

**THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SRI LANKAN AVIATION
INDUSTRY: A PATH TO RECOVERY FROM PASSENGER TO
CARGO TRANSPORTATION**

I hereby declare that the work described in this dissertation was prepared
under the guidance of the supervisors given to me and I have not
not been submitted in whole or in part for any other degree or
award.

By

W.A.K.W WICKRAMASINGHE



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ABSTRACT

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global aviation industry is undoubtedly devastating, compared to the economic and natural shocks that occurred throughout history. This study examines the Sri Lankan aviation industry during the pandemic and investigates its impact in terms of passenger and cargo transportation and highlights the significance of continuing air cargo operations that have contributed to the survival of the airline companies throughout the pandemic. Further, it identifies the drivers and factors that affected continuing the air cargo operations during the time and recommends some recovery approaches for the cargo sector that can be used to prepare and mitigate the impact of a similar environmental shock. The study has conducted using related statistical data published by the Civil Aviation Authority of Sri Lanka and using an online survey which was participated by the employees who are representing the air cargo sector as a sub-sector of aviation industry and some interviews with the industry experts. According to the statistical data analysis, the passenger segment was more severely affected with a significant, 75% drop in departures and a reduction of about 77% in arrivals in 2020 compared to 2019. The cargo sector experienced a decline of approximately 43% in outbound shipments and about 48% in inbound cargo in 2020 compared to 2019. Based on the responses of 51 participants, the results of the regression coefficients indicate that “Technological Advancement and Innovation” and “Changes in Cargo Demand and Behaviour” are the key factors influencing the continuation of air cargo operations during the pandemic. Thematic analysis of the interviews provided a “Thematic Map” with valuable insights into various aspects of the air cargo industry's experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. The identified themes through the Thematic map are, actions taken, challenges faced, effects of the pandemic, policies and regulations implemented, and the role of air cargo transportation in future crises.

Key Words: COVID-19 impact, Sri Lankan Aviation Industry, Contribution of Air Cargo Transportation, Future shocks, Recovery Approaches