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**Role of Freight Forwarders in Logistics and Supply Chain Management:  
With Special Reference to Triple V Air & Sea Services India Pvt. Ltd., Chennai**

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**Abstract**

This research article critically examines the role of freight forwarders in logistics and supply chain management, with special reference to Triple V Air & Sea Services India Pvt. Ltd., a freight forwarding company headquartered in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The study was conducted over a three-month period (January to March 2026) with a sample of 112 registered freight forwarders operating within Chennai district. The research employs a descriptive research design supported by primary data collection through structured questionnaires, and the data was analysed using percentage analysis, chi-square tests, and one-way ANOVA. The findings reveal significant associations between demographic variables and satisfaction levels, and between firm characteristics and operational challenges. The study concludes that freight forwarders occupy an indispensable intermediary role in international trade, and that improvements in technology adoption, customer relationship management, documentation processes, and transportation infrastructure are critical to enhancing service quality and competitive positioning in an increasingly globalised logistics environment.

**Keywords:** Freight Forwarding, Logistics, Supply Chain Management, Containerization, NVOCC, International Trade, Chennai, Triple V Air & Sea Services

<b>1. Institution</b>	<b>2. Triple V Air &amp; Sea Services India Pvt. Ltd.</b>
<b>3. Area of Study</b>	<b>4. Logistics and Supply Chain Management</b>
<b>5. Study Period</b>	<b>6. January 2026 – March 2026</b>
<b>7. Sample Size</b>	<b>8. 112 Freight Forwarders, Chennai District</b>
<b>9. Methods</b>	<b>10. Percentage Analysis, Chi-Square Test, ANOVA</b>

## 11. Introduction

The global economy in the twenty-first century is characterised by the rapid movement of goods across borders, complex regulatory environments, and increasing consumer demand for speed and reliability. At the centre of this intricate ecosystem stands the freight forwarder — an entity that coordinates the safe, efficient, and cost-effective transportation of goods from origin to destination. Freight forwarders act as indispensable intermediaries between exporters, importers, carriers, customs authorities, and warehousing providers.

India, as one of the world's fastest-growing economies, presents a particularly dynamic context for studying freight forwarding. With a logistics industry valued at approximately USD 228.4 billion in 2023 and projected to reach USD 357.3 billion by 2030, India's logistics sector is a critical enabler of economic growth. However, it also faces significant structural and infrastructural challenges — including congested roads, inadequate port facilities, limited warehousing capacity, and complex regulatory frameworks — that freight forwarders must navigate on a daily basis.

This article presents a critical analysis of the role of freight forwarders in logistics and supply chain management, grounded in an empirical study conducted at Triple V Air & Sea Services India Pvt. Ltd., Chennai. The study investigates the functional responsibilities of freight forwarders, assesses satisfaction levels among industry stakeholders, identifies operational challenges, and evaluates the influence of firm-level and demographic factors on supply chain competencies and business promotion strategies.

### 1.1 Background and Context

Triple V Air & Sea Services India Pvt. Ltd. is a Chennai-based freight forwarding company incorporated on 15 November 2021 under the Registrar of Companies, Chennai (CIN: U63030TN2021PTC147869). The company offers a comprehensive range of logistics services including international freight forwarding, customs clearance, cargo consolidation, multimodal transport, door-to-door delivery, cargo insurance, and specialised handling. As part of the broader Triple V brand — which traces its logistics network roots to 2005 — the company exemplifies the evolution of modern freight forwarding from a simple documentation function to a full-service integrated logistics provider.

The Chennai logistics corridor, servicing one of India's busiest port cities, provides a rich context for examining freight forwarding dynamics. The city's connectivity through the Chennai Port, Ennore Port, and Chennai International Airport places it at the heart of India's international trade infrastructure.

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the critical role freight forwarders play in international trade facilitation, their operational performance, customer satisfaction levels, and the factors that influence their competitiveness remain insufficiently studied in the Indian context. The industry is characterised by intense competition, rising customer expectations, complex regulatory requirements, and infrastructural bottlenecks that disproportionately affect small and medium freight forwarding enterprises. This study aims to address these gaps by systematically analysing the functioning of freight forwarders in Chennai, with a focus on service quality, supply chain competencies, and the challenges they encounter in daily operations.

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

- To examine the demographic and organisational profile of freight forwarders at Triple V Air & Sea Services India Pvt. Ltd., Chennai.

- To analyse the dimensions of freight forwarding operations, including service rendered, goods forwarding, supply chain competencies, and business promotion factors.
- To determine the relationship between demographic variables and satisfaction levels regarding C&F agent services.
- To identify the association between firm characteristics and problems faced in forwarding goods.
- To evaluate the influence of demographic and firm-level variables on supply chain competencies and freight forwarding business promotion.
- To suggest actionable strategies for improving logistics performance and competitiveness.

## **2. Review Of Literature**

A comprehensive body of literature establishes the theoretical and empirical foundations underpinning this study. The following review synthesises key contributions that illuminate the evolving role of freight forwarders in global logistics systems.

### **2.1 Freight Forwarders as Logistics Intermediaries**

Gourdin (2006) defined the central function of freight forwarders as combining multiple small shipments into a single consolidated unit, thereby achieving economies of scale and lower per-unit freight costs. This consolidation function, combined with expertise in documentation, customs procedures, and carrier negotiation, positions freight forwarders as indispensable orchestrators within the supply chain. Dr. J. Paul Sundar Kirubakaran (2012) further elaborated on this intermediary function, finding that a large proportion of freight forwarders in India operate through sub-agency systems, limiting the adoption of supply chain management concepts and advanced logistics technologies.

Lambert and Stock (1993) contributed an important observation regarding the cost advantage that forwarders provide: by aggregating small shipments, freight forwarders are able to offer shippers lower rates than they could obtain by approaching carriers directly. This cost leverage is a fundamental driver of their market value. Similarly, Gray and Kim (2001) argued that in developing economies, a multimodal transport framework — rather than full intermodal integration — represents a more realistic and achievable logistics target.

### **2.2 Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction**

Customer satisfaction within logistics contexts has been extensively studied. Dong Wang (2019) employed the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) to evaluate logistics customer satisfaction, arguing that satisfaction extends beyond service attitude and price to encompass post-purchase emotional outcomes. Irene Gil Saura and David Servera Frances (2012) empirically demonstrated that the logistics service quality-satisfaction-loyalty chain is significantly mediated by Information and Communication Technology (ICT) adoption, using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) across a sample of 194 manufacturing companies.

Kuo-Chung Shang and Chin-Shan Lu (2012) examined Customer Relationship Management (CRM) in the freight forwarding context through a survey of 144 Taiwanese firms. Their findings indicated that customer responsiveness and profit interaction are the most significant CRM dimensions affecting financial performance, providing a model that links CRM practice directly to firm competitiveness. David B. Grant (2010) further demonstrated that corporate brand equity, when operationalised through quality service delivery, can convert customer satisfaction into sustained loyalty in the logistics service provider context.

## 2.3 Operational Challenges and Supply Chain Competencies

Morgan (2004) identified a fundamental tension between standardised transport performance metrics and the customised requirements of logistics operations, concluding that performance measurement systems must be tailored to reflect actual channel behaviour. Yael Perlman, Tzvi Raz, and Livnat Moshka (2009) identified eighteen key factors in the selection of international freight forwarders by Israeli firms, organised around the dimensions of reliability, information management, service quality, and pricing. Their findings suggest that client characteristics — including company size, number of export destinations, and scope of freight forwarding usage — significantly moderate the importance assigned to these selection criteria.

S. Swathy (2025) and K. Bagyalakshmi and R. Karthika (2022) both conducted India-specific analyses of freight forwarder selection and satisfaction, collectively highlighting documentation accuracy, freight rate competitiveness, and warehousing quality as key determinants of exporter satisfaction. Swathy's study additionally found that freight forwarders can meaningfully reduce freight costs for customers through more efficient mode selection and operational planning.

## 3. Research Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive research design, which is appropriate for characterising the operational profile, perceptions, and challenges of freight forwarders within a defined geographical and organisational context. Descriptive research enables systematic fact-finding with adequate interpretation and supports comparative analysis across demographic and firm-level variables.

### 3.2 Sampling and Data Collection

Convenient sampling was employed to select respondents from among 240 registered freight forwarders operating in Chennai district. A final sample of 112 respondents was obtained, representing a response rate of approximately 46.7 percent. Primary data was collected using a structured interview schedule incorporating Likert-scale items, multiple-choice questions, and demographic identifiers. The questionnaire covered areas including firm profile, export operations, satisfaction with C&F agent services, problems in forwarding, and supply chain competencies. Secondary data was gathered from the records of freight forwarder associations, industry journals, magazines, and web-based sources.

A pilot study was conducted with a small subset of schedules prior to final data collection, allowing for the identification and correction of ambiguous or poorly framed items. The final instrument was validated for reliability and content validity before widespread administration.

### 3.3 Statistical Tools

The following statistical tools were applied to analyse the collected data:

- **Percentage Analysis:** Used to describe the distribution of respondents across demographic and operational categories, enabling comparison of relative frequencies.
- **Chi-Square Test ( $\chi^2$ ):** Applied to test associations between categorical variables, specifically between demographic characteristics (age, gender, place of residence, educational qualification, monthly income) and satisfaction levels, and between firm characteristics (type of industry, capital investment, nature of industry, market coverage, nature of exports) and problems encountered in forwarding goods.
- **One-Way ANOVA:** Used to determine whether statistically significant differences exist in mean scores of Supply Chain Competencies and freight forwarding business promotion factors across demographic

and firm-level groups.

## Analysis And Findings

### 4.1 Demographic and Organizational Profile

The sample of 112 respondents exhibited the following demographic distribution:

Variable	Dominant Category	Percentage
Age Group	26–40 years	34.8%
Gender	Male	65.2%
Place of Residence	Urban	50.9%
Educational Qualification	Graduate / Diploma	44.6%
Monthly Income	Rs. 10,001 – Rs. 15,000	60.7%
Type of Industry	Building Materials	30.4%
Total Capital Investment	Rs. 50 Lakhs – Rs. 1 Crore	49.1%
Company Position	Sub-product / Assemble Manufacturer	63.4%
Nature of Industry	Medium Scale	50.0%
Manufacturing Pattern	Make-to-Stock	33.9%
Market Coverage	International Market	51.8%
Nature of Exports	Manufacturing Exporters	75.9%
Export House Status	100% Export House	48.2%
Primary Export Destination	USA	40.2%

These findings indicate a predominantly young-to-middle-aged, male-dominated workforce, operating largely in medium-scale manufacturing firms that engage primarily in international trade. The dominance of manufacturing exporters and the high share of building materials as a traded commodity reflects the industrial composition of Chennai's export economy.

### 4.2 Supply Chain Management Perceptions

An interesting and noteworthy finding emerged regarding the perception of Supply Chain Management (SCM): 50.9% of respondents indicated that SCM is not vital for every business. However, 64.3% of respondents simultaneously reported that they actively follow SCM practices. This apparent contradiction suggests a gap between conceptual understanding and practical application — respondents may be implementing elements of SCM without formally recognising them as such, or may be underestimating the theoretical importance of SCM while engaging in its operational practices.

### 4.3 Chi-Square Analysis: Satisfaction and Operational Problems

Chi-square tests were conducted to determine whether statistically significant associations exist between selected variables and outcomes of interest. The results are summarized below:

Variable	Chi <sup>2</sup> Value	df	Table Value (5%)	Decision
Age vs. Satisfaction	29.324	6	12.592	<b>H<sub>0</sub> Rejected</b>
Gender vs. Satisfaction	12.979	2	5.991	<b>H<sub>0</sub> Rejected</b>
Residence vs. Satisfaction	6.356	2	5.991	<b>H<sub>0</sub> Rejected</b>
Education vs. Satisfaction	24.407	6	12.592	<b>H<sub>0</sub> Rejected</b>
Income vs. Satisfaction	36.286	6	12.592	<b>H<sub>0</sub> Rejected</b>
Industry Type vs. Problems	124.114	12	21.026	<b>H<sub>0</sub> Rejected</b>
Capital vs. Problems	6.107	4	9.488	<b>H<sub>0</sub> Accepted</b>
Industry Nature vs. Problems	9.513	4	9.488	<b>H<sub>0</sub> Rejected</b>
Market Coverage vs. Problems	17.191	4	9.488	<b>H<sub>0</sub> Rejected</b>
Export Nature vs. Problems	6.787	4	9.488	<b>H<sub>0</sub> Accepted</b>

The chi-square results confirm that age, gender, place of residence, educational qualification, and monthly income all have a statistically significant association with the level of satisfaction regarding C&F agent services. Younger respondents (below 40 years) and higher-income respondents tend to report higher satisfaction, while those with greater professional experience (above 45 years) show lower satisfaction — possibly reflecting higher service expectations. Regarding operational problems, the type of industry and market coverage are significantly associated with the problems experienced in forwarding goods, whereas total capital investment and nature of exports show no significant association.

#### 4.4 ANOVA Analysis: Supply Chain Competencies and Business Promotion

One-way ANOVA was applied to test whether mean scores for Supply Chain Competencies and factors in promoting freight forwarding business differ significantly across subgroups. Key findings include:

- Age ( $F = 16.702, p = 0.000$ ) and Monthly Income ( $F = 6.600, p = 0.002$ ) significantly influence Supply Chain Competency scores, indicating that experience and financial resources enhance an organisation's capability to manage complex supply chain operations.
- Gender ( $p = 0.209$ ), Place of Residence ( $p = 0.504$ ), and Educational Qualification ( $p = 0.367$ ) do not significantly affect Supply Chain Competencies, suggesting that supply chain performance is not structurally differentiated by these demographic factors.
- For business promotion factors, Type of Industry ( $p = 0.006$ ), Total Capital Investment ( $p = 0.000$ ), Nature of Industry ( $p = 0.000$ ), and Nature of Exports ( $p = 0.000$ ) all show significant effects, while Market Coverage ( $p = 0.633$ ) does not.

Collectively, these findings suggest that operational and financial characteristics of firms are stronger predictors of supply chain performance and business promotion strategies than demographic variables. Capital availability and industry type define the operational complexity faced by freight forwarders and the strategies required to sustain business growth.

## 5. Critical Analysis

### 5.1 Strengths of the Study

This study makes several commendable contributions to the understanding of freight forwarding in an Indian urban context. First, the use of multiple statistical tools — percentage analysis for descriptive profiling, chi-square for association testing, and ANOVA for mean comparison — provides a multi-layered analytical framework that captures both the distributional and relational dimensions of the data. Second, the sample of 112 freight forwarders, drawn from a pool of 240 registered operators, provides a reasonably representative cross-section of the Chennai freight forwarding community. Third, the industry focus on a single, well-defined company (Triple V Air & Sea Services) enables contextual specificity that is often lost in broader regional or national studies.

The literature review is notably comprehensive, spanning from foundational works by Lambert and Stock (1993) and Gray and Kim (2001) to contemporary analyses by S. Swathy (2025) and Dr. D. Rajasekar and Mr. T. Sandeep Prabhakar (2024), thus demonstrating temporal depth and topical breadth.

### 5.2 Limitations and Areas for Improvement

Notwithstanding its strengths, several limitations warrant acknowledgment. The study relies exclusively on convenient sampling, which introduces selection bias and limits the generalisability of findings beyond the study area. A stratified random sampling approach would have produced a more representative sample and enabled stronger inferential claims about the broader Chennai freight forwarding sector.

The omission of financial performance metrics — explicitly acknowledged as a limitation by the researchers — represents a significant gap. Supply chain competencies and customer satisfaction, while important, are incomplete proxies for organisational effectiveness without corresponding data on revenue growth, profitability, or cost efficiency.

Additionally, the study's questionnaire does not capture technology adoption metrics (e.g., RFID usage, electronic data interchange, track-and-trace systems), which are critical drivers of modern freight forwarding competitiveness. Given the emphasis in the literature on the transformative role of IT in logistics (Carroll, 2004; J. Roy, 2001), this omission limits the study's ability to comment on digital readiness within the sector.

Finally, the binary SCM perception question (Table 4.16) — which asks only whether SCM is 'vital' (Yes/No) — lacks the nuance required to meaningfully measure SCM awareness and orientation. A multi-item Likert scale instrument would yield richer insights into SCM understanding and adoption across the sample.

### 5.3 Policy and Managerial Implications

The findings carry important implications for both freight forwarding practitioners and policy-makers. At the firm level, the significant association between age/income and supply chain competency scores suggests that investment in training and skills development for younger, lower-income employees could substantially enhance organisational capability. Freight forwarding companies should institutionalise structured learning pathways, mentorship programmes, and on-the-job training in documentation, customs compliance, and digital logistics tools.

The identification of building materials as the dominant export commodity category, combined with the high proportion of manufacturing exporters, indicates that service offerings should be calibrated to the specific regulatory, packaging, and documentation requirements of heavy industrial cargo. Specialised service packages for building material and automobile exporters could represent a significant revenue

differentiation opportunity.

From a policy perspective, the study reaffirms the urgency of addressing India's logistics infrastructure deficit. The challenges identified — including inadequate warehousing, non-availability of vehicles and containers, routing and scheduling problems, and incomplete customs documentation processes — are systemic in nature and require coordinated government intervention through initiatives such as the National Logistics Policy (NLP), dedicated freight corridors, and the streamlining of customs procedures under the ICEGATE platform.

## 6. Emerging Trends And The Future Of Freight Forwarding In India

The freight forwarding sector in India is undergoing profound transformation driven by four major forces: digitalization, sustainability imperatives, regulatory reform, and the restructuring of global supply chains.

Digital freight platforms — such as Flexport, Freightos, and their Indian equivalents — are challenging the traditional intermediary model by enabling direct carrier-shipper connections. Freight forwarders who fail to integrate technology into their service delivery risk disintermediation. The adoption of cloud-based Transportation Management Systems (TMS), blockchain-enabled documentation, and AI-driven route optimisation represents the frontier of competitive differentiation.

India's National Logistics Policy, announced in 2022, sets an ambitious target to reduce logistics costs from approximately 13-14% of GDP to 8% within a decade — aligning India with global benchmarks. Achieving this target will require significant improvements in port dwell times, road quality, last-mile connectivity, and inter-modal integration, all of which directly affect freight forwarder operations.

The post-pandemic reconfiguration of global supply chains — characterised by nearshoring, friend-shoring, and supply chain diversification — presents significant opportunities for Indian freight forwarders. As multinational companies diversify production away from single-country dependency, India's role as an alternative manufacturing and logistics hub is growing. Freight forwarders with deep expertise in complex multimodal operations, regulatory compliance, and value-added logistics services are well-positioned to capture this emerging demand.

For companies like Triple V Air & Sea Services, the path to sustainable growth lies in service differentiation, technology integration, and the cultivation of long-term client relationships built on reliability, transparency, and expertise. As the empirical findings of this study demonstrate, customer satisfaction is multidimensionally determined and sensitive to firm characteristics — necessitating a customised, intelligence-driven approach to client management.

## 7. Suggestions And Recommendations

Based on the analysis and critical review, the following recommendations are proposed for freight forwarding companies operating in Chennai:

- **Strengthen Customer Relationship Management:** Implement structured CRM systems to monitor satisfaction drivers, track complaint resolution timelines, and identify at-risk customer accounts. The significant association between demographic variables and satisfaction levels underscores the need for personalised service approaches.
- **Form Industry Consortia:** Address the perennial challenge of vehicle and container non-availability by

forming cooperative networks or consortia among small and medium freight forwarders. Resource pooling can mitigate capacity constraints and reduce operational costs.

- **Leverage Technology for Documentation:** Invest in digital documentation platforms and electronic data interchange systems to eliminate delays caused by manual paperwork. Integration with ICEGATE and port community systems can significantly reduce clearance times.
- **Develop Specialised Service Capabilities:** Given the high proportion of building material and automobile industry clients, develop dedicated service verticals with specialised expertise in handling, packaging, and regulatory compliance for these sectors.
- **Advocate for Infrastructure Development:** Industry associations should actively engage with government bodies to accelerate the development of logistics parks, container freight stations, and warehousing facilities in the Chennai region.
- **Invest in Employee Development:** Implement training programmes targeting supply chain management, customs law, international trade compliance, and digital logistics tools — particularly for younger employees who show high satisfaction sensitivity but lower baseline supply chain competency.
- **Expand Technology Adoption:** Prioritise investment in track-and-trace systems, mobile delivery confirmation, and real-time shipment monitoring to meet the rising expectations of international clients.

## 8. Conclusion

This article has undertaken a critical analysis of the role of freight forwarders in logistics and supply chain management, with empirical grounding in a study conducted at Triple V Air & Sea Services India Pvt. Ltd., Chennai. The findings affirm that freight forwarders are not merely documentation agents but multifunctional logistics orchestrators whose value proposition encompasses carrier negotiation, customs compliance, documentation management, cargo insurance, warehousing coordination, and strategic supply chain advisory services.

The empirical analysis reveals that demographic variables — particularly age and income — significantly influence satisfaction levels and supply chain competency scores, while firm-level factors such as industry type, capital investment, and export orientation shape the nature and intensity of operational challenges. These nuanced relationships point to the importance of context-sensitive strategies in freight forwarding management.

India's logistics landscape presents both formidable challenges and extraordinary opportunities. Freight forwarding companies that embrace digital transformation, cultivate deep client partnerships, invest in talent development, and actively engage with infrastructure development initiatives are best positioned to thrive in this environment. For Triple V Air & Sea Services and its peers in the Chennai ecosystem, the study provides a roadmap for service improvement, competitive positioning, and long-term organisational resilience.

As India advances toward its aspiration of becoming a global manufacturing and logistics hub, the freight forwarder will remain a pivotal actor in translating this potential into economic reality — navigating the complexities of global trade with expertise, agility, and an unwavering commitment to service excellence.

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