

5 key trends transforming the transport and logistics industry



By [Vanessa Schonborn](#)

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The transport and logistics industry is undergoing a transformation driven by technological advancements, shifting consumer expectations, and global events. When combined with the current challenges of power supply, rising costs, and environmental concerns, several key trends are shaping the sector to be more innovative, efficient, sustainable and resilient in 2024.



Vanessa Schonborn, executive head transport and logistics, Vodacom

Adopting advanced technology

Digitalisation is not new to the sector, but organisations are realising that by integrating rapid technological developments, such as artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), blockchain and machine learning, they can increase supply chain visibility, operational efficiency and overall performance. In [PwC's 2023 Digital Trends in Supply Chain Survey](#), executives are planning to spend the most on AI and machine learning in the next two years, aiming to drive growth and optimise costs.

By harnessing the power of emerging technology, transport and logistics companies have increasing access to vast amounts of data, which can be used for business insights and better decision-making. This will require investing in data and analytics capabilities, as well as upskilling workforces, to unlock the benefits of new technologies now and into the future.

Making safety and security a priority

New technology is helping to overcome some of the health and safety challenges in the supply chain. For example, innovations that are being used to improve safety for long-haul road carriers include camera monitors to ensure pre-travel

safety precautions, automated sensors in vehicles, such as emergency braking and cargo locking, and fleet tracking and navigation assistance to avoid driver fatigue.

Earlier this year, [Amazon announced a US\\$200 million](#) (about R3.7 billion) investment into safety technology across its transportation network, with many other transport and logistics companies set to follow suit.



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Going beyond the physical into the virtual world, with the rise of digitalisation comes an increase in cyber security incidents. In a [Vodafone Business Fit for the Future study](#), 46% of transport and logistics organisations acknowledge that the severity of cyber security challenges is still growing and more needs to be done to remain resilient and ensure business continuity.

As the supply chain becomes more interconnected, a single threat can impact the entire ecosystem. Adopting a zero-trust approach and integrating consolidated security services in the cloud through a trusted technology provider can help protect transport and logistics organisations from the surge in cyber-attacks.

Keeping up with the e-commerce momentum

The past few years have accelerated the demand for fast, reliable and convenient delivery of goods, ordered at the push of a digital button and tracked until the last mile. To meet these expectations of customers and retailers alike, transport and logistics companies are once again turning to technology solutions.

These can optimise routes, manage fleets effectively, provide full visibility and real-time communication on the status of operations, and offer quicker shipping methods, such as automated vehicles and drones. This can not only help with enhancing customer satisfaction but also decrease costs and improve efficiencies across the supply chain.

Implementing sustainability strategies

Transport and logistics providers are increasingly adopting sustainability initiatives to align with global environmental and social responsibility goals and respond to the growing demand from consumers for eco-conscious supply chain practices.

In a [recent Deloitte study](#), nearly one-third of consumers said they would trust brands more if their supply chain was transparent, accountable, socially and environmentally responsible.



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In achieving these ambitions, the industry is seeking ways to reduce carbon emissions by moving away from fossil fuels to alternative renewable energy sources and automated electric vehicles. Integrating advanced technologies, such as IoT, blockchain and data analytics, can lead to more efficient route planning, reduced fuel consumption, and minimised waste in the supply chain processes.

Creating a collaborative supply chain ecosystem

As businesses adopt technological innovation, supply chains are transforming into interconnected ecosystems of

collaboration. Suppliers, manufacturers, distributors and even other industry stakeholders are partnering with transport and logistics companies to share resources, information and capabilities through digital platforms.

This enables real-time communication and improved operations and efficiencies. In the current climate of disruption, uncertainty and high cost, working together can increase agility and responsiveness to deliver better service, and explore new business opportunities.

Embracing these trends is not merely an option but a necessity for those aiming to stay competitive in an ever-evolving global market. By weaving digitalisation into the fabric of their operations, businesses can navigate the complexities of tomorrow's supply chain landscape with resilience and foresight.

The future is calling, and it is one where innovation paves the way for a more connected, efficient, sustainable and collaborative transport and logistics industry.

ABOUT VANESSA SCHONBORN

Vanessa Schonborn serves as the Executive Head for Transport, Logistics & Industries at Vodacom Business, overseeing a diverse portfolio that interconnects various sectors within the supply chains of both South African and African markets.

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