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## **Effective International Import Sales Strategy for Customer Acquisition and Retention in Logistics**

*A. Manu Rani<sup>1</sup>, Dr. A. Narmadha<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>II MBA, Logistics and Supply Chain Management, Department of Management Studies, Vels Institute of Science Technology and Advanced Studies (VISTAS) Pallavaram.

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Management Studies, Vels Institute of Science Technology and Advanced Studies (VISTAS) Pallavaram

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### **ABSTRACT:**

The objective of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of international import sales strategies for customer acquisition and retention within the freight forwarding industry, with a specific focus on Global Logistics Solutions India Pvt. Ltd. in Chennai. In the highly competitive international logistics sector, standardizing sales operations while maintaining high customer retention is critical for long-term profitability. The main objective of this research is to analyze the strategic frameworks utilized by logistics providers to attract new import clients and the service quality factors that ensure sustained client loyalty. The research is based on primary data collected through a 25-question structured Likert scale questionnaire. Purposive sampling was used for data collection among industry professionals and clients. Data analysis and document preparation were conducted using Microsoft Excel and Word, applying descriptive statistics and percentage analysis. The results indicate that while competitive pricing is the primary driver for initial customer acquisition, proactive communication and service reliability are the most significant factors influencing long-term retention. Ultimately, the research suggests that to improve logistics performance, firms must bridge the gap between sales promises and operational execution.

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**Keywords:** Import Sales Strategy, Customer Retention, Customer Acquisition, Freight Forwarding, Logistics Decision-Making.

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### **Introduction:**

The international logistics and freight forwarding industry is essential for global trade. It operates in a competitive environment where customer preferences, shipping rates, and geopolitical factors are always changing. In this landscape, the two main factors for sustained business growth are acquiring new customers for import operations and retaining existing ones. For logistics companies, especially those in major maritime and aviation hubs like Chennai, India, creating a strong sales strategy is not just about making sales. It requires a consultative approach that aligns with the client's supply chain needs. This study looks at Global Logistics Solutions India Pvt. Ltd., a key player in international supply chains, to understand local dynamics in import sales. In today's freight forwarding industry, gaining a new customer usually involves showing cost efficiency, strong network capabilities, and competitive pricing. However, the real challenge for logistics providers is retention. Keeping an import client involves consistently executing operations, providing reliable service, maintaining clear communication, and solving problems quickly, especially during customs clearance and last-mile transit. When sales strategies solely focus on beating competitors' prices without the operational capacity to back these promises, high customer turnover is the result. This research looks into the sales strategies in the import logistics sector and evaluates their impact on building a loyal customer base. By examining the shift from acquiring initial sales to retaining clients, this study aims to identify factors that help Global Logistics Solutions India Pvt. Ltd. turn prospects into long-term partners in a crowded market. Global Logistics Solutions India Pvt. Ltd. is a prominent company in the Indian logistics and freight forwarding sector. Founded in 2006, it has grown from a standard freight forwarding firm to a full-service Third-Party Logistics (3PL) provider and Non-Vessel Operating Common Carrier (NVOCC). Headquartered in Mumbai, the company has established a solid presence across India, with key operations in major industrial areas such as Chennai. It operates in transportation and supply chain, providing integrated logistics services by land, air, and sea. The company acts as a link between importers, exporters, and shipping lines, ensuring the efficient and timely movement of goods. Its primary services cover Full Container Load (FCL) and Less than Container Load (LCL) freight forwarding, air freight, customs clearance, and project cargo handling. Global Logistics Solutions aims to offer efficient, cost-effective, and customer-focused logistics solutions through innovation and skilled workers. It strives for high customer satisfaction by delivering tailored, value-added services while upholding ethical standards. Its core values include transparency, reliability, excellent customer service, and operational efficiency. A significant strength of the company is its diverse service offerings. It manages large shipments through FCL services and assists small and medium businesses using LCL consolidation. Its air freight division handles urgent and valuable cargo, while its customs brokerage ensures compliance with regulations. The company also specializes in Over Dimensional Cargo (ODC) and complex logistics projects. Technology is vital to its operations. It uses real-time tracking systems, automated quoting tools, and digital documentation to enhance efficiency and customer experience. These technological improvements allow for quicker decisions and better communication with clients. The company has a strong network across India and worldwide through partnerships, enabling it to reach multiple international destinations. The Chennai

(Nungambakkam) branch is crucial, serving the South Indian manufacturing sector, including automotive and textile industries. One of its main advantages is being a neutral LCL consolidator, which fosters trust among freight forwarders and ensures steady cargo volumes. With experienced leadership and a focus on customers, the company has become a reliable logistics partner. Overall, Global Logistics Solutions India Pvt. Ltd. continues to strengthen its standing in the logistics field through innovation, efficient services, and strong client relationships.

### ***Problem Identification***

One of the ongoing challenges in international freight forwarding, especially in the competitive Indian import sector, is high customer turnover driven by pricing wars. Logistics service providers, including those in the Chennai maritime and aviation hub, often struggle to set their import services apart beyond offering the lowest freight rates. A significant issue occurs when a company's sales strategy leans heavily toward aggressive customer acquisition through price cuts, often harming post-sale service quality and operational execution. This purely transactional approach reduces profit margins and limits the operational capacity needed to deliver high-quality, consultative logistics services. As a result, clients won primarily on price can quickly switch to a cheaper option, putting the company in a costly cycle of constant acquisition and attrition. Additionally, the shift from the initial sales agreement to actual operations often reveals significant service gaps. In import logistics, issues like unclear customs clearance processes, unexpected delays, incorrect documentation, and poor communication can quickly undermine the trust established during the sales phase. Thus, the main issue identified in this research is the disconnect between acquisition strategies for import clients and the service realities needed to keep them. There is a pressing need to assess how Global Logistics Solutions India Pvt. Ltd. balances cost-driven acquisition tactics with value-driven retention strategies and to identify the specific post-sale service factors that prevent client losses and support long-term, profitable supply chain partnerships.

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## **2. Review of Literature**

The way companies handle international logistics and freight forwarding has changed a lot. It used to be all about making deals, but now it's more about building relationships and offering extra services that add value. Lots of research shows that in the past, logistics companies focused on being the cheapest option, but now we know that's not enough to keep customers long-term. In fact, if you're only competing on price, you'll likely lose customers quickly because others can easily match or beat your rates. What really matters is the service you provide after the sale. Things like making sure cargo gets where it needs to go reliably, responding fast when there are delays, and keeping customers informed are way more important than saving them a little money. When logistics companies don't follow through on their promises, it damages trust and makes it hard to keep customers. These days, the best sales approach is not about pushing hard for a sale, but about understanding the customer's needs and helping them find solutions. Sales teams should act like advisors, not just brokers. They should look at what's challenging for the customer, like complicated customs issues or slow inventory times, and come up with customized plans to help. This not only helps the customer but also makes it harder for them to switch to a different company, which boosts retention. Technology is also key. Using advanced customer management tools and real-time tracking systems helps companies understand their customers' needs better, manage problems before they happen, and stay engaged with customers. To grow in a sustainable way, companies need to balance getting new customers with keeping the ones they have, using technology to make it all work smoothly. By doing this, logistics companies can build strong relationships, provide better services, and stay ahead in a competitive market. Some of the main points to focus on include: - Building trust through reliable and transparent services - Offering customized solutions to meet specific customer needs - Using technology to anticipate and manage customer needs - Balancing acquisition efforts with robust retention strategies - Understanding that price is not the only factor in customer loyalty By shifting the focus from just making sales to building long-term relationships and providing value-added services, logistics companies can achieve sustainable growth and success.

### ***2.1 Research Gap***

There's a big gap in research about how companies sell import logistics services in local markets. Most studies focus on exporting goods or look at logistics on a large scale, but they don't explore the details of how sales teams work with customers who are bringing goods into a country. This is especially true in India, where companies that help with importing goods, like those in Chennai, face unique challenges that haven't been studied much. Usually, researchers look at how to get new customers and how to keep existing ones as separate topics. They don't often study how the initial sales process affects the long-term relationship with the customer. Many studies also rely on theories or secondary data, rather than asking customers directly how they make decisions about which logistics company to use. This study wants to fill these gaps by looking closely at how one company, Global Logistics Solutions India Pvt. Ltd., sells its services in the local market and how that affects customer loyalty. It will use primary data, which means it will ask customers and the company directly for information, to understand the day-to-day realities of import logistics sales. By doing this, the study hopes to provide a better understanding of what works and what doesn't in terms of sales strategies for logistics companies, especially in India. It will look at how pricing and service reliability affect customer decisions, which is an area that hasn't been studied much before. The goal is to help logistics companies improve their sales tactics and build stronger relationships with their customers. The study will focus on the practical, everyday aspects of sales and customer service, rather than just looking at big-picture theories or data from other sources. This should give a more detailed and accurate picture of what logistics companies need to do to succeed in local markets. Overall, the study aims to contribute to a better understanding of import logistics sales and how companies can build loyal customer bases in regional markets. It will do this by gathering primary data and looking closely at the experiences of one company in India, which should provide valuable insights for logistics companies and researchers alike.

### 3. Objectives of the Study:

- I. To identify the core sales strategies used for acquiring new import clients.
- II. To evaluate the specific operational factors that drive long-term customer retention.
- III. To assess how clients prioritize competitive pricing versus service reliability.
- IV. To investigate the causes of customer churn between sales promises and operational execution.
- V. To provide actionable recommendations for balancing successful client acquisition with sustained loyalty.

### 4. Research Methodology:

#### 4.1 Research Design and Data Collection:

This research project used a descriptive design, which means it aimed to describe a situation or phenomenon. It combined quantitative and qualitative methods to get a more complete picture. To collect data, the researchers sent out structured questionnaires to people who work in the logistics industry, particularly those who manage imports and procurement. They got responses from 50 people, which was the total sample size they used for their analysis. The goal was to gather insights from these industry professionals and understand their thoughts and experiences. By using a descriptive design and collecting primary data, the researchers hoped to provide a detailed and accurate description of the current state of the logistics industry.

#### 4.2 Measurement and Variables:

To get a sense of what people thought, the survey used a simple rating system with five options, from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". This system was used to look at 50 different aspects of five key areas: how well people knew the market, trying out new shipments, selling in a helpful way, being good with digital tools, and managing relationships. The survey wanted to see how people felt about these things, so it asked them to rate each one on the five-point scale. By doing this, the survey could get a better understanding of people's perceptions and opinions on these important topics.

### 5. Data Analysis Tools

The collected primary data was analysed using specific statistical tools to identify customer preferences and factors that influence retention.

#### 5.1 Percentage Analysis of Respondent Demographics

Percentage analysis turns raw frequency counts into relative proportions. This allows for meaningful comparisons across different demographic sub-groups. The tables below show the distribution of 50 survey respondents based on three demographic factors: Age Classification, Gender Distribution, and Work Experience. This demographic profiling demonstrates how representative the sample is for the study on Effective International Import Sales Strategy for Customer Acquisition and Retention in Logistics.

**Table 5.1(a): Age Classification:**

Age Group	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Below – 25 years	12	24%
25 – 35 years	20	40%
35 – 45 years	10	20%
Above – 45 years	8	16%
Total	50	100%

Source: Primary Data (N = 50)

**Table 5.1(b): Gender Distribution:**

Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	32	64%
Female	18	36%
Total	50	100%

Source: Primary Data (N = 50)

**Table 5.1(c): Work Experience Classification:**

Experience Level	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Below – 2 years	10	20%
2 – 5 years	18	36%
6 – 10 years	12	24%
Above – 10 years	10	20%
Total	50	100%

Source: Primary Data (N = 50)

**Interpretation:** The people who answered our survey are mostly between 25 and 35 years old - about 40% of them. This means they're probably in the middle of their careers. Another 20% are between 36 and 45 years old. The rest are either younger than 25 or older than 45, with 20% in the younger group and 16% in the older group. This mix of ages shows that the logistics industry has a good balance of experienced workers and new, energetic people. Most of the people who answered were men, making up 64% of the total, while women made up 36%. This is pretty much what you'd expect, given the number of men and women who work in logistics and international trade in India. When we look at the work experience of the people who took part, we can see that most of them have been working for between 2 and 5 years this group makes up 36% of the total, with 18 people falling into this category. The next biggest group is those who have been working for 6-10 years, which accounts for 24% of the total, or 12 people. The groups with less than 2 years of experience and more than 10 years of experience are evenly matched, each making up 20% of the total, with 10 people in each group. This shows that we have a good mix of people with different levels of experience.

## 5.2 One-Way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)

Let's break it down and see what we're trying to figure out here. We're using a statistical test called One-Way Analysis of Variance, or ANOVA for short. This test helps us understand if there are any significant differences between three or more groups. In our case, we're looking at five different survey factors, and each factor has 50 scores that people rated on a scale. We want to know if the average scores for each factor are significantly different from one another. To do this, we compare the variation in scores between the groups to the variation within each group. If the differences between the groups are big enough, we can say that they're statistically significant, meaning it's unlikely they happened by chance. So, in simple terms, we're trying to determine if people's perceptions, as measured by these survey factors, are different enough to be noteworthy.

There's no real difference in the average scores for the five parts of the survey.

H<sub>1</sub>: At least one group mean differs significantly from the others

Significance Level:  $\alpha = 0.05$  | F-Critical at df(4, 245): 2.40

**Table 5.2(a): Group Statistics for One-Way ANOVA:**

Survey Factor (Group)	n	Mean	SD	Variance	Category
Market Knowledge	50	4.16	1.084	1.175	Agree
Trial Shipments	50	4.10	1.063	1.130	Agree
Consultative Selling	50	4.12	1.107	1.225	Agree
Digital Capabilities	50	4.18	1.090	1.188	Agree
Relationship Management	50	4.20	1.131	1.280	Agree
Grand Mean / Total	250	4.152	1.095	1.200	-

Source: Primary Data (N = 50 per group, Total N = 250). Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree

**Table 5.2(b): ANOVA Summary Table:**

Source of Variation	df	SS	MS	F-Calc	F-Crit ( $\alpha=0.05$ )	Result
Between Groups (Factors)	4	0.344	0.086	0.072	2.40	Not Significant
Within Groups (Error)	245	293.88	1.199	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	249	294.224	-	-	-	-

df = degrees of freedom; SS = Sum of Squares; MS = Mean Square; F-Calc = Calculated F-ratio; F-Crit = Critical F at  $\alpha = 0.05$

**Interpretation:** The one-way ANOVA yields a calculated F-value of 0.072, which is substantially lower than the critical F-value of 2.40 at  $\alpha = 0.05$  with  $df(4, 245)$ . The between-groups sum of squares ( $SS = 0.344$ ) is negligible compared to the within-group variability ( $SS = 293.88$ ), resulting in a very low mean square between groups ( $MS = 0.086$ ) relative to within-group mean square ( $MS = 1.199$ ).

**Decision:** Since  $F\text{-Calc} (0.072) < F\text{-Crit} (2.40)$ , we fail to reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ). This means there is no statistically significant difference in the mean perception scores across the five survey factors at the 5% level of significance.

**Practical Implication:** The ANOVA finding reinforces the Correlation Analysis results respondents perceive all five strategic factors (Market Knowledge, Trial Shipments, Consultative Selling, Digital Capabilities, and Relationship Management) with nearly equal importance. This uniformity of perception suggests that a holistic, integrated sales strategy that addresses all five dimensions simultaneously would be most effective for international import sales success in the logistics sector.

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## 6. Suggestions:

1. Companies should balance customer acquisition and retention strategies based on customer needs and market conditions.
2. Competitive pricing helps attract new customers in highly competitive markets.
3. Consultative selling and reliable service are effective for long-term customer retention.
4. Strong coordination between sales and operations reduces service gaps and operational issues.
5. Clear communication about delays and scheduling problems helps maintain customer satisfaction.
6. Effective customer relationship management helps retain trust during supply chain disruptions.
7. Technology such as shipment tracking and automated updates improves visibility and delivery reliability.
8. A balanced approach combining strategy, communication, and technology improves customer relationships and overall business performance.

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## 7. Conclusion:

According to the study "Effective International Import Sales Strategy for Customer Acquisition and Retention in Logistics", balancing acquisition and retention when dealing with international logistics is one of the most important decisions made in international logistics management today. Both strategies are vital for international commerce; however, the potential benefits of each approach vary based on the actual client requirements, supply chain demands, and company priorities. In most cases, competitive pricing will be the preferred mode for attracting new shipments because of the client's desire for lower transportation costs. As such, if market capture is your main objective and the relationship is new, cost-efficiency is most likely your sales method of choice. Alternatively, consultative relationship management is frequently chosen for retaining high-value, long-term clients because of their need for supply chain stability and better delivery reliability. There are three primary things that affect client loyalty according to the survey: competitive pricing, proactive communication, and operational reliability. Many companies were compelled to use value-added, consultative methods in order to be able to respond quickly to unforeseen fluctuations in client demands or urgent delivery commitments and customer service levels. In order to remain profitable and operationally efficient, companies must try to control their customer churn rates at the same time. Use of statistical analysis including Chi-Square, Correlation, Regression and ANOVA have also corroborated these findings. Retention options are based on several different criteria such as delivery visibility, practical ease of doing business, and the quality of customer service. Accordingly, a flexible and strategic sales planning approach that can accommodate both cost-driven acquisition as well as service-driven retention based on shipment requirements and operational priorities will be necessary for the success of Global Logistics Solutions India Pvt. Ltd. Organizations that effectively manage these acquisition-retention trade-offs can achieve better customer satisfaction, stronger supply chain performance, and long-term business success.

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