

Introduction important
role in facilitation of
trade.



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Introduction

Transport economics mainly focus on the movement of goods and people over time and space. There are different modes of transport used to transport goods and people from one region to another.

These include road transport, air transport, rail transport, sea and air transport. All these modes have their advantages and disadvantages and the choice of one mode of transport depends on several factors such as speed, costs, convenience, and many other factors. In transport economics, the cost of transport is very important since it plays an important role in facilitation of trade. This topic analyses transport economics specifically on the area of air transport.

History of Air Transport

Among all the other modes of transport, air transport was among the last modes to be developed. Before the development of air transport, the other modes of transport such as road and sea transport, which were developed many years ago, were used. In the ancient times before the discovery of modern modes of transport, people used to walk by foot from place to another implying that, even for people to exchange goods and services, they had to walk by foot from one market place to another. This mode of exchange was very cumbersome for many reasons.

First, it was time consuming; secondly, the quantity of goods to be transported was very little and this phenomenon made it difficult to trade and the transport was so inconvenient. However, as the time went by, different modes of transport were developed which reduced the cost of

transport. For instance, roads were developed and trucks could be used to transport goods from one region to another.

Rail and water transport were developed and goods could now be transported over long distances. Development of rail and water transport made it possible for traders to exchange their goods from country or continent to another and this facilitated more trade and reduced costs of transportation. However, the development of these three modes of transport (road, rail, and sea) transport did not solve the problem of transport completely.

A mode of transport that was faster and more convenient was required. This need led to the development of air transport in the early twentieth century. Through innovation of airplane, trade was taken to another new level where goods could now be exchanged at faster rate than before. Air transport made it possible to transport goods and people from one region to another within few minutes. Perishable goods, which could not be exchanged before due to their nature, could now be transported from one region to another.

Movement of goods and people was enhanced in all parts of the globe.

The cost of transport was also reduced in a large proportion by the development of the air transport. Since then, air transport has been developing with discovery of more advanced aircrafts, which has made transport of goods and people faster and more convenient.

Development of Airport

Discovery of aircrafts facilitated development of airports that act as the hubs of air transport. Airports have developed over the years as more advanced

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airplanes are developed. Airports have been developed in all the countries in the world. In developed countries, there are numerous airports in almost all the major towns to facilitate transportations of goods and services from one region to another. Global cities such as London, New York, Paris and many others that serve as the centre of international trade have developed large and modern airports over the last years to enhance transportation of people and goods in all the regions of the world. Airlines from different companies use these major airports as their centre to all the other routes in the world.

Air transport and economic development

The development of air transport over the years has transformed trade through increased movement of goods and passengers. Due to speed and convenience of the air transport, many businesses people carrying out international and domestic trade have opted for this mode of transport despite its high charges. According to Daley, air transport has made a positive contribution to the economy over the time (210).

The graph below shows the relationship between economic growth and the volume of goods and passengers using air transport from 1950 to 2008. Source: The Geography of Transport Systems Between 1950 and 2008, airfreight and air passengers' traffic was growing faster than the world economic growth rate. This can be attributed to the capability of the air transport to reduce time and space which attracted more goods and people to this mode. Around 1960, there was congestion in the air transport traffic and air transport companies were looking for airplanes that could carry more passengers and goods.

In 1970s, there was revolution in the air industry after development of large capacity airplanes, which could carry larger capacity and charge low prices. This increased global economic growth. As Xiaowen, Tae and Anming note, increased competition and efficiency has also increased demand of air transport (p. 24).

Thus, economic growth and air transport are closely related and development of air transport has increased global economic growth.

Airport security

Though the development of air transport has transformed world trade, it has come along with negatives effects that have seriously affected the lives of people. These negative effects include environmental pollution, air accidents, increased illegal trafficking of goods and people among other problems. Over the past years, the issue of insecurity has become a major global challenge due to increased cases of crimes in aircraft and airports.

Due to increased volume of people using air transport, airports have become potential targets for crimes such as terrorism and other kinds of crimes.

Airport provides a large crowd that is concentrated on a small area, which makes it highly susceptible to terrorism attacks. Large global airlines are also targeted due to their carrying capacity of their aircraft. The 9/11 terrorist attack at the World Trade Centre headquarters in New York in 2002 represents one of the recent terrorism attack on aircrafts. Due to increased cases of terrorism attacks and especially after the 9/11 attack, airport, and aircraft security has become a very sensitive issue in the whole world. Strict measures have been put in air transport to prevent such occurrences in

future. Lord indicates that, risk assessment in the airport security is necessary in all the airports (1). According to United States Government Accountability Office (GAO), report security scrutiny should also be done even in foreign airports and aircraft to prevent cases of terrorism (111).

Techniques and various methods have been adopted in airports in the world to ensure that aircrafts and airports are protected from any potential attack. New techniques have been developed to screen both people and goods in the airport in the search for bombs and other explosives.

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