

TRANSPARENCY IN FREIGHT FORWARDING:

How Honest Communication Drives Brand Loyalty — A Study on Sevenseas Global Express Logistics Pvt. Ltd., Chennai

Duraikarthik S (Reg. No. 44410076)

MBA Scholar, Department of Management Studies, School of Management Studies
Sathyabama Institute of Science and Technology (Deemed to be University), Chennai – 600 119

Guided by: Dr. J. Rani, MBA., M.Phil., Ph.D. | April 2026

ABSTRACT

This article investigates how ethical marketing practices influence customer trust and brand loyalty in the logistics sector, with Sevenseas Global Express Logistics Pvt. Ltd. (Chennai) as the focal organization. In an era of heightened consumer awareness, principles of honesty, integrity, and open communication have become strategic imperatives. Using a descriptive research design with a structured questionnaire administered to 142 respondents, the study employs percentage analysis, weighted mean, Henry Garrett Ranking, and Pearson Correlation to uncover the role of ethics in logistics marketing. The findings confirm that fair customer treatment, data privacy, and transparent communication significantly strengthen brand trust and loyalty. Ethical behaviour emerged as the most decisive trust-driver (weighted average: 4.43), and a near-perfect correlation ($r = 0.99$) was established between honest delivery commitments and non-misleading marketing.

Keywords: Ethical Marketing, Brand Loyalty, Customer Trust, Logistics, Freight Forwarding, Transparency, Garrett Ranking, Pearson Correlation

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic and highly competitive business environment, ethical marketing has emerged as a crucial determinant of organizational success and long-term sustainability. With increasing consumer awareness and evolving expectations, companies are under growing pressure to operate transparently, honestly, and with integrity. Ethical marketing encompasses practices that adhere not only to legal and societal norms but also demonstrate a genuine commitment to fairness, truthfulness, and respect for customers.

The logistics and freight forwarding industry, while traditionally perceived as operationally driven, is increasingly being evaluated through an ethical lens. Sevenseas Global Express Logistics Pvt. Ltd.—a prominent player founded in 2001 and operating 18 branches across India—manages sensitive, time-bound operations across national and international borders. In such a context, customers place significant reliance on a brand's integrity, reliability, and service quality. Adopting ethical marketing strategies is therefore not merely a compliance measure but a powerful strategic tool to foster brand trust and customer loyalty.

India's freight forwarding and logistics industry, valued at approximately USD 215 billion, is growing at 10–12% annually. The surge is propelled by booming e-commerce, government initiatives like “Make in India,” infrastructure development, and technological innovation. Against this backdrop, logistics firms that embed ethical marketing practices can achieve a distinctive competitive edge. This article presents the empirical findings of a primary research study conducted at Sevenseas Global Express Logistics, Chennai, examining how ethical marketing practices shape customer trust and loyalty.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Mansouri et al. (2022) demonstrated, through data from 265 sportswear consumers, that ethical sales practices significantly boost satisfaction and trust, with trust being the strongest predictor of loyalty. Nassar and Battour (2020) proposed a conceptual framework showing that ethical marketing—encompassing honesty, transparency, and social responsibility—positively influences customer satisfaction and loyalty even in politically fragile market contexts.

In the digital domain, Hakiki, Nurlina, and Abaharis (2024) found that transparency in digital marketing gives brands a competitive edge through improved customer retention and market reputation. Vederhus and Nath (2021) established that ethical marketing and corporate social responsibility (CSR) are jointly essential for building attitudinal and behavioural e-loyalty. Tanveer et al. (2021), in a landmark study of 1,500 Pakistani consumers, showed that ethical elements of the 7Ps marketing mix—fair pricing, transparent promotion, and respectful employee-customer interactions—positively impact trust, product value, and sustained brand loyalty.

Hagenbuch and Mgrdichian (2019) introduced “Mindful Marketing,” showing that ethical cues in advertising significantly improve consumer trust and purchase intention. Ejjami (2024) further proposes that AI-powered marketing must integrate human creativity, ethical transparency, and data privacy to achieve long-term consumer acceptance. Collectively, the literature establishes that ethical marketing is both morally imperative and commercially strategic—a conclusion validated through this study.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive research design, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques to examine the relationship between ethical marketing practices and brand trust and loyalty among clients of Sevens seas Global Express Logistics Pvt. Ltd., Chennai. The study was conducted over a four-week period (January–April 2026).

3.2 Sampling and Data Collection

A stratified random sampling technique was employed. The target population comprised businesses and individuals who have availed the services of Sevens seas. A structured questionnaire was administered to 142 respondents. Both primary data (questionnaire responses) and secondary data (websites, journals, published reports) were utilized.

3.3 Analytical Tools

- Percentage Analysis – distribution of responses across variables
- Weighted Average Analysis – relative importance of trust factors (5-point Likert scale)
- Henry Garrett Ranking – converting qualitative rankings into quantitative scores
- Pearson's Correlation Analysis – strength of linear relationships between key variables

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Respondent Profile

Of the 142 respondents surveyed, 59% were manufacturers and 41% were merchants, indicating that Sevens seas' primary clientele comprises manufacturing enterprises reliant on reliable freight forwarding for supply chain continuity (Fig 1). A majority (48%) utilize domestic logistics services, followed by international logistics (27%), freight forwarding (19%), and NVOC operations (6%) as shown in Fig 2.

Fig 1: Respondent Category

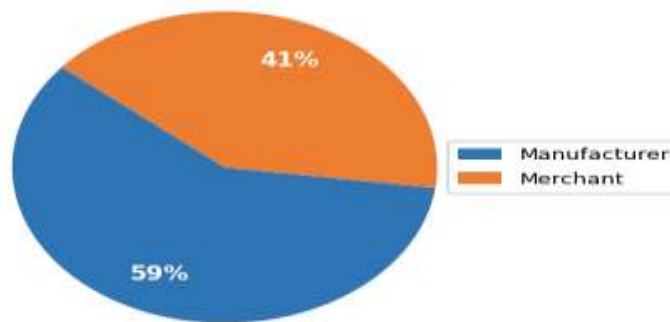


Fig 1: Respondent Category — 59% Manufacturers, 41% Merchants (n=142)

Fig 2: Type of Service Used

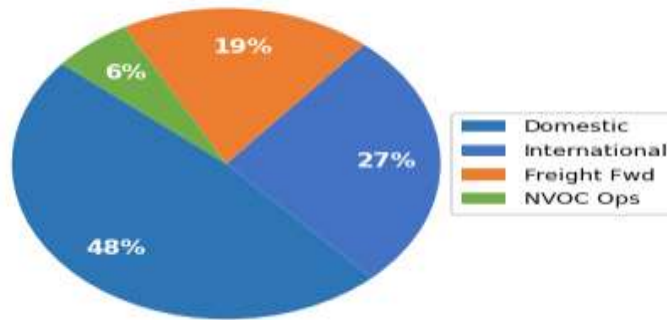


Fig 2: Service Type Used — Domestic logistics dominates at 48%

4.2 Mode of Freight and Usage Frequency

Sea freight is the most preferred mode (38%), closely followed by air freight (36%), land transport (16%), and multimodal transport (10%). This near-parity between sea and air freight reflects the diverse needs of Sevens seas’ client base across time-sensitive and cost-sensitive shipments (Fig 3).

Fig 3: Mode of Freight

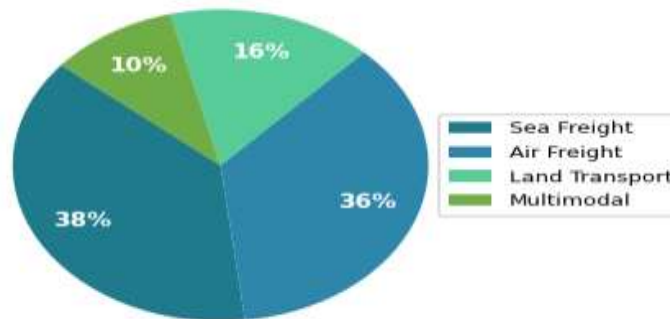


Fig 3: Mode of Freight — Sea (38%) and Air (36%) are near parity

Fig 4: Service Usage Frequency

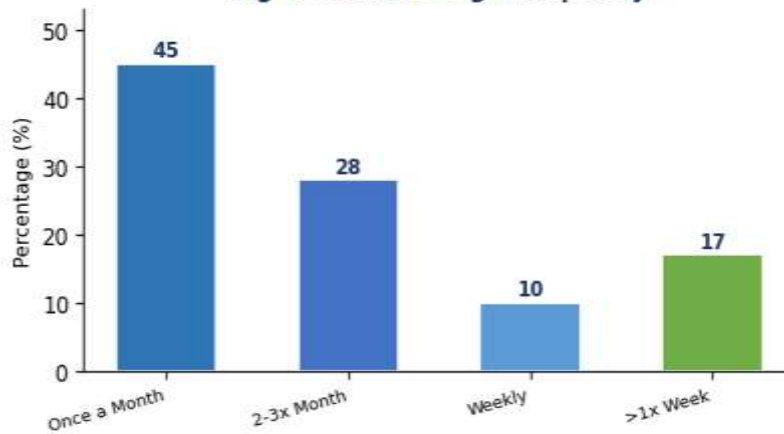


Fig 4: Service Usage Frequency — 45% use services once a month

A plurality of respondents (45%) use Sevens seas’ services once a month, indicating periodic but recurring dependence. Combined with those using the service 2–3 times per month (28%) and more than once a week (17%), this reflects a strong recurring customer base (Fig 4).

4.3 Reasons for Choosing Sevenseas

The availability of both air and sea freight services was cited by 49% as the primary reason for choosing Sevenseas, underscoring the importance of service breadth. A wide global network (31%) and competitive pricing (14%) were secondary considerations.

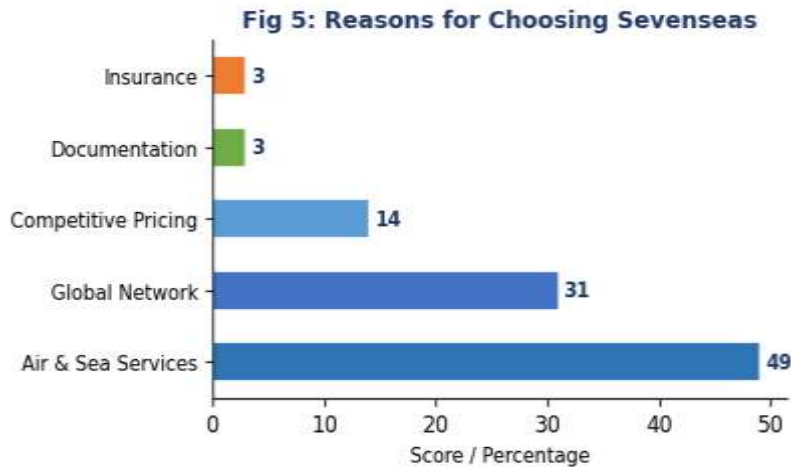


Fig 5: Key Drivers for Choosing Sevenseas — Service variety leads at 49%

4.4 Ethical Marketing Perceptions

A strong majority (80% combined) affirm that Sevenseas’ marketing messages about delivery timelines and service quality are realistic (Fig 6). On non-misleading claims, 76% confirmed the company does not resort to false urgency or misleading offers—a strong indicator of ethical advertising standards. On advertisement fairness, 87% expressed satisfaction. Customer privacy protection was acknowledged by 87%, and positive employee interaction was reported by 84%.

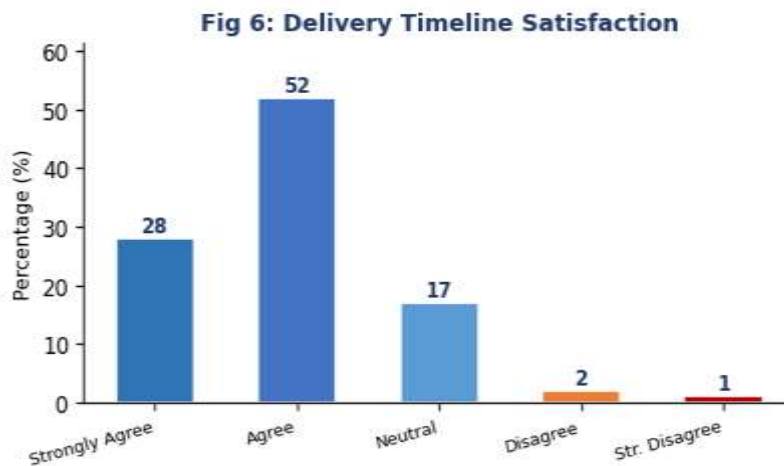


Fig 6: Delivery Timeline Satisfaction — 80% agree marketing claims are realistic

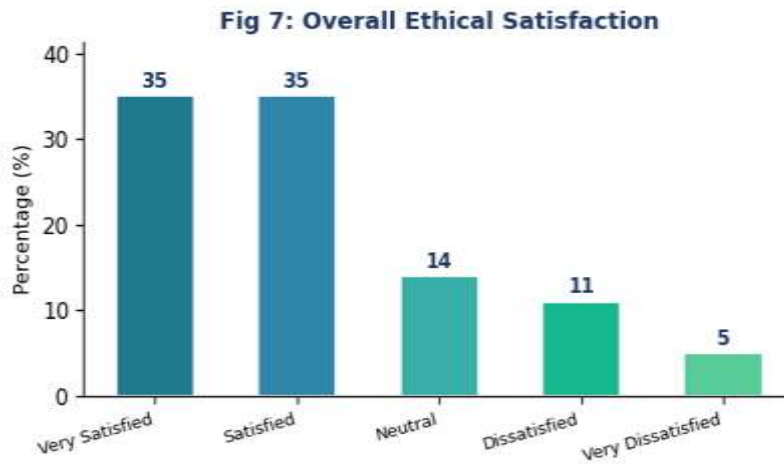


Fig 7: Overall Ethical Standards Satisfaction — 70% satisfied or very satisfied

4.5 Summary of Ethical Marketing Perceptions

Ethical Parameter	Positive %	Neutral %	Negative %
Delivery Timeline Realism	80%	17%	3%
Non-Misleading Marketing	76%	21%	3%
Advertisement Fairness	87%	8%	5%
Customer Privacy Protection	87%	11%	2%
Feedback Responsiveness	77%	16%	7%
Employee–Customer Interaction	84%	14%	2%
Overall Ethical Satisfaction	70%	14%	16%
Documentation Support	84%	8%	8%

Table 1: Summary of Ethical Marketing Perceptions (n=142)

4.6 Weighted Average Analysis – Trust Factors

Weighted average analysis reveals a progressive alignment of customer trust: fulfilling promises (WA = 4.07), acting in customer’s best interest (WA = 4.10), preference over competitors (WA = 4.22), and—most decisively—ethical behaviour as a trust-enhancer (WA = 4.43). This confirms that ethics plays the most decisive role in building brand trust.

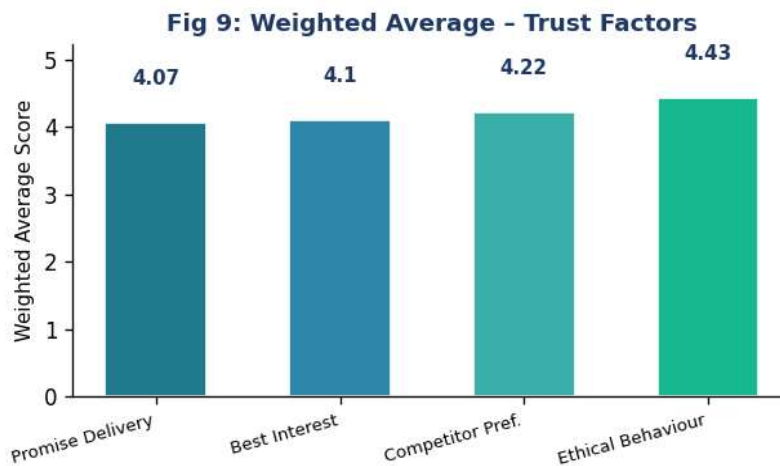


Fig 9: Weighted Average Scores — Ethical Behaviour is the top trust driver (4.43/5)

Trust Factor	Weighted Average	Rank
I trust Sevenscas to deliver what they promise	4.07	4th
I believe Sevenscas acts in my best interest	4.10	3rd
I feel confident choosing Sevenscas over competitors	4.22	2nd
Ethical behaviour by the company increases my trust	4.43	1st

Table 2: Weighted Average – Customer Trust Factors

4.7 Henry Garrett Ranking – Most Valued Ethical Practices

The Henry Garrett Ranking method was used to convert qualitative rankings into quantitative scores to determine the most important ethical practices valued by logistics customers. Using the formula: $\text{Percent Position} = 100(R_i - 0.5) / N$, Garrett scores were computed for each of five ethical parameters.

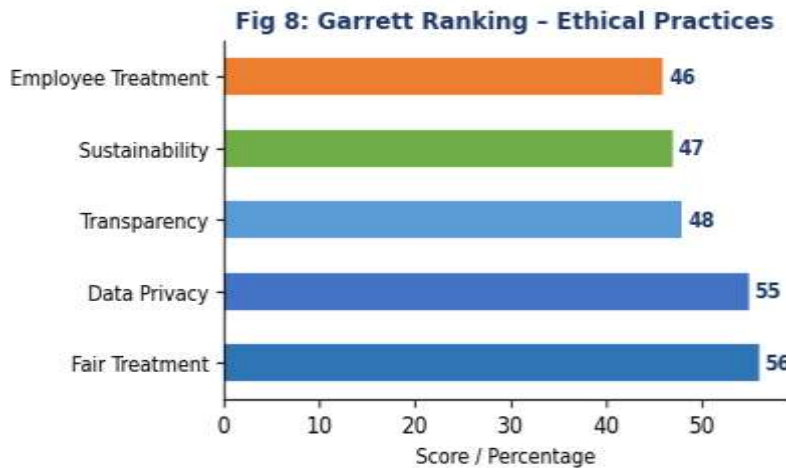


Fig 8: Garrett Ranking — Fair Treatment of Customers is the top ethical priority

Ethical Practice	Average Garrett Score	Final Rank
Fair Treatment of Customers	56	1st
Data Privacy and Confidentiality	55	2nd
Transparency in Charges	48	3rd
Sustainability / Environmental Care	47	4th
Fair Employee Treatment	46	5th

Table 3: Garrett Ranking of Ethical Practices Valued by Logistics Customers

The results indicate that customer-centric practices—fair treatment, data privacy, and pricing transparency—are prioritized by logistics customers over sustainability and internal employee welfare, reflecting a primary self-interest in the value experience.

4.8 Pearson Correlation Analysis

4.8.1 Delivery Timelines vs. Non-Misleading Marketing

H₀: No significant correlation between non-misleading marketing and realistic delivery timeline perceptions.

H₁: A significant correlation exists between the two variables.

The Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.9907$) reveals a near-perfect positive relationship. $R^2 = 0.9815$ indicates that 98.15% of variance in non-misleading perception is attributable to delivery timeline transparency. The result is significant at $p < 0.01$, leading to rejection of H₀.

4.8.2 Customer Privacy vs. Feedback Responsiveness

H₀: No significant correlation between customer privacy perceptions and feedback responsiveness.

H₁: A significant correlation exists between the two variables.

A strong positive correlation ($r = 0.9566$) was established. With $R^2 = 0.9151$, approximately 91.5% of the variance in feedback responsiveness perception is explained by privacy confidence. Significant at $p < 0.01$, confirming H₁. When organizations demonstrate robust data stewardship, customers are significantly more likely to trust brand responsiveness.

Variable Pair	r Value	R ² Value	p-Value
Delivery Timelines × Non-Misleading	0.9907	0.9815	<0.00001
Customer Privacy × Feedback Responsiveness	0.9566	0.9151	<0.00001

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Results

5. FINDINGS

- 59% of respondents are manufacturers; 48% use domestic logistics; sea freight (38%) is the preferred mode.
- Service breadth (air + sea) is the primary driver for choosing Sevenses (49%).
- 80% affirm delivery timeline realism; 76% confirm non-misleading marketing practices.
- 87% acknowledge privacy protection; 77% affirm feedback responsiveness; 84% report positive employee interaction.
- Ethical behaviour is the top trust-driver with a weighted average of 4.43/5.
- Fair Treatment of Customers ranked 1st in Garrett analysis (score: 56), Data Privacy 2nd (55), Transparency 3rd (48).
- Near-perfect correlation ($r = 0.99$) between transparent delivery timelines and non-misleading marketing confirms ethical coherence.
- Strong correlation ($r = 0.96$) between privacy protection and feedback responsiveness validates the trust-engagement nexus.
- 70% of respondents reported satisfaction or very high satisfaction with Sevenses' overall ethical standards.

6. SUGGESTIONS

- Consistently communicate delivery reliability in all marketing materials to reinforce non-misleading brand image.
- Strengthen data privacy communication by highlighting compliance certifications and global data security standards.
- Develop structured feedback channels (surveys, digital portals, follow-up calls) and publicly showcase improvements from customer input.
- Position sustainability and eco-friendly logistics (green shipping, carbon-reduction initiatives) as marketing assets to engage ethically conscious clients.
- Train customer-facing staff in ethical communication and transparent service delivery as a brand differentiator.
- Integrate ethics into the core brand identity—positioning Sevenses as an “ethical logistics partner” through annual ethics and sustainability reporting.
- Focus marketing campaigns on the top three Garrett-ranked values: fair treatment, data privacy, and transparent pricing.

7. CONCLUSION

This study unequivocally establishes that ethical marketing is a cornerstone of brand trust and customer loyalty in the logistics sector. At Sevenses Global Express Logistics, ethical practices—transparent communication, data privacy, non-misleading advertising, and fair customer treatment—are not peripheral compliance requirements but central drivers of competitive advantage. The Garrett Ranking reveals that customers prioritize fairness and data protection above sustainability concerns, while the near-perfect Pearson correlation ($r = 0.99$) between honest delivery commitments and non-misleading marketing underscores the inseparability of operational integrity and ethical branding.

As the Indian logistics sector continues its 10–12% annual growth trajectory, organizations that embed ethics into their marketing philosophy will build stronger reputational capital, foster long-term customer relationships, and achieve sustainable business growth. The evidence from Sevenses affirms that for logistics companies operating in trust-critical environments, ethical marketing is not only the right thing to do—it is the strategically smart choice. By positioning itself as an ethical logistics partner and consistently showcasing commitment to fairness, transparency, privacy, and sustainability, Sevenses can build a strong competitive edge and achieve lasting growth in an evolving market.

REFERENCES

- Mansouri, H., Sadeghi Boroujerdi, S., & Md Husin, M. (2022). The influence of sellers' ethical behaviour on customer's loyalty, satisfaction and trust. *Spanish Journal of Marketing – ESIC*, 26(2), 267–283.
- Nassar, R. M. M., & Battour, M. (2020). The impact of marketing ethics on customer loyalty: A conceptual framework. *International Journal of Business Ethics and Governance*, 3(2), 1–12.
- Hakiki, R., Nurlina, N., & Abaharis, H. (2024). Navigating ethical marketing: How transparency influences brand loyalty in the digital age. *YUME: Journal of Management*.
- Vederhus, T., & Nath, A. (2022). The influence of marketing ethics and corporate social responsibility on e-loyalty: A review. *Proceedings of University of Primorska Press*.
- Hagenbuch, M., & Mgrdichian, Q. (2019). Mindful marketing: A unique educational approach using a 2×2 “Mindful Matrix.”
- Ejjami, R. (2024). Holistic AI-Enhanced Marketing Framework (HAEMF): Integrating AI capabilities with human creativity, ethical transparency, and inclusivity.
- Tanveer, M., Ahmad, A.-R., Mahmood, H., & Haq, I. U. (2021). Role of ethical marketing in driving consumer brand relationships and brand loyalty: A sustainable marketing approach. *Sustainability*, 13(12), 6839.
- Petr, C., & Caudan, P. (2024). Ethical marketing framework for metaverse simulated experiences of tourism. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 79, 103785.