trends rather than bringing totally new practices. For example, cashless society, remote office work, and the decline of brick-and-mortar retail, and virtual education have been there even before the pandemic.

NNS changed the economic approach of every country especially those of at developing stage. Globalization generally helps companies to lower the cost of production, increase competition, and offer larger variety of choices for consumers. However, on the other extreme it increased the countries' dependence on imported goods and services. When covid-19 hit the world, all countries were at their peak of globalized economy where the imports and exports are indispensable so as the LTS. Around 80% of global trade volume are being transported by ships. Logistics experts have been promoting to run tight inventory and be efficient, but with major disruption of air cargo, 'blanked' ocean sailings in NNS the frequent shortage of inventory has created a paradox. In passenger transport, cyclists have been hitting the streets in force in NNS in some countries. International Civil Aviation Organization reveals an overall reduction of 50% and 39% seats offered by airlines in 2020 and 2021 respectively compared to 2019 levels leading to USD 371 in 2020 and 327 in 2021 billion loss of gross passenger operating revenues. Nearly 90% of the World's population is subject to some form of international travel restrictions.

According to Pew Research Center in USA, the NNS in 2025 will be far more "tech-driven", presenting bigger challenges to ordinary people. Yet, some people find life is better in a 'tele-everything' world with the convenience of work from home, fast and reliable e-buying, less traffic on roads, fresher air due to less carbon emission, more time to live with family and kids etc. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) would be a challenging phenomenon as the unpredictability, uncontrollability may exceed the ability of the organism to cope. Younger generation will continue to show higher levels of anxiety and depression than older generations. Entering an adulthood would be a crime where nothing can be planned taking future for granted because the NNS is full of contingency planning and crisis management. The "coming-of-age" generation may bear long-term impact whose repercussions are yet to be realized. Accordingly, the crucial role played by the LTS should be given its due consideration in the NNS. The government policies and social practices should align well with activities of LTS. The global supply network should continue to cater to the needs and wants of consumers throughout the world in NNS. This cannot be done without efficient and effective logistics and transport system.