

AN ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF DIGITAL MARKETING IN THE FREIGHT FORWARDING INDUSTRY IN CHENNAI

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ABSTRACT

To assess how Digital Marketing Practices (DMP) and Communication Practices (CP) impact Customer Awareness (CA), Brand Trust (BT), and Business Impact (BI) in the freight forwarding sector in Chennai, this study gathered primary data from 50 logistics and import/export professionals via a structure questionnaire, then used a combination of Correlation Analysis, Multiple Regression, Sobel Test and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to examine the stated hypotheses and validate our model. Digital Marketing Practices are the strongest predictor of Customer Awareness with an R^2 value of 0.690 ($p < 0.001$). In addition to DMP directly impacting Business Performance, both DMP and CP significantly influence Business Performance indirectly (through CA) thus indicating partial mediation. BT does not significantly affect either DMP or CP therefore indicating that Trust in B2B Freight Forwarding relationships is generally formed via dependable operations, consistently delivered services and long-term relationship management but not through Digital Channels. Our recommendations are for Logistics companies to implement Digital Marketing strategies in conjunction with dependable service provision and customer-focused relationship management if they seek to develop a lasting competitive advantage.

KEYWORDS

Digital Marketing Practices, Freight Forwarding, Customer Awareness, Brand Trust, Business Impact, B2B Logistics

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Logistics and Freight Forwarding: Overview

The logistics industry has changed from being a simple operational support function to a key part of a company's competitive edge in today's global economy. Logistics is about how to plan, implement, and control (in advance) the transport and storage of goods and services and the information associated with them through the use of transportation; warehousing, inventory control; handling of goods and services; customs clearance; last mile delivery. The freight forwarding industry is an important and knowledge-intensive niche within the overall logistics ecosystem; intermediaries in the freight forwarding business help facilitate the international movement of goods between shippers and carriers via air, sea, road, and/or multimodal transport networks. The Logistics Industry has experienced major changes in structure and function in recent years. In the past, logistics were performed locally where relationships determined how goods moved through the supply chain; paper documents were used to manage an order from shipper to receiver; and communication between carriers and shippers was slow. Industry innovations were driven by containerization that increased air and sea shipping capacity globally and created a homogeneous way to clear customs internationally so that multimodal service options could be offered on a global basis. Today's environment has been transformed by the use of digital technologies; EDI, TMS, computerized customs filing, real-time shipment tracking and customer-facing shipping portals have caused a shift in how logistics operations are completed and how companies expect their logistics service providers to operate. According to estimates, the global logistics market is approximately \$9 - \$10 Trillion in size; large Multinational Logistics Providers such as DSV, DHL, Kuehne + Nagel, CEVA Logistics and DB Schenker dominate this market. In India, logistics cost as a percentage of GDP is approximately 13 -14 percent (versus 8-10% in developed economies); this higher percentage reflects ongoing infrastructure deficits and regulatory complexities that Indian Government programs such as PM Gati Shakti, GST reform and Digital India are addressing.

1.2 Digital Marketing and Brand Trust in Freight Forwarding

Historically, marketing for freight forwarding firms was predicated on developing personal relationships. Marketing for freight forwarding was based on the personal networks of salespeople (often from their previous jobs), trade references and relationships with industry associations. Increasing competition and B2B buyers' reliance on digital content have led to a growing reliance on digital marketing as a complementary service offered by freight shipping firms. Over seventy percent of logistics purchase processes begin with an online research component, meaning

freight shippers must use the Internet to effectively target potential customers, display service capabilities, regulatory expertise and operational reliability through measurable metrics. Freight shipping companies use their websites as a tool for establishing trust among potential customers; search engine optimization (SEO) to improve the website's discovery; content marketing to position their firm as a thought leader in the transportation/logistics industry; LinkedIn to build corporate recognition and brand trust; and analytical tools to help build digital marketing through data-based campaign improvements. Creating brand trust is critical in evaluating logistics services. Call it what you will, but with the extremely high dollar amounts and time-sensitive nature of freight transportation; providers are evaluated by their customers based on four major criteria; (1) reliability; (2) transparency in pricing; (3) ability to respond to customers' communications; and (4) ability to produce documentation that demonstrates provider compliance to government regulations. Brand trust develops from repeated positive experiences with an organization's services, relying on accurate documentation for each transaction, and relying on externally validated Credibility Signals (e.g., ISO certifications, Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) designations). Online testimonials and Net Promoter Scores (NPS) are becoming increasingly important contributors/complements to laundry lists of trust signals.

1.3 Competitive Benchmarking

There are three different tiers in the global freight forwarding industry. They consist of large multi-national businesses, medium-sized regional companies and small soon-to-emerge international forwarders. The industry leaders set benchmarks that emerging businesses can use to measure themselves against as they continue to grow: Web sites can be used to generate leads; Customer Relationship Management (CRM) provides methods for tracking clients in a structured way; using Key Account Management (KAM) translates transactional customers into long-term partners; and Social Media keeps a company's name in front of potential clients' eyes. The critical factor is that the top-tier companies use Digital Marketing, Social Media and Relationship Management for a single overarching Commercial Strategy, which leads to an ongoing cycle of Visibility, Trust, Engagement and Repeat Business.

Strategy Focus	Leading Providers (DHL, DSV, Kuehne + Nagel)	Objectives	Effect on New Businesses
Digital Marketing SEO	Advanced websites, customer portals, strong SEO presence, online booking and tracking systems	Enhances credibility, generates global leads, and builds strong first impressions	Develops a professional website, showcases certifications and case studies, and focuses on niche-based SEO
Content Marketing	Blogs, industry	Positions firms as industry experts and thought leaders	Provides logistics tips, customs guides, and publishes success stories to attract and educate customers
Social Media (LinkedIn)	Regular posts on achievements, innovations, and sustainability initiatives	Strengthens brand image, builds social proof, and improves market visibility	Shares shipment updates, promotes team expertise, and highlights industry knowledge
CRM & Key Account Management	Advanced CRM systems with dedicated key account managers	Converts customers into long-term strategic partners	Maintains structured customer databases, tracks interactions, and ensures consistent follow-ups
Trust-Building Mechanisms	Certifications, compliance systems, real-time tracking, digital transparency	Reduces perceived risk and increases customer confidence	Demonstrates compliance records, AEO status, and operational reliability
Integrated Strategy	Integration of digital marketing, social media, and CRM systems	Creates a →Trust → Relationship Revenue)	Aligns website, social media, and sales follow-ups for consistent customer engagement

Table 1: Strategic Benchmarking — Global Logistics Leaders vs. Emerging Freight Forwarding Firms

1.4 Problem Statement

Despite their strong reputations built on the strong service quality and advanced marketing strategies of Multinational freight forwarders, smaller new and mid-size providers experience significant challenges in developing a brand that is comparable to their larger competitors. There is very little available evidence that systematically evaluates how digital marketing strategies and communications affect customer awareness, brand trust and business impact in the freight forwarding space, particularly among logistics service providers based in India. The purpose of this research is to fill that gap by developing and empirically testing a structural model linking these constructs.

1.5 Objective of the study

The primary purpose of the study is to evaluate how digital marketing practices and communication methods contribute to brand trust and business impact in the freight forwarding industry.

The secondary purposes of this study are to:

1. SO1: Evaluate the effectiveness of digital marketing practices in creating customer awareness and developing perceptions.
2. SO2: Evaluate how digital communications contribute to, and help to build, customer trust, reliability and confidence.
3. SO3: Evaluate the relationship between customer awareness and brand trust.
4. SO4: Evaluate how brand trust impacts business results such as customer engagement and decision-making.
5. SO5: Evaluate the direct and indirect effects of digital marketing practices and digital communications on business impact.

1.6 Research Gap

Previous research primarily focused on how technological developments (digital twins, ERP and TMS adoption) are helping to improve operational performance. However, there has been little attention paid to how digital marketing can help build brand trust for logistics service companies, which is arguably more crucial than technological advances in improving operational performance. Furthermore, most research has been centred on large manufacturing organisations, and there is a lack of literature that explores how digital marketing (via customer awareness and brand trust) mediates the link between digital marketing and business performance outcomes. This study seeks to fill these gaps through an empirical test of a multi-construct structural model in the context of freight forwarding.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Recent studies highlight the increasing importance of digital technologies, marketing strategies, and communication practices in enhancing supply chain performance, customer engagement, and business outcomes.

Digital Marketing and Supply Chain Visibility: Bennett (2025) and Müller & Voigt (2021) emphasize that digital platforms significantly enhance supply chain visibility and coordination. Porter & Heppelmann (2019) highlight that digital integration creates long-term value through improved operational connectivity.

Digitalization and Technological Advancements: Sania et al. (2024) and Al Tera et al. (2024) demonstrate that digital twins and data-driven systems enhance resilience and performance in supply chains, confirming digitalization as a critical factor in dynamic logistics environments.

Digital Communication and Customer Engagement: Chen & Lin (2024), Ahmed & Rahman (2023), and Gupta & Verma (2020) show that effective digital communication characterized by transparency, responsiveness, and consistency significantly improves customer satisfaction and trust.

Content Marketing, SEO, and Brand Visibility: Rodriguez et al. (2024) and Zhao & Li (2023) find that SEO and content marketing strategies play a vital role in increasing brand visibility and customer awareness in B2B environments.

Customer Awareness and Brand Trust: Patel & Shah (2021) and Sharma & Mehta (2022) highlight that customer awareness is a key driver of brand trust. Williams et al. (2023) further emphasize that website quality, information accuracy, and security features significantly influence trust formation.

Relationship Marketing and Customer Retention: Singh & Kaur (2023), Khan et al. (2022), and Johnson & Lee (2021) underline the importance of relationship marketing and personalized digital interaction in improving customer retention and loyalty.

Digital Transformation and Business Performance: Nair & Joseph (2022) and Ravi & Subramanian (2021) demonstrate that digital transformation enhances operational performance and market expansion. Hassan et al. (2020) confirm that brand trust mediates between marketing strategies and business performance.

Despite this body of literature, no prior study integrates digital marketing practices, communication strategies, customer awareness, brand trust, and business impact within a single unified empirical framework for the logistics sector. This study fills that gap.

2.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Showing the Relationship between Digital Marketing Practices and Business Development in the Freight Forwarding Industry

Source: Developed by the researcher based on the objectives

Explanation of the Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework outlines the way that digital marketing and communication ways impact how a customer becomes aware, trusting, and engages with a business in the context of freight forwarding. Digital Marketing Methodologies (such as website effectiveness, social media presence, and online content) build the visibility of a business by creating awareness with customers about the services provided. Communication Methodologies (email, instant messaging) establish or enhance the interaction between the business and customer to provide them with timely, effective communication resulting in quality customer experiences. Customer Awareness is a measure of the degree of recognition and understanding that a customer has about a business and its associated services, whilst Brand Trust refers to the amount of confidence that a customer has in a business due to its use of digital methods, and the quality of digital communications that they provide to customers. According to the framework, digital marketing initiatives provide an increase in Customer Awareness, and as a result, will build Brand Trust. Trust can also be enhanced through direct communication efforts. Trust will lead to improved business outcomes (e.g., increased inquiries) and customer engagement with the business. Digital marketing and communication methods have a direct effect on the performance of the business.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design and Type of Study

This study uses an empirical, quantitative and qualitative approach and consists of both descriptive and analytical designs. Descriptive analyses capture consumers' views towards digital marketing and communications. Analytical methods examine the relationships between variables and test directional hypotheses.

3.2 Data Collection and Sampling

Structured questionnaires were collected in primary data by conducting the study using digital platforms between January and April 2026. A non-probability convenience sampling approach yielded 50 valid responses from individuals working in import/export management, logistics coordination, business ownership and procurement (business sectors characterised by direct decision-making authority over logistics operations). Secondary data were sourced from academic journals and articles along with trade publications to validate the conceptual framework.

3.3 Questionnaire Design

The tool consisted of a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) using only the closed-ended format. Section A of the questionnaire covers demographic information, such as respondent type, years of service and frequency of digital engagement. Section B provides a measurement of five constructs using five-point Likert scales; Independent variable 1 = Digital Marketing Practices (DMP) and Independent variable 2 = Communication Practices (CP); Mediating Variable 1 = Customer Awareness (CA) and Mediating Variable 2 = Brand Trust (BT); Dependent variable = Business Impact (BI).

3.4 Hypothesis

1. H₁ - Digital marketing practices provide a strong impact on the awareness by customers of those products or services marketed by digital means.
2. H₂ - Awareness by customers will provide a strong impact on trust in the brand.
3. H₃ - Digital marketing practices will provide a strong impact on building trust in the brand.
4. H₄ - Communication practices will provide a strong impact on building trust in the brand.
5. H₅ - Trust in the brand will provide a strong impact on business results.
6. H₆ - Digital marketing practices will provide a strong impact on the business results being produced.
7. H₇ - Communication practices will provide a strong impact on the business results being produced.

a. Analytical Tools

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS, AMOS, and Microsoft Excel with the following methods of analysis being employed:

1. To gain demographic profiles - percentage analysis
2. Construction summaries - descriptive statistics
3. Bivariate associations - Pearson correlation
4. This will be used to test the individual hypotheses - multiple regression analysis
5. Mediation theory verification - Sobel Test
6. To determine simultaneous structural path estimation & evaluation of model fit - Structural Equations Model (SEM) using AMOS.

8. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

a. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for all five constructs. Communication Practices (CP) recorded the highest mean ($M = 3.816$, $SD = 0.746$), while Brand Trust (BT) showed the lowest ($M = 2.460$, $SD = 0.596$), indicating relatively weak brand trust perceptions. Business Impact exhibited the greatest variability ($SD = 1.110$). DMP showed negative skewness (-0.795) and elevated kurtosis (2.46), suggesting a concentration of responses toward higher values.

Var	Description	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skew	Kurt
DMP	Digital Marketing Practices	50	3.651	0.745	1	5	-0.795	2.460
CP	Communication Practices	50	3.816	0.746	1.8	5	-0.410	-0.073
CA	Customer Awareness	50	3.567	0.912	1	5	-0.339	0.235
BT	Brand Trust	50	2.460	0.596	1	3	-0.743	-0.451
BI	Business Impact	50	3.560	1.110	1	5	-0.157	-0.936

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Construct Variables (N = 50) | DMP=Digital Marketing Practices; CP=Communication Practices; CA=Customer Awareness; BT=Brand Trust; BI=Business Impact

b. Pearson Correlation Analysis

Table 2 presents the bivariate correlation matrix. The strongest relationship is between DMP and CA ($r = 0.831$, $p < 0.01$), confirming digital marketing as the primary driver of customer awareness. DMP also correlates moderately with BI ($r = 0.502$, $p < 0.01$) and CP ($r = 0.443$, $p < 0.01$). CP demonstrates significant moderate correlations with CA ($r = 0.469$, $p < 0.01$) and BI ($r = 0.448$, $p < 0.01$). Brand Trust shows weak, statistically non-significant correlations with all constructs (range: $0.173-0.237$), foreshadowing its limited structural role.

Variable	DMP	CP	CA	BT	BI	Mean / SD
DMP	1.000	0.443**	0.831**	0.234	0.502**	3.651 / 0.745
CP	0.443**	1.000	0.469**	0.231	0.448**	3.816 / 0.746
CA	0.831**	0.469**	1.000	0.237	0.467**	3.567 / 0.912
BT	0.234	0.231	0.237	1.000	0.173	2.460 / 0.596
BI	0.502**	0.448**	0.467**	0.173	1.000	3.560 / 1.110

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Matrix (N = 50) | ** p < 0.01 (two-tailed)

c. Regression Analysis — Hypothesis Testing

Table 3 reports regression results for all seven hypotheses. H1 is strongly supported: DMP significantly predicts CA ($\beta = 1.016$, $F = 106.778$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.690$), explaining 69% of variance — the strongest path in the model. H6 and H7 are supported: DMP ($\beta = 0.748$, $p < 0.001$) and CP ($\beta = 0.666$, $p = 0.001$) both significantly predict BI. H2 through H5, involving Brand Trust as either predictor or outcome, are not supported (all $p > 0.05$), indicating BT does not significantly mediate or predict any examined relationship.

H	Structural Path	Beta	t-value	p-val	R ²	F-stat	Decision
H1	DMP → Customer Awareness	1.016	10.333	0.000	0.690	106.778	Supported ✓
H2	CA → Brand Trust	0.155	1.687	0.098	0.056	2.845	Not Supported ✗
H3	DMP → Brand Trust	0.187	1.666	0.102	0.055	2.776	Not Supported ✗
H4	CP → Brand Trust	0.185	1.644	0.107	0.053	2.703	Not Supported ✗
H5	Brand Trust → Business Impact	0.323	1.220	0.229	0.030	1.488	Not Supported ✗
H6	DMP → Business Impact	0.748	4.022	0.000	0.252	16.174	Supported ✓
H7	CP → Business Impact	0.666	3.468	0.001	0.200	12.025	Supported ✓

Table 4: Regression Analysis Results — Hypothesis Testing | Significance level $\alpha = 0.05$

d. Mediation Analysis — Sobel Test

Table 4 presents Sobel Test results for six mediation paths. Only the indirect path CP → CA → BI yields a statistically significant indirect effect (Indirect = 0.230, Sobel z = 1.985, p = 0.047), confirming partial mediation: CP influences BI both directly and indirectly through improved customer awareness. All paths involving Brand Trust as a mediator are non-significant, consistent with regression findings.

Mediation Path	a	B	Indirect (a×b)	Sobel z	p-value
DMP → CA → Brand Trust	1.016	0.089	0.091	0.537	0.591
DMP → CA → Business Impact	1.016	0.195	0.199	0.711	0.477
DMP → BT → Business Impact	0.187	0.110	0.021	0.441	0.659
CP → CA → Brand Trust	0.573	0.108	0.062	0.997	0.319
CP → CA → Business Impact ✓	0.573	0.401	0.230	1.985	0.047*
CP → BT → Business Impact	0.185	0.138	0.025	0.525	0.600

Table 5: Mediation Analysis Results — Sobel Test | * p < 0.05; Based on Baron & Kenny (1986)

e. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM / AMOS)

SEM was conducted via IBM AMOS to simultaneously evaluate all structural paths. Table 5 reports model fit indices, all meeting or exceeding recommended thresholds (Hair et al., 2010; Hu & Bentler, 1999), confirming good-to-acceptable model fit. The dominant structural path is DMP → CA ($\beta = 1.016$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.690$). DMP directly drives BI ($\beta = 0.748$, $R^2 = 0.252$) and CP independently influences BI ($\beta = 0.666$, $R^2 = 0.200$), with partial mediation via CA ($p = 0.047$). Brand Trust does not emerge as a significant predictor or outcome in any structural path (all $p > 0.05$).

Fit Index	Category	Recommended	Obtained	Verdict
χ^2/df	Absolute	< 3.0	2.41	✓ Acceptable
RMSEA	Absolute	< 0.08	0.068	✓ Good
SRMR	Absolute	< 0.08	0.071	✓ Good
GFI	Absolute	> 0.85	0.891	✓ Good
CFI	Incremental	> 0.90	0.924	✓ Good
TLI	Incremental	> 0.90	0.907	✓ Good
NFI	Incremental	> 0.85	0.884	✓ Good
AGFI	Parsimony	> 0.80	0.856	✓ Good

Table 6: SEM Model Fit Indices (AMOS Output) | GFI=Goodness of Fit; CFI=Comparative Fit Index; TLI=Tucker-Lewis Index; RMSEA=Root Mean Square Error of Approximation

9. FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

a. Key Findings

Demographic Profile: The data for this sample was collected through a survey of individuals in the following positions in business-to-business (B2B) companies: import/export managers (46 percent), logistics/supply chain managers and executive directors/owners (16 percent each), procurement managers (8 percent), and other executives (14 percent). The respondents' levels of experience were balanced across four ranges: less than one year, one to five years, six to 10 years, and more than 10 years. An important contextual area of concern is that there is a significant lack of engagement with digital platforms. There were 36 percent of respondents who reported that they rarely check their company's digital platform, and 16 percent that never do; 10 percent of the total respondents check their company's digital platform on a daily basis. This information gaps between checking and using digital platforms (DMP) is supported by all other secondary objectives' findings. **SO₁ – DMP → CA (Fully Supported):** The single best predictor of CA is DMP practices ($\beta = 1.016$; $R^2 = 0.690$; $p < 0.001$). However, there were more than 52 percent of respondents who stated that they rarely or never engage with DMP, which indicates that engagement and visibility are not aligned.

SO₂ – DC → BT (Partially Supported): Although DC practices have a significant impact on Business Impact (H7: $\beta = 0.666$; $p = 0.001$) and partially mediate the impact of CA (indirect effect = 0.230; $p = 0.047$), neither DMP nor DC practice predicts BT; therefore, it would appear that the manner by which one develops trust in B2B freight is through experience, as opposed to digitally.

SO₃ – CA → BT (Not Supported): CA does not significantly predict BT (H2: $\beta = 0.155$; $p = 0.098$; $R^2 = 0.056$); therefore, it would appear this does not satisfy the commonly held belief that increased knowledge results in increased trust in B2B logistic situations.

SO₄ — Brand Trust and Business Impact are Not Related: Brand Trust does not appear to predict Business Impact (H5: $\beta = 0.323$); $p = 0.229$; $R^2 = 0.030$), and Brand Trust does not serve as a mediator in all possible paths. Additionally, Brand Trust Antecedents (Service Quality, Timeliness of Delivery and Price Consistency) are outside the Digital Marketing Framework studied.

SO₅ Direct and Indirect Effects to Business Impact; Testing was Successful: Direct (DMP = 0.748; $p < 0.001$) and CP (CP = 0.666; $p = 0.001$) are significant predictors for the Business Impact. The only significant indirect effect is (CP → CA → BI) (Indirect = 0.230; $p = 0.047$) which confirms partial mediation. The SEM confirmed both are under good model fit.

b. Recommendations

Develop Digital Trust Audit Programme: Perform quarterly reviews of all digital customer facing touchpoints (Website, Email, WhatsApp, Social media) based on (i.e. response time, accuracy of information, service delivery evidence). This gap in Trust is developed in H3, H4, and H5.

Establish a Post Enquiry Communication Protocol: Provide structure customers (Pricing Clarification, Timeline Clarity, Assigned Contact, Written guarantee), within 2 hours of having received an electronic enquiry, to support the previously confirmed CP → CA → BI mediation pathway.

Digital Marketing Should Use Experience Segmentation: Respondents had only 56 percent experience under 5 years. We must be cognizant of this when creating content to reach our Clients (e.g., short-form video for those with less than 5 years' experience vs. thought leadership content for higher level decision makings), in order to tighten the DMP → CA pathways. Establish a Net Promoter Score System: To develop a data-based trust signal that is publicly accessible, provide quarterly NPS surveys to customers and aggregate results to indicate trust between ICE clients and ICE. Create a Freight Industry Content Calendar: In accordance with digital marketing, align with peak season shipping periods, budgeting cycles, regulatory modifications and trade activity to sustain the DMP → CA effect ($R^2 = 0.690$) throughout the full year. Create a Study to Determine Trust Inducers (Nota Bene: New study shows what does not induce digital trust.) Study to Determine Digital Trust (i.e., on-time delivery performance, claim settlement speed, customer service / personnel consistency and billing transparency). Consider conducting a qualitative and/or mixed quantitative and qualitative study to establish operational antecedents of trust.

Conclusion

In this research project we explore the dynamic interaction among digital marketing practices (DMP), communication practices (CP), customer awareness (CA), brand trust (BT), and business impact (BI) in the freight forwarding industry. Our empirical analyses show that DMP is the strongest predictor of customer awareness ($\beta = 1.016$). Our analyses show that both DMP and CP are two direct contributors to BI. The communication practices used by companies have an additional, indirect influence on business impact through customer awareness (Indirect effect = 0.230; $p = 0.047$). Probably the most strategically important result of this study is the discovery that brand trust is structurally isolated from all other variables, with no significant relationship established between brand trust and DMP, CP, or CA. According to our findings, trust is built through experience in B2B freight forwarding, based upon consistently delivered services, transparency of operations, and long-term relationships. Our results call into question the widely held belief that increasing digital visibility is a universal means to build brand trust.

In this industry, the implementation of digital capabilities with reliable operations, while being orientated towards establishing relationships with customers, creates a source of sustainable competitive advantage. Companies that combine innovation in the digital arena, with service delivery that is consistent in its quality and provide clients with engagement that builds trust will be in a better position to succeed as the industry becomes more competitive and digitally oriented. This research furthers our understanding of digital marketing effectiveness in the context of B2B logistics and provides a basis for future longitudinal studies on the building of trust within the freight forwarding sector.

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