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A Study on Cargo Handling Process in Shipping and Logistics with Special Reference to Manidra Logistics Pvt. Ltd, Chennai

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Abstract: ***In recent years, many businesses have become more globalized due to advancements in technology and computer networks. As a result, many of these globalization efforts have been enabled by the use of computers and have created opportunities for companies to work together in partnerships that allow them to create efficiencies by utilizing each other's strengths for the purpose of providing a higher level of service and meeting rising customer retention rates.***
To identify best practices for the cargo handling process, I examined how logistics companies can provide their customers with a competitive advantage through different handling practices. To achieve this goal, I assessed customer satisfaction levels for those who utilized Mahindra Logistics (an Indian third-party logistics service provider). My analysis included the relationship of Mahindra to each of its customers from five different sectors (automotive, pharmaceutical, consumer goods, food and beverage), and also included a survey of 185 customers to determine how well Mahindra Logistics met customer service expectations.
The value of this research lies in the fact that the research developed herein consisted of operational data as well as information from emerging digital marketing research, and will continue to enable new forms of partnerships to form in both logistics and transportation.
Descriptive and correlational analyses (i.e., Chi-square tests, Pearson correlations) were performed to produce the findings. Although there are several areas where Mahindra Logistics meets customer service requirements, there are still major areas where the organization has not achieved target levels of service (i.e., agility/response time, special requests, and punctuality). Findings were also based on recent empirical studies of digital marketing practices related to the field of freight forwarding. Findings indicate that Digital Marketing Practices (DMP) is an excellent predictor of Customer Awareness (R2 = 0.690, p < 0.001), and DMP's and Communication Practices (CP) are the most significant drivers of Business Impact (both direct and indirect) for businesses. Therefore, in order for logistics companies (like Mahindra Logistics) to create sustainable competitive advantages, they need to combine digital visibility efforts with dependable service delivery systems.
Keywords: Customer, Cargo, Logistics, Organization, Shipping, etc.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Laying The Groundwork For Logistics In The Global Marketplace

The logistics industry has evolved from being strictly operational in nature to being a strategic driver of competitive advantage in global commerce. All primary sectors of global commerce are now supported by the logistics function including (but not limited to) e-commerce, retail, health care, and manufacturing. Logistics costs in India are approximately 13 – 14% of GDP, significantly higher than the benchmark of 8 – 10% associated with other developed nations. Infrastructure shortcomings and regulatory constraints are contributing to making India's logistics systems less competitive than their counterparts located in other developed countries. At present, the Indian Government is pursuing numerous initiatives to address these deficiencies; namely, PM Gati Shakti, GST Reform, and Digital India (Jahan & Anitha Kumari, 2026).

Within the overall logistics environment, freight forwarding represents a highly information-based segment of the industry, facilitating the global movement of goods from supplier locations to end-user locations via multiple modes of transport; i.e., air, ocean, ground, and multi-modal. There have been numerous technological developments that have redefined the freight forwarding sector; among them are containerisation (the use of containers to ship products), EDI systems (computer based systems to support transfer of data between multiple enterprises), Transportation Management Systems (TMS), and real-time shipment tracking.

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B. Digital Transformation Within The Freight Forwarding Industry

Since freight forwarding encompasses the management of the physical transportation of goods between two or more locations, strong underlying relationships have been present since its inception. As depicted in current statistics that indicate over 70% of B2B logistics purchases are generated from an Internet search of the company providing that service (Bharadwaj & Siddle, 2021), there is currently enough evidence to support that the growing use of the Internet has established a necessity for freight companies to establish a digital presence. Thus, establishing a digital presence is no longer a choice; it is a requirement if they wish to differentiate themselves among all other companies that provide freight services. A variety of social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn), as well as individual corporate websites, search engine optimization (SEO), content marketing, and CRM systems, are increasingly being utilized as marketing resources to help freight companies establish visibility, generate leads, and establish trust of potential customers. Freight forwarders in Chennai, TN, conducted research among freight forwarders in that region, and it was found that DMPs [Data Management Platforms] had the greatest impact on providing awareness of freight forwarders to customers ($\beta = 1.016$; $R^2 = 0.690$; $p < 0.001$). However, despite the influence of digital channels on customers building trust with freight companies in the B2B Logistics sector, customers will only build trust with a freight forwarder based on their consistent delivery of services via reliable methods, transparency of logistics processes, and continuous management of the relationship over a long term. Digital channels, consequently, are not the sole means of obtaining customer trust in the freight forwarding field (Bharadwaj & Siddle, 2021).

C. Problem Statement And Objectives

Despite Mahindra Logistics being recognized as being well invested and aware of technology, customers have reported measurable gaps with the accessibility of service staff and the quality, reliability, and handling of special cargo requests (such as HAZMAT). Given the existence of these operational weaknesses, this research study provides a framework to analyze these weaknesses relative to the current dynamics of B2B logistics and digital marketing.

The objectives of this study are as follows:

• Identify the process by which Mahindra Logistics Pvt. Ltd. (Chennai) handles cargo.
• Evaluate the quality of customer service for three dimensions - responsiveness, knowledge, and courtesy.
• Evaluate Mahindra Logistics Pvt. Ltd.'s ability to accommodate special cargo requests.
• Evaluate timeliness of delivery and customer perceptions regarding delivery timeliness.
• Find relationships between these variables and customer satisfaction.
• Provide insights from other areas of digital marketing research that were conducted by this researcher and may be relevant for developing Mahindra Logistics' future business strategy.

D. Problem Statement

Although the reputations of the more prominent worldwide freight forwarding, are based on delivering a high level of service, and most of these companies utilize advanced marketing methods to promote their services, intermediate and smaller freight forwarders will have a difficult time building a similar amount of brand equity.

Currently there is very limited empirical research that examines in a systematic way how digital marketing strategies and communication affect customer awareness, brand trust and the actual business impact (i.e., number of sales attributed to the company's marketing efforts) in the context of Indian freight forwarding. The goal of this research was to develop and test a structural equation model that provides a foundation for linking these three constructs.

E. Study Objectives

General Objective: assess how digital marketing techniques/communications help impact brand confidence and, as a result, affect the business of freight forwarders.

Specific Objectives:

- SO1: Measure the effectiveness of digital marketing in creating customer awareness and helping to shape perceptions.
- SO2: Measure the contributions of digital communications to creating trust, reliability, and confidence in a customer.
- SO3: Measure the relationship between customer awareness of a brand and being able to trust that brand.
- SO4: Measure the impact of brand trust on business results (e.g., customer engagement and decision-making).
- SO5: Measure both the direct and indirect effects of digital marketing and digital communications on business impact.

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F. Research Gap

Existing research has focused on the operational side of digitising logistics (e.g., adopting ERP, integrating TMS, being able to produce digital twins) and not on the marketing and brand confidence aspects, that directly affect a business' commercial performance. Additionally, the majority of studies have been conducted in large manufacturing firms versus freight forwarder SMEs. This study addresses these gaps by using data collected from a freight forwarding sample located in Chennai, India to perform an empirical analysis of a multi-construct study.

II. ANALYSIS OF LITERATURE

Scholarly research is increasingly revealing how digital (i.e. online) technology is revolutionising how the supply chain operates as well as how digital marketing techniques and digital communication(s) enhance supply chain performance, create consumer engagement, and improve business results.

1) Digital Technology in Marketing to Increase Supply Chain Visability

Digital Platforms will allow for increased transparency and coordination between multiple supply chains (Bennett, 2025; Müller & Voigt, 2021); while Porter & Heppelmann (2019) show that through using digital integration, companies will be able to create long-term assets with an improved operational connection.

2) Digital Technology Used for Supply Chain Digitalisation

According to Sania et al. (2024); Al Tera et. al. (2024), the incorporation of digital twins and/or data based systems into the supply chain will enhance resilience and increase supply chain performance, thereby establishing digitalisation as an imperative success factor in dynamic logistics environments.

3) Customer Engagement Through Digital Communication

The studies conducted by Chen & Lin (2024), Ahmed & Rahman (2023), and Gupta & Verma (2020) demonstrate that digital communication(s), when performed transparently, responsively and consistently, enhance consumer satisfaction and trust.

4) Brand Visibility and SEO

According to Rodríguez et al. (2024) and Zhao & Li (2023), SEO strategies and content marketing are fundamental in enhancing brand visibility and increasing customer awareness in the B2B domain.

5) Brand Trust and Consumer Awareness

Customer awareness is a key factor in establishing brand trust (Patel & Shah, 2021; Sharma & Mehta, 2022), and website quality, accurate information, and secure websites play a significant role in building customer trust (Williams et al., 2023).

6) Relationship Marketing and Retention

Khan et al. (2022), Singh & Kaur (2023), and Johnson & Lee (2021) highlight the role of relationship marketing and personalised digital interaction in increasing customer retention and loyalty.

7) Performance Improve Through Digital Transformation

Digital transformation improves the operational performance of businesses and allows them to expand into new markets (Nair & Joseph, 2022; Ravi & Subramanian, 2021), and brand trust mediates the relationship between marketing strategies and business performance (Hassan et al., 2020). To the best of our knowledge, no studies have yet created an integrative empirical framework that combines digital marketing methods, communication, customer awareness, brand trust, and business outcomes tailored to the logistics sector. This paper seeks to bridge this gap. So as stated here the 'Conceptual Framework' for the study places the Digital Marketing practices as independent variables, Communication Practices as independent variables, Customer Awareness and Brand Trust as mediating variables, and Business Impact as dependent variable in this study of DMPs and CPs.

The DMP methods, including website effectiveness, social media presence, and content published online, work to generate customer awareness of a company's products and services by increasing visibility. The CP methods, such as emails and instant messages, improve the quality of interaction customers have with companies and give them a better overall experience, hence potentially gaining more trust and ultimately building more engagement with that company.

DMPs drive the Customer Awareness, which has a positive impact on Brand Trust, which has a positive impact on Business Impact. CPs have a additive effect on Business Impact through Customer Awareness and a moderating effect on Business Impact through Brand Trust regarding DMPs and CPs.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Design Of The Research

An empirical mixed-method study consisted of descriptive and analytical studies. Descriptive Methods examine how Respondents view digital marketing and communication through descriptive analysis, while Analytical Methods study the relationship between the variables and conduct hypothesis testing based on directionality/relationship.

B. Collection Of Data And Sampling

The primary data collection was a structured questionnaire that was conducted with Digital Platforms from March to April of 2026 (with a total of 50 valid responses from professionals employed in Import/Export Management, Logistics Coordination, Business Ownership, and Procurement - all positions that allowed the Respondent to make decisions related directly to Logistic Operations). Secondary data collection sources (e.g. academic journals, trade publications, etc.) were used to validate the proposed framework.

C. Questionnaire Design

The response choice scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree) that was used to measure the five underlying constructs was structured using a Likert-type scale. The questionnaire that was analyzed consisted of a closed-ended questionnaire that included two sections. Section A of the questionnaire was comprised of demographic data about each Respondent (such as Respondent Role, Number of Years of Experience and Frequency of Participation in Digital Mediums). Section B consisted of five underlying constructs (DMP, CP, CA, BT, BI) and was satisfied by asking each Respondent to rate how much they agreed with each item on the questionnaire.

D. Hypotheses

Customer awareness is predicted to be influenced by digital marketing strategies (H1). Customer awareness is believed to correlate with trust in the brand (H2). Digital marketing strategies are expected to be predictive of brand trust (H3). Communication strategies are anticipated to predict brand trust (H4). Trust in a brand is thought to have an impact on the business impact (H5). Digital marketing strategies are believed to be predictive of the business impact (H6). Communication strategies are assumed to predict the business impact (H7).

E. Tools For Analysis

The analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics, AMOS, and Microsoft Excel software programs. The following types of analyses were completed: descriptive statistics (describing variables), percentage analysis (demographic profiling), Pearson's correlations (bivariate relationships), multiple regression (testing of hypotheses), Sobel Test (testing mediation), and path estimates using structural equation modelling (AMOS).

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

A. Demographic

A total of 185 subjects participated in the study. Respondents' largest age group was 36 to 40 years old (38.9%) and most reported they were most educated at the Professional Degree level (25.4%) and worked in the automotive industry (36.2%); however, the other industries include those in pharmaceuticals and consumer goods among other varying industries. The vast majority of respondents (54.6%) reported they had only been employed with Mahindra Logistics for 1-3 years.

B. Customer Quality

Table 1: Customer Service Quality - Key Finding

Dimension	Dimension response	% of Respondents
Service responsiveness	Dissatisfied	30.8%
Personnel knowledge of cargo handling	Highly Dissatisfied	38.9%

Staff politeness/courtesy	Highly Satisfied	40.0%
Personnel proficiency in handling various types of cargo	Highly Satisfied	50.3%
Minimal delay in handling cargo	Highly Satisfied	40.0%

Mahindra Logistics exhibits two different forms of service quality; on the physical and operational elements, they perform well (50.3% of consumers were "very satisfied" with their cargo-handling capabilities, and 40%).
In terms of the knowledge-based element(s), however, this company does not perform well; for example, product-related knowledge has a considerable gap from the perspective of consumer feedback (38.9% were "very dissatisfied" with the company's product knowledge), and there is also considerable opportunity for further improvement in responsiveness based on the number of consumers dissatisfied with responsiveness (30.8%).

C. Individual Request Handling Managment

The objective of this report is to analyse how well the handling of this type of individualized request is completed. In this analysis of the current level of service provided to consumers by the subject company, 38.9% of all respondents reported that they were either dissatisfied/neutral with the level of service received thus far (i.e. low scores). Additionally, 29.2% of all the respondents indicated that they did not believe the subject company has provided consumers with adequate and clear instructions on how to make individualized requests. Conversely, 41.1% of the respondent group agreed that the subject company does in fact provide reasonable written communication regarding their limitations of the individualized service that they provide to the consumer. Overall, the company's method of communicating their limitations of personalized service requests has certain weaknesses and is inflexible in their ability to manage individualized service requests.
According to the Pearson Correlation analysis of the survey results from the respondents regarding individualized service request management and overall satisfaction they do not correlate at statistically significant levels (i.e. $r = -0.111$, $p = 0.132$), thus inferring that while it is possible that the individual service request management demonstrates a qualitatively positive correlation, there may be numerous other categories of service that have a greater correlation to overall satisfaction.

D. Delivery Timeliness

Table 2: Delivery Timeliness | Key Findings

Dimension	Dimension response	% of Respondents
Reliability in meeting delivery deadlines	Dissatisfied	37.3%
Real-time status updates with shipments in transit	Very Dissatisfied	30.8%
Timely delivery of ordered products	Dissatisfied	43.8%
Overall performance with meeting delivery times	Very Satisfied	28.6%
Advance notification of changes to timeframes for shipment deliveries	Very Dissatisfied	35.1%

Reliability is the area of delivery that the respondents were the most unhappy about with a total of 43.8% of all respondents being unhappy with timeliness of delivery. Close to 43.8% of the respondents were unhappy with the speed of their product deliveries and 37.3% were unhappy with whether or not products would arrive in time for their specified deadlines. Just over 35.1% of the respondents surveyed indicated they were very displeased with receiving timely notification regarding any changes in delivery deadlines. This data supports the findings of Munim and Schramm (2022) who suggest that cargo dwell time and logistics coordination problems will be resolved through use of a digital port integration system. The operational impacts on Mahindra Logistics will require urgent implementation of tracking capabilities and proactive customer communication for both informing of delays during delivery and providing timely notification of any delivery date changes.

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E. Overall Customer Satisfaction

Overall, the Customer Satisfaction metric is more positive than the metric associated with the shipment issue. Of the respondents, 38.9% report their overall experience with cargo handling is satisfactory and 30.8% state they are likely to recommend the carrier to others. Conversely, however, 34.1% of respondents strongly disagree with the statement that the carrier met or exceeded their expectations, and 34.6% of respondents strongly disagree with receiving timely assistance for cargo handling.

F. Hypothesis Testing - Chi Square Analysis

A chi-square analysis was performed to test the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer service quality. Results ($\chi 2$=211.196; df=264; p=0.981) indicate that at the 5% level of significance, the alternative hypothesis is supported, so there appears to be a statistically significant relationship between customer satisfaction and customer service quality.

V. CONCLUSIONS RECOMMENDATIONS AND FINDINGS

A. Major Findings

Demographic Information: The demographic breakdown of the participants was 46 per cent were either Import/Export Managers or Logistics Supply Chain Managers; 16 per cent were Managing Executive/Owner Director(); 8 per cent were Procurement Managers and 14 per cent were employed in some other Executive Position. Overall about 39 per cent of respondents had potential Import/Export Management background with also having (39%) having Managing Executive/Owner Director backgrounds.

When researching the number of years of experience distributed across (4) experience bands of 0 - 1 years, 1 - 5 years, 6 - 10 years and more than 10 years, the results of the survey showed the following distribution: 36 per cent (respondents did not use a digital marketing platform For checking the organization's performance) were found to use the DMAPI to provide prospective clients with the information needed prior to submitting a proposal (DMP=39%) which was developed via an awareness gap between the customers and the DMPs for services.

SO1-DMP-Customer Awareness (Full Support): The DMPS Model Predicted Strong Relationship Will Exist Between DMPs Indicating A Positive Relationship Between DMPs At The Customer Level (β = 1.016, R2 = .690, p<.001) For Less Than 50 %. Survey Responses Indicated DMP Shorted Soft-Serve Customers & Prospective Customers 52 % Shared Provide Services Through DMPs, If Not Doing So, And Business Entities Would Use DMPs To Identify Potential Opportunities For Prospective Clients; (DMPs Have The Best Rate Of Return For Their Clients Than For Their Customers).

SO2 Communication Practices to Brand Trust Partially Supported. CP significantly influences Business Impact (H7: β = 0.666 p < 0.001) as well as partially mediating between CP and CA and BI (indirect effect = 0.230; p < 0.047). However, neither DMP nor CP are predictive of brand trust indicating that operator experience generates confidence for B2B freight operations rather than digital interactions.

SO3 Customer Awareness to Brand Trust Not Supported. CA is not predicted on BT (H2: β = 0.155, p = 0.098, R^2=0.056) which challenges the assumption that trust will increase by way of knowledge in the B2B logistics environment.

SO4 Brand Trust Not Related to Business Impact. BT does not have a predictive nature for BI (H5: β = 0.323, p = 0.229, R^2=0.030) nor mediates in any pathway tested in this study. Trust antecedents in freight forwarding (Service Quality, Delivery Timeliness, and Price Consistency) likely lie outside the digital marketing framework.

SO5 Confirmed Direct and Indirect Effects Business Impact. DMP (β = 0.748, p < 0.001) and CP (β=0.666, p < 0.001) both statistically predict BI. The only indirect pathway statistically found is CP → CA → BI which confirms partial mediation (indirect = 0.230, p = 0.047). Model Fit was confirmed with SEM through all model fit indices

B. Recommendations

1) Design a Digital Trust Audit Process: Conduct quarterly assessments of every digital customer interaction you provide, and assign each a rating based on response time, accuracy, and proof of service delivery.
2) Implement a Sequential Process for Communicating Following an Inquiry: Provide clear information in response to email inquiries you receive from customers within 2 hours of them being submitted. (i.e., prices, timelines, who is accountable for what, and proof of delivery). This will continue to align with our current practices of mediating from CP to CA to BI.
3) Organize experience-based content based on respondent experience: Differentiate how and what to use to communicate with each subject based on their level of experience as a respondent. (Use short-form video for individuals who have less than five years of experience; use thought leadership material for senior decision-makers). This supports the connection between DMP and CA.

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4) Use NPS as an Indicator of Customer Satisfaction: Conduct quarterly NPS surveys to evaluate customer satisfaction; make the combined results available to the public via external face or web, establishing trust signals within your organization that are based on evidence•
5) Create a Freight Logistics Content Calendar: Synchronize your digital marketing campaigns with high-volume shipping periods, budget cycles, any regulatory changes, and trade shows to keep adding to the effects of the DMP to CA (R2=0.690) throughout the year.
6) Perform a Dedicated Study of the Antecedents of Trust: Use qualitative or mixed-method research to find out what operational measures provide trusts as B2B freight forwarders and how they can be quantified (i.e., shipment timeliness, rapid claim settlement, billing transparency, employee consistent performance).

C. Conclusion

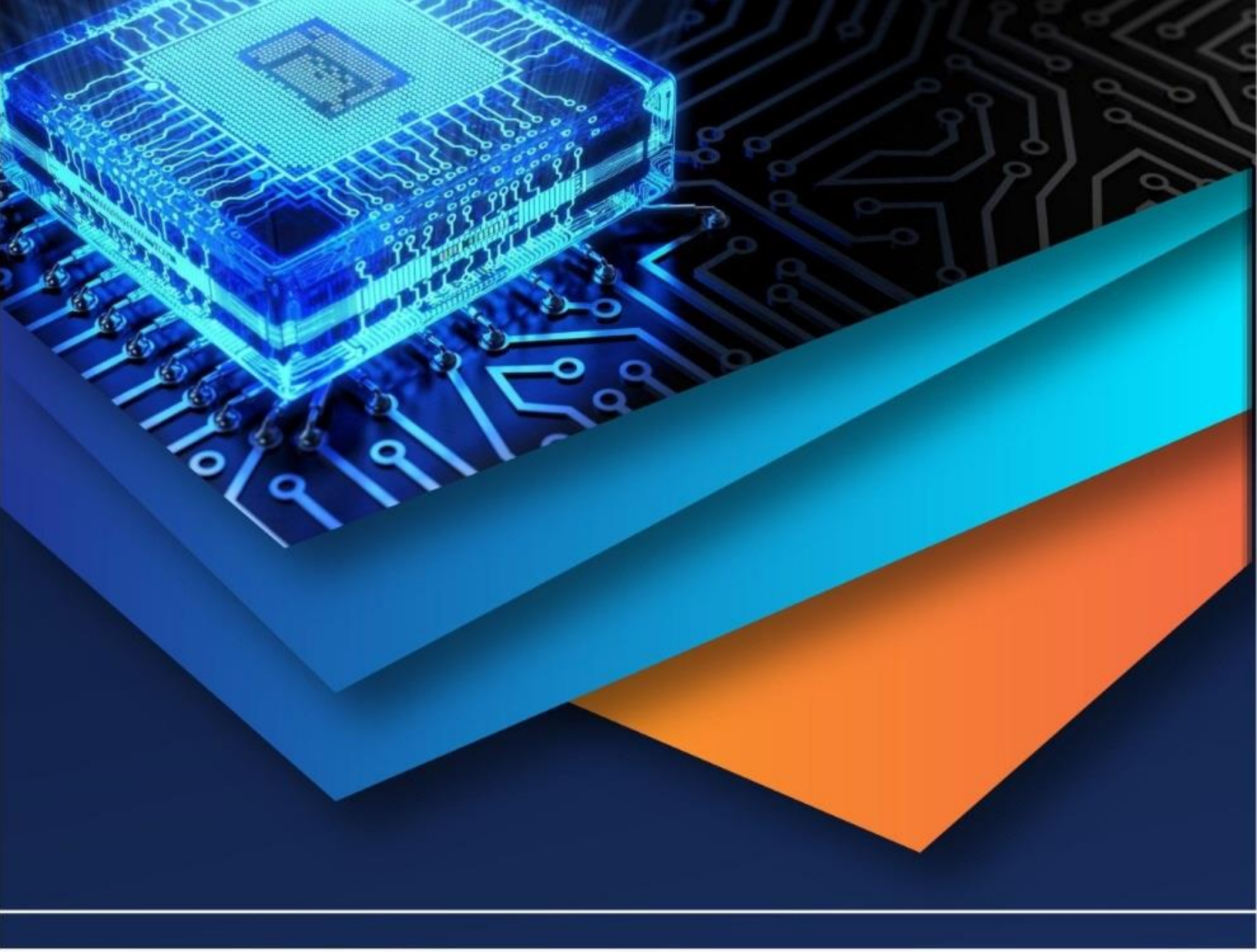
Study 2 identified five variables which exhibit direct and indirect interactions: Digital Marketing Practice (DMP), Consumer Participation (CP), Consumer Attachments (CA), Brand Trust (BT), and Brand Image (BI). DMP was a significant predictor for CA (β=1.016). DMP and CP also had statistically significant direct effects on BI. In addition, CP had an indirect effect on BI through CA (i.e. Indirect Effect = 0.230; p = 0.047.)). During the course of this study, it was determined that BT was not associated with any form of Digital Marketing Practice within B2B Freight Forwarders. There were no statistically significant relationships identified between BT and either DMP or CP or CA. Thus, from a B2B Freight Forwarding perspective, BT is primarily attributed to consistently providing quality service, transparency in operations, and continuous relationship development and not as a result of digital visibility. The findings of this study disproves the theory that simply investing into Digital Marketing will result in an automatic establishment of BT.

The most strategically relevant discovery is that, in this context, all digital marketing variables are structurally independent of brand trust. There was no significant connections demonstrated between CA, CP, DMP, and Brand Trust. Therefore, it is suggested that brand trust for B2B freight forwarders is primarily established based on the delivery of service consistency, operational transparency and long-term relationship building; not by way of digital presence. The study challenges the notion that investment in digital marketing is universally tied to the development of brand trust.

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