STUDY OF DIGITALIZING THE CONTAINERIZED SHIPMENT EXPORT PROCESS IN SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

The research was conducted to study the current process of the export supply chain process, in order to identify the opportunities to transform them into digitalization. And to identifying the perceive benefits in digitalizing the export process. In order to study the current process, the exporters export process and the freight forwarders export process as identified. The operations of the freight forwarder performed on behalf of the exporter is been studied and the drawbacks are identified which will enable to rectify them when the export operation is been digitalized. A quantitative analysis approach was implemented for this research and the priority is given to identify the existing current process of the export supply chain process, in order to identify the opportunities to transform them into digitalization. This is mainly focused to identify on which level the service is been offered to the exporters and which process can be to transform into to a digitalize platform which will be engage the freight forwarders and the exporters as well. And secondly from the literature review, Identifying the perceive benefits in digitalizing the export process will be assessed as it is required by the exporters and the benefits which will directly affect the export operation, which will engage the exporters more closely to work with the freight forwarders. In order to get the accurate information from the exporters the convenient sampling method was used and a sample of 30 employees were selected to distribute the questioners. The collected data is been analyzed using Microsoft excel and the outcome is shown in graphical form. The exporters are been spending more time with the freight forwarders to the shipment details and the booking details and in order to minimize the issues they are willing to convert them self to use the digital platform which will be more effective. According to the research conduced the exporters are requesting for digital platform as they are currently experiencing the same in the passenger transport. So, implementing a digital information platform will have the mutual benefit for the exporter and the freight forwarders.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Contents

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A freight forwarder is a commission agent fulfilling the shipping and logistics requirements of an exporter and an importer. A freight forwarder is also called as a Non-vessel operating common carrier (NVOCC), (Freight forwarder, 2019). In order to be more competitive and to be the best solution provider the freight forwarder contract with a carrier or with multiple carriers to move the goods from Point A to B. A forwarder does not move the goods but acts as an expert in the logistics network.

Freight Forwarding

Cargo forwarder usually mastermind consignment growth to a worldwide area. in addition, familiarized as worldwide freight forwarders which permits them to induce them to prepare the documentation and perform connected movements regarding shipments. On the run of the bill of lading information assessed by a freight forwarder is the business receipt, shipper's fare announcement, bill of filling and totally different archives needed by the transporter or nation of fare, import, or conveyance. heaps of this information are presently handled in an exceedingly paperless domain. the primary capability of the forwarder, or speedier, was to mastermind the carriage of the shoppers by getting with totally different transporters. The duties enclosed urging on all documentation and traditions conditions within the nation of goal. (Universalcargo, 2017)

Cargo sending

A cargo forwarder is an outsider coordination supplier. An outsider coordination forwarder dispatches shipment by means of advantage-based transporters and books or generally allocates the required space for the shipments. Transporter categories incorporate marine vessels, planes, and automobiles. Cargo forwarders regularly orchestrate load development to a worldwide goal. Likewise alluded to as universal cargo forwarders, they have the aptitude that enables them to get ready and process the documentation and perform related exercises relating to worldwide shipments. A percentage of the run of the mill data explored by a cargo forwarder is the business receipt, shipper's fare affirmation, bill of filling and different reports required by the bearer or nation of fare, import or transshipment. A lot of this data is presently handled in a paperless situation. (Universalcargo, 2017)

Custom Clearance

It is a procedural action which is performed by government faculty. The shipment needs to clear every one of the standards of custom freedom. Custom scope contrasts from nation to nation. Tax arrangements, esteem presentation, and obligation administration can expand costs. Traditions and security activities have forced new directions on organizations' that make it more difficult than any time in recent memory to exchange globally. (Transporteca, 2019)

Transportation

It is the development of individuals and products starting with one area then onto the next. Transport is performed by different modes, for example, air, sea, pipeline and Road. Infrastructure comprises of the settled establishments important for transport, and might be roads, railroads, aviation routes, conduits, trenches and pipelines, and terminals, for example, airplane terminals, rail route stations, transport stations, distribution centers and seaports. (Transporteca, 2019)

The research is carried out to outline the benefits of digitalizing the export process which will benefit the exporters as well as the fright forwarders. As in this modern world the information technology is playing a vital role and the information is on the fingertips of the people. Nowadays having a mobile phone is not just to make a call or send a text message, all the other IT related task are been performed and the time is been well managed, so the people are been converting their self and adopting to the modern environment, which will make their life easy and be more competitive in the market with the up to date information which is been a must in the world.

1.1 Export Process from the Exporter's.
For an export shipment the following steps are carried out from the exporter.

- ▶ Step 1: Request quotes
- ▶ Step 2: Choose the quote that you prefer
- ▶ Step 3: Prepare necessary documents for the shipping process
- ▶ Step 4: Confirm the shipment details
- ▶ Step 5: Book your freight
- ▶ Step 6: Shipment passes through customs inspection at port of entry
- ▶ Step 7: Receive and pay the bill for customs duties and taxes
- ▶ Step 8: Receive the shipment
- ▶ Step 8: Pay the freight & other Charges (Fleet, 2017)

1.2 Freight Forwarders Export Process.

From the perspective of the freight forwarder, the following steps are been performed on behalf of the exporter
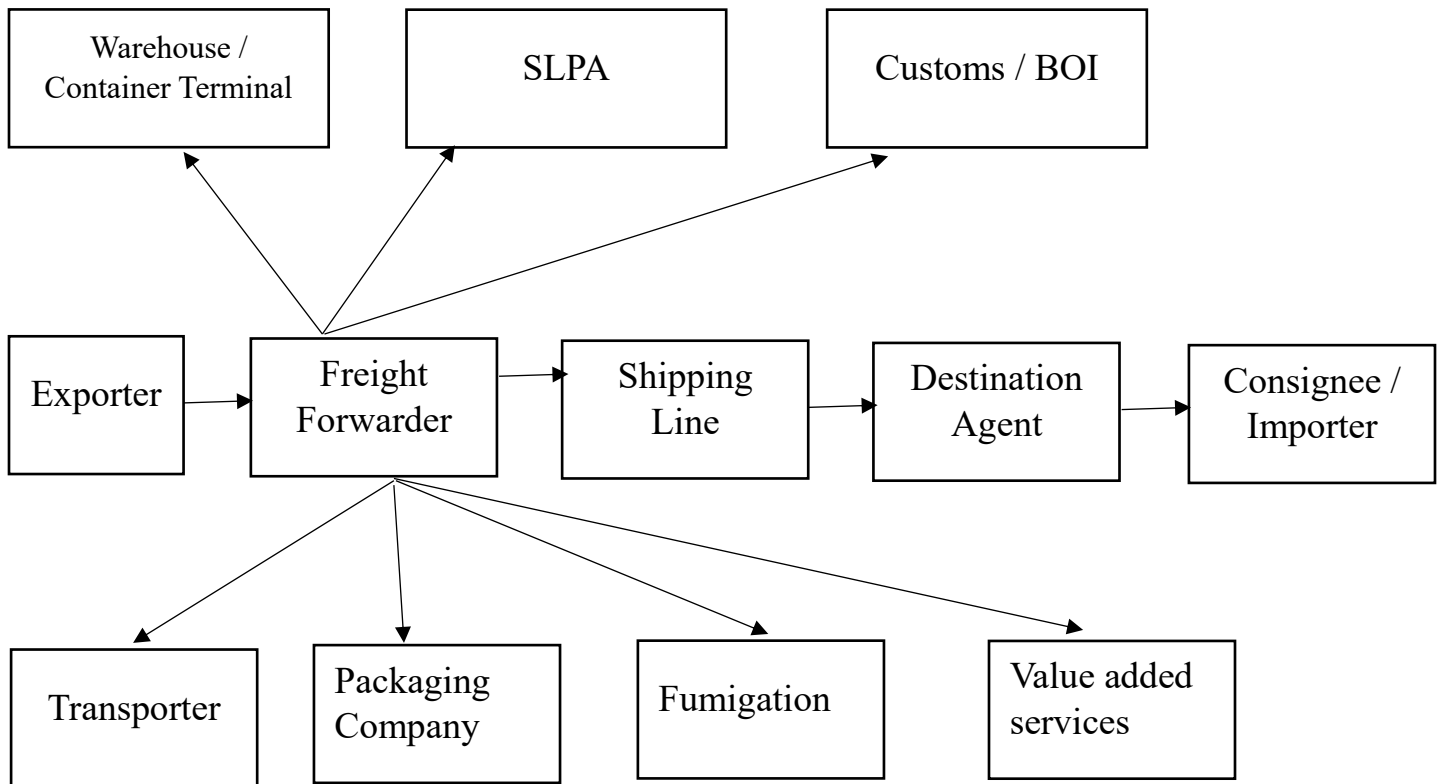
(Sri Lanka Export Development Board , 2014)

As per the above figure, once the exporter places a booking for export shipment to the freight forwarder, the freight forwarder performs the following task to complete the export shipment. Once the booking is received, the freight forwarder places the booking to the shipping line. Then the operation is split to be performed with the government entity & the required private suppliers. The empty container is picked by the transporter and is been placed at the exporters loading premises for the cargo loading, if the packaging is required it's also been performed and the according to the cargo commodity the required fumigation is been performed with the required supervisor of the plant quarantine department. Additionally, the value-added services are performed by the freight forwarder, as it is one of the main core areas which is been practiced with the exporters. Providing the value-added services creates a value for the exporters as the hassle of the exporter is been performed by the freight forwarder. Once the loading process is completed, the container is been moved from the exporters premises and reaches the Customs or the BOI yard for the customs proceedings, once the customs proceedings are

completed the Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA) proceedings are been carried out and finally the container is been moved to the desired terminal and placed on the relevant stack for the loading into the ship.

After the port and customs operation is completed the freight forwarder submits the documentation to the shipping line in order to get the bill of lading for the shipment and release the same to the exporter with the other required certifications. On the release of the bill of lading to the exporter the freight forwarder advises the destination agent with the shipment details so the importer can approach the delivery agent addressed on the bill of lading to clear the shipment from their end.

1.3 Research Problem

▶ Barriers in the export process, when transforming them into digitalization in freight Forwarding industry of Sri Lanka.

▶ Delays in getting the accurate information in the export process from the freight forwarder.

1.4 Research Objectives

▶ Study the current process of the export supply chain process, in order to identify the opportunities to transform them into digitalization.

▶ Identifying the perceive benefits in digitalizing the export process.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Digitization, less commonly digitalization, is the process of converting information into a digital (i.e. computer-readable) format, in which the information is organized into bits. The result is the representation of an object, image, sound, document or signal (usually an analog signal) by generating a series of numbers that describe a discrete set of its points or samples. The result is called digital representation or, more specifically, a digital image, for the object, and digital form, for the signal. In modern practice, the digitized data is in the form of binary numbers, which facilitate computer processing and other operations, but, strictly speaking, digitizing simply means the conversion of analog source material into a numerical format; the decimal or any other number system that can be used instead.

Digitization is of crucial importance to data processing, storage and transmission, because it "allows information of all kinds in all formats to be carried with the same efficiency and also intermingled". Unlike analog data, which typically suffers some loss of quality each time it is copied or transmitted, digital data can, in theory, be propagated indefinitely with absolutely no degradation. Therefore, it is a favored way of preserving information for many organizations around the world.

The digital supply chain is a new media term which encompasses the process of the delivery of digital media, be it music or video, by electronic means, from the point of origin (content provider) to destination (consumer). In much the same manner a physical medium must go through a "supply chain" process in order to mature into a consumable product, digital media must pass through various stages in processing to get to a point in which the consumer can enjoy the music or video on a computer or television set.

A broader definition of the term "digital supply chain" is given in a book chapter by Tony Hines where the term was coined in 2001 to explain a transformation from what he called analogue supply chains to his new conception - the digital supply chain. This contribution recognized that digital supply chains were configured to distribute goods or services that had previously been supplied in physical form. Examples given included books, music and film. However, Hines also expanded the definition to include business to business services and he gives the example of fashion design and product development conducted digitally. This digitalization of hitherto physical form (which he called analogue supply chains) removed time, distance and cost from the supply chain. Hines gives further examples of how information has replaced inventory by designing digital supply chains.

2.1 Import process of Freight Forwarder

▶ The agent sends the pre–alert of shipment details along with copies of the Bills of lading.

▶ Once the pre alert is received the contents of Master B/L as per specimen and House Bill of lading is compared. If any difference arises the relevant agent is advised, and the corrections are performed.

▶ Check with shipping line on ETA of vessel and inform the consignee and the customhouse agent.

▶ Submit the cargo manifest to the Custom prior to 72 hours before the vessel arrival.

▶ Issue cargo arrival notice and Freight invoice to the consignee.

▶ Collect the freight and other local charges from consignee and pass the same to Accounts departments for remittance, for mutual benefits.

▶ To issue discharge request to custom house operator after gathering of properly released unique house Bill of filling with every single important underwriting, for example, bank, if bank is included, recipient and custom house specialist after accumulation of significant charges.

2.2 Export process of the Freight Forwarder

▶ Get rate enquiry from outside accomplices if appropriate.

▶ Check with nearby sending organization's/Break mass administrator/Consolidator and arrange sea cargo.

▶ On the off chance that business finished, get steering request from the abroad operator including shipper points of interest/recipient data.

▶ Prompt shipper through phone about being selected to deal with the shipment and mind freight preparation.

▶ Acquire duplicate of receipt/pressing rundown and ACD (Advance load announcement) if shipments are bound to USA metal Canada.

▶ On the off chance that LCL at that point inform shipper or CHA name with respect to the LCL consolidator and request that the CHA hand over the freight after traditions freedom

▶ Catch up with the providers or Customs house specialist for draft of House Bill of replenishing for readiness of Original B/L

▶ Discharge the transportation line to give the charge note for THC and neighborhood charges and installment ask for is given to accounts offices for installment of nearby charges.

▶ Discharge Master B/L from transportation co/consolidator when the vessel sails. This could be SEAWAY B/L. On the off chance that unique is discharged then the equivalent is surrendered to the transportation line.

2.3 Issues faced by the Freight Forwarders

Issue #1: Freight rates aren't current

Quoting to the clients as per their requirements

However, in coordination's you're normally managing taxes that are now outdated. That is not on account of most coordination's individuals are sluggish, but rather because cargo rates (particularly sea taxes) change at regular intervals or months. This makes computing cargo costs precisely incomprehensible on the off chance that don't have the most recent rates accessible. (Logistics Management, 2017)

Issue #2: There is no centralized system for managing freight rates

On the off chance that have in excess of one area that exist as independent activities from a rate and contract administration outlook, there is effectiveness being lost.
This is on the grounds that are most likely overseeing separate transporter duties and working under various methodology and most of the time, doing likewise work twice for no gain. A halfway overseen, single programming to deal with cargo rate administration will give you better control and consistency. (Partida, 2013)

Issue #3: Taking Too Long to Quote

To get a demand for evaluating with respect to a multi-modular cargo development and they require it yesterday. Without a procedure to get to and ascertain all in rates it can take hours or days to return to the client. Probabilities are in that time the client has addressed other cargo forwarders and got no less than a couple of contender quotes. Ordinarily it is the first to quote that wins the business. (Partida, 2013)

Issue #4: Not Balancing the Cost and Service

In some cases, the most reduced cost alternatives don't prompt the best arrangement. Numerous forwarders quote higher for shipments than they ought to and with longer travel times than are vital. This is mostly since they can't without much of a stretch figure out what the best choices are. A procedure to improve cost and administration while citing clients is pivotal to putting your best foot forward and winning more business. (Partida, 2013)

Issue #5: Losing Money on Invoice Errors

Transportation produces a considerable measure of solicitations – and mixed up ones at that. It's a fundamental segment of the business, yet never an agreeable one. There are normal cheats and different blunders that are basic on cargo solicitations. However, except the placing staff time into surveying them, or have a framework that consequently checks for blunders, it can have an opening in the company. (Logistics Management, 2017)

2.4 Shipping Industry Supply Chain

The shipping lines supply chain is operating using the digital platform. In the past days the exporters have passed the consignment to the shipping line. Once the shipment is handed over the updated was received to the exporter from the shipping line in a manual communication method. Which had delay in getting the accurate shipping information. In order to link the port operation and the shipping line, the GPS technology is been used. The cargo booking is been handled using process automation which links across the cargo booking and the shipping documentation.

Managing the operation using the digital platform the documentation, customs clearance and the transportation are merged using the system and the visibility of the operation is much transparent which has increased the efficiency of the shipping operation. (Cogoport, 2017)

2.5 Difficulties Faced by Exporters in International Trade

2.5.1 Geography and transportation

One of the primary commercialism challenges that you simply might need to alter is that the distance. If you're getting to export your product to a rustic that's isolated from your location, the method will get a touch difficult. assumptive your product can need to travel many alternative countries to succeed in their destination and it'll result in avoid the shipping delays. Also, if your product can travel over the ocean or ocean, you may get to consider a unique style of transportation like a ship rather than associate aero plane. Also, if your product can travel over the ocean or ocean, you may get to take into account a unique style of transportation like a ship rather than associate aero plane.

2.5.2 Payment Methods

Payment technique unbelievably necessary once it involves international mercantilism. Some countries will not share identical business enterprise system in conjunction with your country. and you may would love to facilitate and facilitate once mercantilism with such countries. There are some international types of payment which is able to cowl such things, but they need to be gift in every country. There unit of measurement many ways during which to realize one of these payment ways, and with correct analysis, you need to confirm them. associate controller conjointly can assist you produce the foremost effective choice. contemplate the varied currencies and potential money loss on the tactic, therefore you don't waste your funds. it's notably important if you are commerce with a country that doesn't use unit of measurement or USD currencies confine mind that exchange rates modification on a commonplace, therefore time could be a important issue once you produce a payment. wise communication with a creditworthy typical will ease your job hundreds and forestall from stunning issues which can occur.

2.5.3 Language barriers

The Language barriers are a true issue once commercialism internationally. If the businessperson doesn't speak an equivalent language thing can be lost within the translation. the most commercialism language may be utilized in English. However, several countries don't have English as their national language, therefore importers would possibly use completely different translation programs to speak with you. you'll still build a deal if you retain the language straightforward and as customary as attainable. Hiring a translator can prevent from plenty of struggle once it involves communication issues. And its associate investment value creating as a result of nobody desires misunderstandings once there's plenty of cash concerned

.

2.5.4 Finding the right importer

The most vital half to require care of as a world merchant is finding the proper businessperson. Your vital are going to be your partner within the entire method, and that they will become a blessing or a curse for the corporate. Once an honest businessperson is known, that helps the corporate with the import-export method. which can change to try and do the simplest to stay them with the corporate. A long-run account is very important within the international mercantilism market. And smart contacts area unit onerous to search out, therefore the known importers must be compelled to be developed with smart relationships. On the opposite hand, once the corporate notice an honest businessperson

supported other exporters' recommendations. There are a unit several forums dedicated to exporters wherever you'll speak with others in similar things.

2.5.5 Different customs and cultures

When an export is been exported to a new country, the exporter must consider the culture and traditions of the importing country. This may specially occur if you are exporting Perishable food or Garments. On the other side considering the meat items, certain restrictions are there according to the relevant country regulations. Not only for the meat items for the garment items also the same occurs.

2.6 Single Window Portal of Customs, the paperless documentation at Customs and port operations.

This portal is set up to facilitate the trading community in Sri Lanka providing access to several online systems developed for Regulatory Agencies involved in Import & Exports. Providing the Facility to lodge online applications for permits and to view the progress of their applications within the Agencies has been the purpose of setting up this system. Three systems have been developed and brought online for testing as of now. They are, The System for National Plant Quarantine Service the System for Department of Animal Production & Health the System for Sri Lanka Standards Institute The Department of Information Technology Management of the Ministry of Finance intends to bring all the regulatory agencies online by the end of the year. This site is linked to the International Trade Portal of Sri Lanka which provides requisite information for the traders who wish to import goods into Sri Lanka and export goods from Sri Lanka. This website provides links to access required information with few mouse clicks. Information related to the commodities subject to regulatory controls in import and export is along with the information about all the Ministries involved in regulating the import/export process are explained in detail. The laws and regulations related to regulatory requirements are also provided in the site. This website is intended to provide a central contact point for all the stakeholders and the Government Agencies involved in Import & Export Trade.

The customs department of Sri Lanka has taken the steps to digitalize the export operations and have implemented a one stop warehouse which facilitates with all the customs proceedings at the same premises. The main goal was to go into paperless customs proceedings and currently its been in the practiced within the customs department and it will also be implemented to the exporters as well. For the export shipments as customs have taken the initiative to digitalize the process with the other departments such Coconut Development board (CDA), Tea board, Plant quarantine, Import and Export Control, Health department etc… With the digitalization when a certificate is issued to process an export shipment, the relevant certificate is uploaded to the customs systems as all the departments are inter inked with the customs (ASYCUDA) systems. This is a advantage to the exporters as when a certificate issued by the relevant department it is visible for the

customs official and the export customs export proceedings will be more easy and quicker. This is been currently practiced by the department of Customs. Earlier the customs entries were processed manually, now the exporters are given access to frame the customs entries on the customs system, which has reduced the manual processing and the other required documents also can be generated once the cusdec is framed on the system. This has reduced the multiple document framings which was performed manually. With the digitalization of the department of customs the Sri Lanka ports authority has also implemented a digital platform. In the past the port bills were processed manually, and the ports authority staff only had the access to raise an invoice and proceed with the payments. Currently the ports operation has changed, and a digital platform is enabling to the exporters which is been linked with the customs system. Once the cusdec framed on the customs system the exporter could process the port authority bill using the digital platform provided. When the bill is been submitted with the required details the ports authority official checks on it and approve the bill within few minutes. Earlier the exporter must be on the que to get the relevant invoice and then has to visit the bank to pay the bill as ports authority does not accept cash payments directly. Although the payment must be done to the bank, limited banks had the service and with very limited branches, where the exporters faced many difficulties as the banks closes by 03.00PM. with the digital transformation the banks were linked, and the online payment options was included. Once the bill is been approved by the ports authority official the payment can be done using online banking which will be updated within couple of seconds. This has reduced the use of paper as there is no requirement to produce the ports authority bill manually, as all the internal departments are interlinked, and the terminals are also linked to the system. The other advantage of the digital platform is 24/7 the bills are been processed and the export shipments can be moved without any delay. The reason why earlier the option was not available and after the digital transformation its been enabled, earlier ports authority had a certain no of employees to raise the invoice and another set of employees to check and release the invoice for the payment process. The total process has changed, and the invoice is raised by the exporter using the digital platform and the ports authority only checks the invoice and approves the same. This has reduced the cost of the port's authority as at present two employees are enough to perform the operation. In future it will also be automated and once the invoice is submitted, it will be reviewed through the system and will be approved with few seconds. The documentation process of the port's authority is also digitalized, the export containers which are planned to be loaded to a vessel must be updated by the exporter to the ports authority before the container arrives to the port premises. This enables to move through the security gates without any delay because when the system is updated with the required details, it will be visible for the security gate as well as for the terminals. Using the digital platform there is no need for the manual printouts which is huge savings for the exporters.

2.7 Benefits for the Freight Forwarder.

When the freight forwarder is implementing a digital platform, the company will have many advantages as the manual entries will be reduced. This will be a huge savings for the organization as the stationery cost will be reduced and specially the storage cost will also decrease. The internal departments communication gap will be resolved as the details can be viewed using the platform and the time consumed to gather information will be reduced. As the time management is a key area for service organization, the employees can concentrate more on new businesses. The telecommunication expenses will be very low as the number of calls will be reduced comparing to the previous operation model.

2.8 Benefits for the Exporters.

The exporters will be experiencing the following benefits. Time and Transparency: A digitized process must be standardized; else it does not work. Standardization helps create transparency in the system. It reduces the scope for human errors, manipulation of prices and inventory. Digitization will ensure a speedy completion of tasks. Documentation Management**:** Documents are a major part of shipping. Maintaining multiple documents and filing them takes up both time and space. Taking the process online will help save on both. In future, it can also help create an integrated documentation platform that can be accessed by all the parties (exporter, importer, shipping lines, ports, banks, storage) involved in the transaction. Thus, paving the way to a paperless system. Door – to – Door Tracking: New technology is making it possible to track containers on a real time basis. This will go a long way in helping customers provide updates to their business partners and plan further logistics (Cogoport, 2017).

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

A quantitative analysis approach was implemented for this research and the priority is given to identify the existing current process of the export supply chain process, in order to identify the opportunities to transform them into digitalization. This is mainly focused to identify on which level the service is been offered to the exporters and which process can be to transform into to a digitalize platform which will be engage the freight forwarders and the exporters as well. And secondly from the literature review, Identifying the perceive benefits in digitalizing the export process will be assessed as it is required by the exporters and the benefits which will directly affect the export operation, which will engage the exporters more closely to work with the freight forwarders.

3.2 Targeted Population

The exporters registered with the Ceylon Chamber of commerce are considered as the stakeholders for this research. Ceylon Chamber of commerce is the governing body issues the Certificate of Origin for the products produced locally and certifies that the product is Origin of Sri Lanka. For exporting a product manufactured locally, the international trade requires the Certificate of origin issued by the relevant local authority, as it's a very important certificate for the shipment to certify that the products are manufactured locally. The targeted stakeholders are considered from the Ceylon Chamber of commerce as each exporter has registered as they need to get the certificate of origin for every shipment exported. According to Ceylon Chamber commerce the total no of registered exporters is 627. (Our Members - Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, n.d.)

3.3 Sample

The sample of 30 employees of the export companies are selected for this research. The convenient sampling method is been used for this research as the data which is to be collected must be accurate. The employee's will be the export manager's, Assistant Export manager and Senior executives directly involved in the export operations. The reason for selecting the employees who are directly involve in the export operation as they will be closely working with the freight forwarders and the accurate information can be obtained and the drawbacks can be identified. As the research is conducted to find whether the exporters are really interested on digitalizing the export process and what are the been expected by them through the digitalizing of the export process.

3.4 Questioner

The questioner will be properly structured with simple wordings, with the objective of getting the required feedback accurately. The questioner will be focused on the current process of the export supply chain process, in order to identify the opportunities to transform them into digitalization and Identifying the perceive benefits in digitalizing the export process. The questioner will be designed with multiple choice answers, or the feedback will be not accurate. All the questions are based on the industry current process in order to identify the current process, how the operation is carried out and what are been required for the exporters to make the operation process more effective. All the questions were based on interval, nominal, ordinal and five-point Likert scale according to the scope of each question.

3.5 Data Collection

The data collection will be done using the following.

▶ **Primary data**

  ▶ Questionnaires and observations are going to be used to collect the required data. These questionnaires will be forwarded to the employees working for export companies.

  ▶ This method realistic data can be collected and evaluated.

The questioner will be distributed to the selected employees who are currently employed at export companies and in the senior roles such as Export managers, assistant export managers and the senior executives of the export department, as the convenient sampling method is used the employees are selected to answer the questioner to get the accurate information and to get to know the expectations and the improvements. The responders were met and the had short interviews and explained the reason for conducting a questioner survey and collected the required information.\

▶ **Secondary data**

  ▶ Secondary data refers to the already available data. These will be collected from researches and other e-resources.

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS

The data is in descriptive nature, collected data will be analyzed using excel. As the research is in quantitative nature the analysis should be more focused on quantitative data. The questioner feedback is analyzed and show in graphical form. The questioner was forwarded to 30 employees of the export companies and successfully have received all the 30 responses.

1) The size of your company?
30 responses
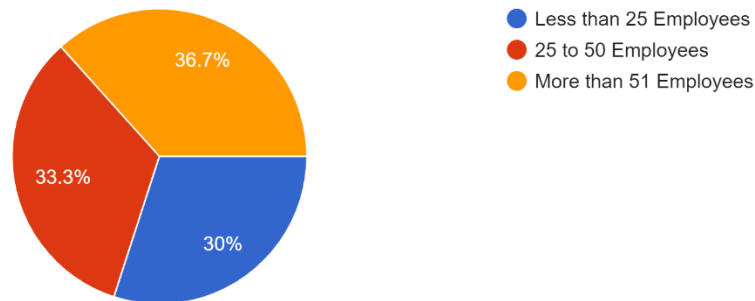
The company size was questioned, and all the 30 responses was received. From the received responses 36.7% of the companies are having more than 51 employees, 33.3% of the companies are having between 25 to 50 employees and 30% of the companies are having less than 25 employees. The reason the company size was questioned to identify the company strength and to determine the volume of the export shipments.

2) The Export volume exported monthly.

30 responses
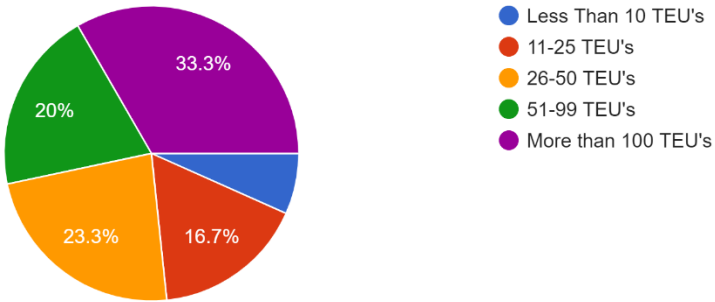
The monthly export volume was questioned, the answers was based on the TEU's. A TEU is referred to a 20 feet container, and for a 40 feet container two TEU's are calculated. It's the general term used in the shipping industry to identify the movement of the containers. All the 30 responses were received. From the received responses 33.3% companies are exporting more than 100 TEU's per month, 23.3% of the companies are exporting between 26 to 50 TEU's per month, 20% of the companies are exporting between 51 to 99 TEU's per month, 16.7% companies are exporting between 11 to 25 TEU's per month and 6.7% companies are exporting less than 10 TEU's per month.

3) At present are you experiencing the digital information service from the freight forwarders or shipping lines?

30 responses

- Yes
- No

53.3%

46.7%
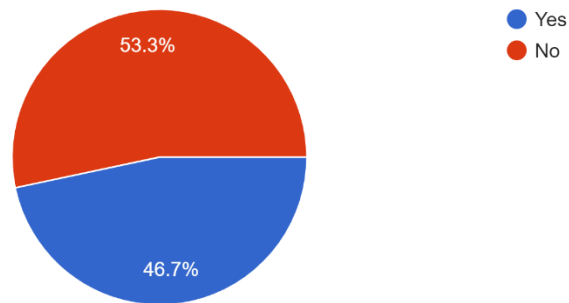
The questioned was raised to find out whether the exporters are currently experiencing a digitalize platform or service offered by the freight forwarders or shipping lies which they are currently engaged with. All the 30 responses were received. From the responses received 53.3% are not experiencing such service from the freight forwarders or the shipping lines, and 46.7% are experiencing the digitalize service from the freight forwarders or the shipping lines. As this research is carried to identify if a digital platform will be provided will it be more effective for the exporters and as per the responses currently more than 50% of the exporters are not been experienced such a service, which is shows that implementing a digital platform will be more effective to gain more business and to increase the level of the customer service offered to the exporters which will enable to be more competitive with the international freight forwarders.

4) If yes, is the information provided accurate?

15 responses

- 🔵 Strongly Disagree
- 🔴 Disagree
- 🟠 Neither agree or Disagree
- 🟢 Agree
- 🟣 Strongly Agree
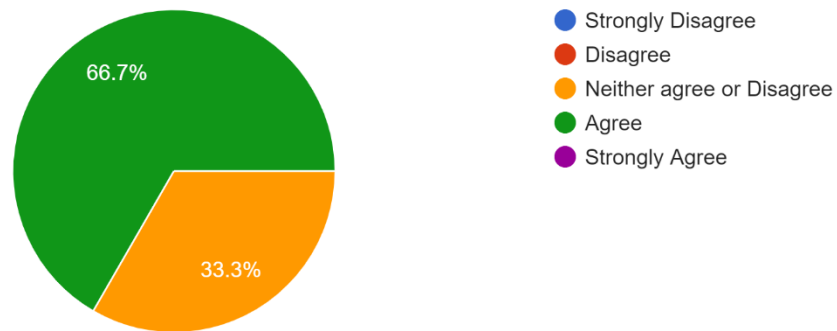
The question was proposed for the responders who are currently experiencing the digital information service from the freight forwarders or the shipping lines. The responders who answered yes to the question at present are you experiencing the digitalize information service from the freight forwarders or shipping lines? Have responded to the question whether the information provided is accurate. The five-point Likert scale was used to get the information. According to the responses received 46.7% are currently experiencing the digitalize information service and 66.7% have agreed that the information provided is accurate and 33.3% have responded that the information provided is not agreeable or disagreeable. As a summary the digital information service is been available for the exporters but its been provided by a limited service provider. Implementing a digital information platform will be good solution to increase the level of customer service offered to the exporters.

5) How often the bookings are placed to the freight forwarders?
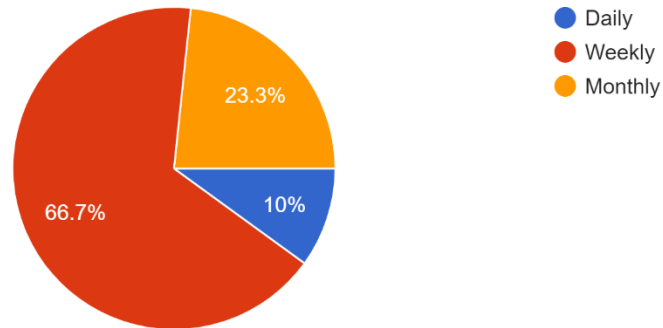
30 responses

The booking rhythm was questioned to identify how often the bookings placed by the exporter to the freight forwarders. All the 30 responses were received and from the received responses 66.7% companies are placing the bookings by weekly, 23.3% companies are placing the bookings monthly and 10% of the companies are placing the booking on daily basis. More than 66% of the exporters are been placing the booking on weekly basis and the freight forwarders can forecast the bookings and reserve the space with the respective shipping lines. Once the space reservation is performed on a weekly rhythm, when the booking is placed by the exporter to the freight forwarders the bookings can be released to the exporter without any delay.

6) In order to forecast and plan the export production, which details of the shipment export process will be needed?

30 responses

Legend:
- 🔵 Vessel Details
- 🔴 BL Cutoff
- 🟠 FCL Cuttoff
- 🟢 VGM Cutoff
- 🟣 All the Details

(Pie chart showing 100%)

Forecasting and planning of the export production is a must in the export organization, in order to forecast and plan the production, which details will be required was questioned and all the 30 responses were received. From the received responses 100 % they have responded that all the details are needed to forecast and plan the export production.

Vessel details is needed to forecast the production as the buyers required date must be met in order to get the business.

The BL cutoff is needed as the bill of lading details has to be submitted before the cutoff time, as per the country regulation of the export to be sent to meet the customs requirements of the relevant nation, and if the bill of landing is not submitted before the cutoff tome although the container is port in and placed on the stack, the container will not be loaded to the ship.

The FCL cutoff is known as Full container load cutoff which is also called as the port cutoff for the respective vessel. The container has to be passed through the customs and port proceedings and has to be placed in the respective terminal in the port before the FCL cutoff, so the cutoff time is also a must when the production is planned, so the production can be completed and the loading of the goods can be performed and the container can be moved to the port.

The VGM cutoff is known as Verified Gross mass which was implemented for the safety of the lives at sea (SOLAS). Its concern about the employees who are in the ships as recently the vessel has been collapsed in the middle of the sea due to stability issues. (International Maritime Organiztion, 2019) The reason behind the stability issues is the tonnage of the vessel is higher than the charted tonnage. To mitigate the issues the International maritime organization implemented and made compulsory for each export

container a VGM certificate must be submitted to the vessel operator before 12 hours from the FCL cutoff. In order to get the VGM certificate, Department of Director merchant shipping appointed the weight bridge service providers. This is one option to get the certificate and the other option was given to the exporters who has the weight bridges on their own premises. For this the department of Merchant shipping has set the rules and regulation and a license must be renewed yearly. The VGM certificate can be obtained on one of the following methods and it must be submitted to the shipping line, or else the container will not be loaded to the vessel although the container is placed in the port.

As a summary all the details are required to forecast and plan the export production. Which will lead to a smooth export process as the production of goods is the first step of the export shipment. Once the export production is completed as planned the loading of goods can be loaded to the container and it can be moved through the customs and port operations, this will avoid the delays of meeting the cutoff times.

## 7) How quickly do you receive the information about the export shipment from the freight forwarder?

30 responses

Legend:
- Less than 10 Minutes
- Within 11 - 30 Minutes
- More than 30 Minutes

40%

56.7%
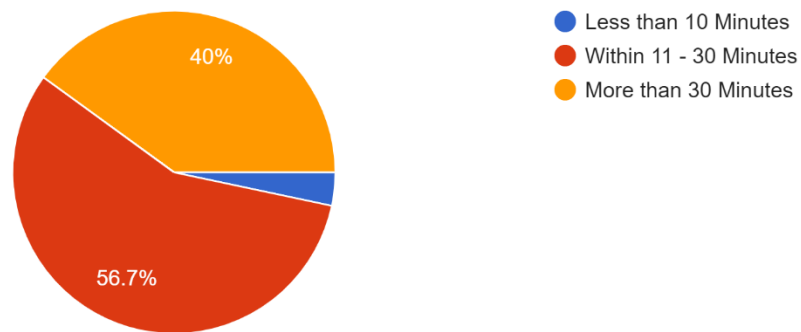
The question was raised to find how quickly the information of the export shipment is received from the freight forwarder. The time consumed for a shipment is to get the information is identified. All the 30 responses were received and the from the received the responses 56.7% are spending between 11 to 30 minutes to get the information per shipment. 40 % are spending more than 30 minutes to get the information per shipment. 3.3% are spending less than 10 minutes to get the information per shipment. As a summary the time spent to get the export shipment information from the freight forwarders are more than 11 minutes per shipment. So, for each shipment the exporter must spent more than 11 minutes per shipment which is very time consuming. The reason the time consumed was questioned was to see how long it takes to get the information and if a digital information platform is provided will it be more effective as they can obtain the details within seconds.

8) Do you receive the accurate information about the export shipment from the freight forwarder?

30 responses

Legend:
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree or Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

90%
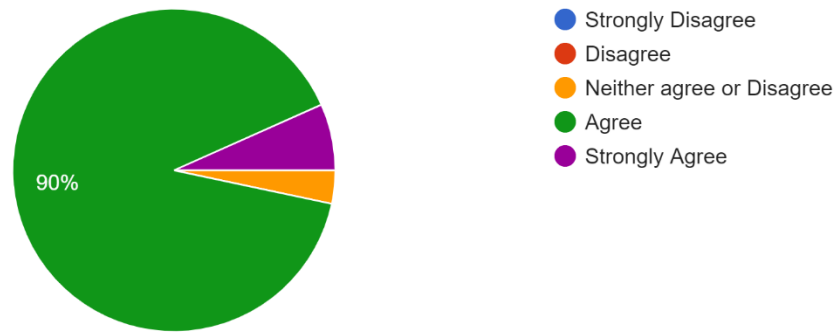
The question was raised to identify whether the exporter is receiving the accurate information about the export shipment from the freight forwarder? The five-point Likert scale was used to get the information. All the 30 responses were received. 90% have agreed that the information received is accurate from the freight forwarders, 8% has strongly agreed that the information received is accurate from the freight forwarders 2% has responded as agreeable or disagreeable. As a summary 98% have agreed that the information received from the freight forwarders are accurate, which shows that the information which is passed is accurate, but the time consumed to get the information is the issues. To overcome this situation the digital information platform can be used which will make the work easy of the freight forwarder as well as the exporter.

9) When an export booking is placed to the freight forwarder, how quickly do you receive the shipment details once the booking is placed?

30 responses

- Within 10 – 15 Minutes
- Within 16 – 30 Minutes
- More than 30 Minutes

63.3%

36.7%
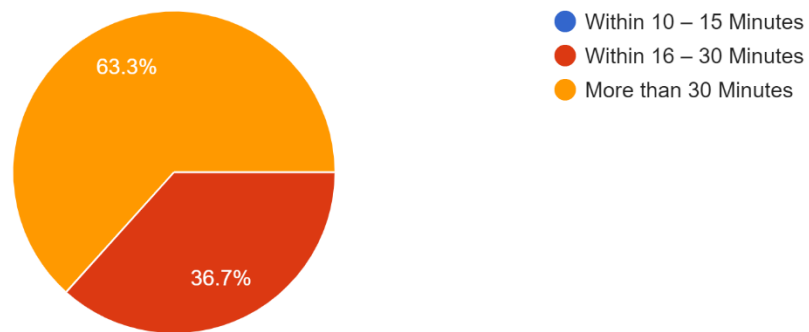
The question was raised to find, when an export booking is placed to the freight forwarder, how quickly the export shipment details are received from the freight forwarder once the booking is placed.? The time consumed for a shipment is to get the shipment details of the relevant booking is identified. All the 30 responses were received and the from the received the responses 63.3% are spending more than 30 minutes to get the shipment details per shipment. 36.7 % are spending more between 16 to 30 minutes to get the shipment details per shipment. As a summary the time spent to get the export shipment details from the freight forwarders are more than 16 minutes per shipment. So, for each shipment the exporter must spent more than 16 minutes per shipment which is very time consuming. The reason the time consumed was questioned was to see how long it takes to get the shipment booking details and if a digital information platform is provided will it be more effective as they can obtain the details within seconds.

10) When an export booking is placed to the freight forwarder, how accurately do you receive the shipment details once the booking is placed?
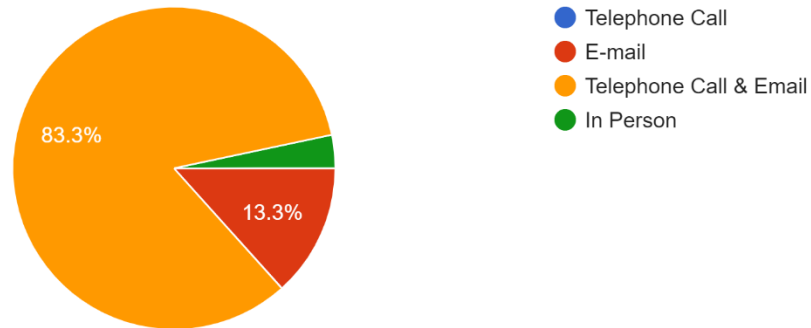
30 responses
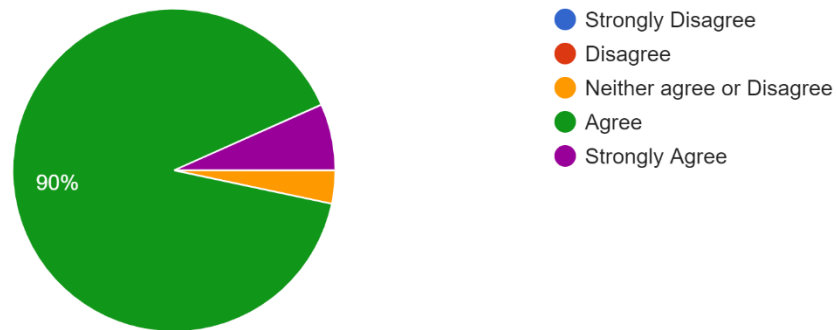
The question was raised to identify whether the exporter is receiving the accurate shipment details about the export shipment from the freight forwarder once the booing is placed? The five-point Likert scale was used to get the information. All the 30 responses were received. 90% have agreed that the shipment details received is accurate from the freight forwarders, 8% has strongly agreed that the shipment details received is accurate from the freight forwarders 2% has responded as agreeable or disagreeable. As a summary 98% have agreed that the shipment details received from the freight forwarders are accurate, which shows that the shipment details which is passed is accurate, but the time consumed to get the information is the issues. To overcome this situation the digital information platform can be used which will make the work easy of the freight forwarder as well as the exporter.

11) Which communication method is used to get the information from the freight forwarder?

30 responses

- 🔵 Telephone Call
- 🔴 E-mail
- 🟠 Telephone Call & Email
- 🟢 In Person

The communication method was questioned to identify which medium is used to get the information from the freight forwarder. All the 30 responses were received. 83.3% are been communicating using the E-mails and telephone calls, 13.3 % are been communicating using E-mails and 3.4% are been communicating in person. According to the responses received for each shipment the exporter must communicate with the freight forwarder using a communication method, which is time consuming and its very costly as the no of calls raised will be very high. The reason the communication medium was identified as this research is focused on the benefits of digitalizing the export process. When the export process is digitalized the information can be viewed using a digital platform, which will be very less time consuming and all the shipment details could be viewed within seconds. Which will improve the service quality. This will benefit the freight forwarder as well as the exporter. The time consumed with the freight forwarders to get the shipment details can be utilized to another operation where the efficiency of the employee who is communicating from either side.

12) If the export shipment details are viewed through a digital platform, will it be useful, and do you all require it from the freight forwarders?

30 responses

● Yes
● No

100%
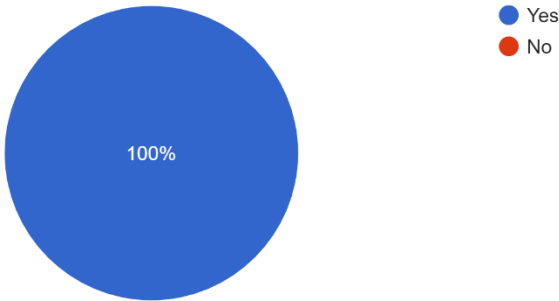
The question If the export shipment details are viewed through a digital platform will it be useful, and do you all require it from the fright forwarders? Was raised to check whether the export industry is lacking with such requirement. All the 30 responses were received, and all the 30 respondents have answered yes, as they are lacking from such service. Currently the passenger transport is in a digital platform, where earlier to get the passenger taxi a phone call must be made to the taxi service providers, which is currently replaced with a mobile app which enables to book a taxi with more information rather than earlier. The transformation has increased the use of the taxi's compared to earlier as is been very convivence to the passengers. As the people are been more digitalize, they are expecting the same level of service from the other service providers as well. As per the survey conducted the industry is expecting a digital information platform.

13) If the export shipment details are viewed through a digital platform, the previously time consumed to get the information will not be necessary?
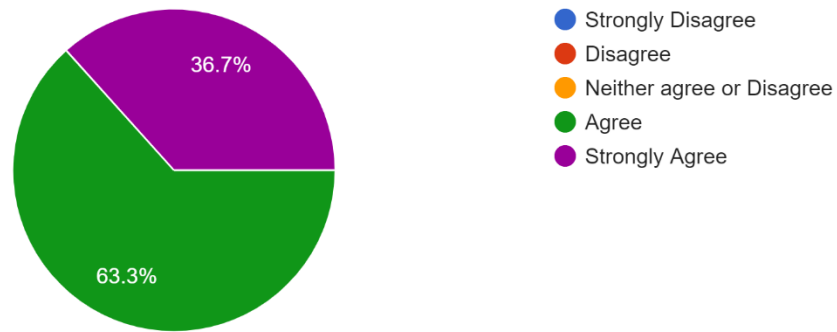
30 responses
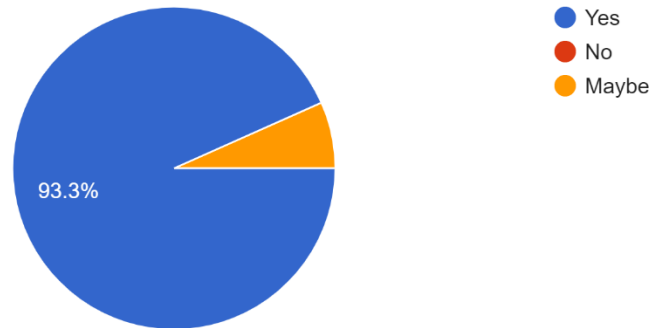
The question was raised to identify the time consumption of the exporters, if a digital platform is provided, the time consumed previously to get the information using a telephone call or an Email will be necessary or not. As per the survey conducted more than 11 minutes is spent to get the information from a freight forwarder per shipment. The responses were received from all the 30 responders. 93.3% have responded as yes and 7.7% have responded as although a digital platform is provided it may be necessary or not necessary. More than 93% have agreed that the time consumed previously will not be necessary when the information is viewed through a digital platform. This shows the requirement of the exporters as they are lacking from this service. Implementing a digital information platform will increase the business as well and the employees working for the freight forwarders in the customer service team can be more efficient as the number of telephone calls will be reduced, as the information will be available for the exporters and if the customer service team receives a call inquiring the details they can be directed to the digital platform or the customer service representive can view the detail from the digital platform and inform the same to the exporter. This enables the internal departments of the freight forwarders transparency as no need to depend on a person to get the required information.

14) If the export details are viewed using digital platform, will the time management and transparency will be very effective?

30 responses

Legend:
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree or Disagree
- Agree — 63.3%
- Strongly Agree — 36.7%

The question was based on the literature review, If the export details are viewed using digital platform, will the time management and transparency will be very effective? The five-point Likert scale was used to get the information. All the 30 responses were received. The received responses are confirming that it will be very effective. 63.3% have agreed that it will be very effective and 36.7% have strongly agreed that it will be very effective. When the details are viewed using the digital platform the access will be available if a mobile phone is available. As earlier a mobile phone was used to make a call, but the evolution has changed, nowadays if a mobile phone is available the daily working can be done as the mobility is very high in this modern trend. This shows that implementing a digital platform is been a requirement in the current market.

15) If the export process is digitized will the documentation errors will be mitigated, and the manual documentation can be avoided?

30 responses
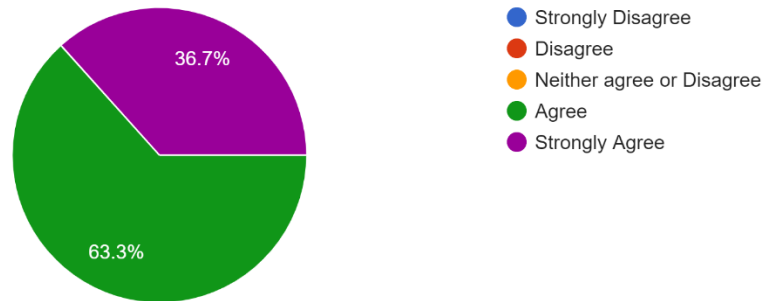
The question was based on the literature review, If the export process is digitize will the documentation errors will be mitigated, and the manual documentation can be avoided? The five-point Likert scale was used to get the information. All the 30 responses were received. The received responses are confirming that the documentation errors will be mitigated, and the manual documentation can be avoided. 63.3% have agreed and 36.7% have strongly agreed. The main reason the documentation errors will be mitigated, as from the shipment booing detail are available when the documentation is been processed and the exporter only has to input the details of the exporter details, Importer details, Notify party details and the cargo description with the quantity and the weight. All the other required details will be available once the booking is been accepted. So, the errors will be mitigated and there will be no requirement for the manual documentation, as once the information filled on the digital platform the exporter also has the access to view the same. This also avails that a service is been lacking from the freight forwarder and implementing a digital platform will be an advantage for the exporters as well as the freight forwarders, as the manual inputs can be reduced.

16) If a digital platform is provided by the freight forwarder, will it be more useful as the information will be on the fingertips?

30 responses
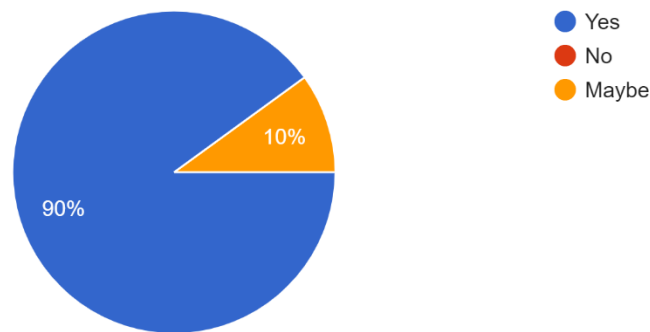
The question was raised to identify, if a digital platform is provided by the freight forwarder, will it be more useful as the information will be on the fingertips? As per the survey conducted more than 16 minutes is spent to get the information from a freight forwarder per shipment. The responses were received from all the 30 responders. 90% have responded as yes and 10% have responded as although a digital platform is provided it may be useful or not useful. More than 90% have agreed that it will be useful when the information is on the fingertips. This shows the requirement of the exporters as they are lacking from this service. Implementing a digital information platform will increase the business as well and the employees working for the freight forwarders in the customer service team can be more efficient as the number of telephone calls will be reduced, as the information will be available for the exporters and if the customer service team receives a call inquiring the details they can be directed to the digital platform or the customer service representive can view the detail from the digital platform and inform the same to the exporter. This enables the internal departments of the freight forwarders transparency as no need to depend on a person to get the required information.

17) The shipment tracking details on digital platform will it be an advantage to coordinate with your buyers?

30 responses
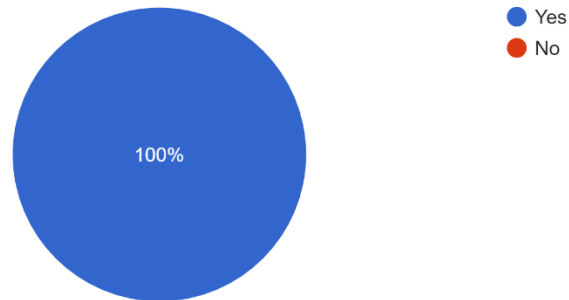
The question was based on the literature review, the shipment tracking details can be obtained through the digital platform rather that calling the freight forwarder, will it be an advantage to plan the shipment and coordinate with your buyers? This question was raised to identify if the shipment tracking is available for the exporters will it an advantage to coordinated with their respective buyers as the shipment arrival dates will be available and as an additional benefit when the shipping documents are sent to the buyer or the importer the tracking link also can be shared so the visibility will be there for importer as well, which will mitigate the communication gap between the exporter and importer, as when dealing with different countries the languages also differ. The responses were received from all the 30 responders. All the responders have agreed that that it will be an advantage, as the shipment visibility is available. As the people are been more digitalize, they are expecting the same level of service from the other service providers as well. As per the survey conducted the industry is expecting a digital information platform.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research was conducted to study the current process of the export supply chain process, in order to identify the opportunities to transform them into digitalization. And to Identifying the perceive benefits in digitalizing the export process. In order to study the current process, the exporters export process and the freight forwarders export process as identified. The operations of the freight forwarder performed on behalf of the exporter is been studied and the drawbacks are identified which will enable to rectify them when the export operation is been digitalized. In this research the Barriers in the export process, when transforming them into digitalization in freight Forwarding industry of Sri Lanka was identified and the why Delays are occurring in getting the accurate information in the export process from the freight forwarder was identified. From the data analysis the barriers were identified, and the required detail were gathered and the responders have confirm that the shipment vessel detail, BL cut-off, FCL cut-off, and VGM cut-off need be advised in order to plan the export production which is the first step of the export shipment. As these details are not advised to the exporter prior issues have been raised and due to the internal conflicts of the freight forwarders the accurate details are not passed to the exporter. In order to overcome this situation, the information transparency must be there among the internal departments of the freight forwarder. The time consumed to get the information of the shipment and the time consumed to get the booking details are very high, so implementing a digital information platform will mitigate the issue and the level of customer service Offred can be increased. From the literature review the exporters was questioned whether they will be requiring a digital information platform and will it be useful and the time consumed to get the information will be reduced and the information transparency will be high and if the export shipment details are on mobility will it e useful and finally if the tracking of the shipment is enable will it to useful to negotiate with the importers and secure the business, the exporters are have strongly agreed on the all the above questions and they are requesting for a digitalise information platform as they want to be more competitive in the international trade business.

Transforming the export process and providing a digital information platform will be a successful initiative as the exporters are lacking from such service currently from the freight forwarders. Implementing a digital information platform will have advantages for the exporter and the freight forwarder.

1. **Time and Transparency:** A digitized method should be standardized; else it doesn't work. Standardization helps produce transparency within the system. It reduces the scope for human errors, manipulation of costs and inventory. conversion can guarantee a speedy completion of tasks.

2. **Documentation Management:** Documents area unit a significant a part of shipping. Maintaining multiple documents and filing them takes up each time and house. Taking the method on-line can facilitate save on each. In future, it may facilitate produce associate integrated documentation platform which will be accessed by all the parties (exporter, importer, shipping lines, ports, banks,

storage) concerned within the dealings. Thus, paving the thanks to a paperless system.

3. **Door – to – Door Tracking:** New technology is creating it doable to trace containers on a true time basis. this may go a protracted method in serving to customers offer updates to their business partners and set up more provision.

4. **Improved Analytics:** Availability knowledge of knowledge of information from all bit points and tools to research that data to assist build higher business selections is one among the most offerings of advanced technology. Shipping lines will use information collected from varied sources to supply higher services, arrange new trade routes, and allocate house.

5. **Better Operational Integration:** Transporting a cargo from one location totally different involves participation of various modes of transportation and handling at different bit points. If all the services are integrated, it'll facilitate offer a seamless expertise to the shipper and scale back loss arising out of delays and operational unskillfulness for the service suppliers. it'll conjointly facilitate numerous service suppliers – ports, road & rail transporters, storage, and shipping lines to set up higher and guarantee most utilization of their area and instrumentality.

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7.0 APPENDIX

7.1 Questioner

1)The size of your company

☐ Less than 25 Employees   ☐ 25 to 50 Employees   ☐ More than 51 Employees

2)The Export volume exported monthly

☐ Less than 10 TEU's   ☐ 11- 25 TEU's   ☐ 26-50 TEU's   ☐ 51 – 99 TEU'S   ☐ More than 100 TEU's

3)At present are you experiencing the digitalize information service from the freight forwarders or shipping lines?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

4)If yes, is the information provided accurate?

☐ Strongly Disagree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Neither agree or disagree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Strongly agree

5)How often the bookings are placed to the freight forwarders?

☐ Daily   ☐ Weekly   ☐ Monthly

6)In order to forecast & plan the export production, which details of the shipment export process will be needed?

☐ Vessel Details   ☐ BL Cutoff   ☐ FCL Cutoff   ☐ VGM Cutoff   ☐ ALL the Details

7)How quickly do you receive the information about the export shipment from the freight forwarder?

☐ Less than 10 Minutes   ☐ Within 11 – 30 Minutes   ☐ More than 30 Minutes

8)Do you receive the accurate information about the export shipment from the freight forwarder?

☐ Strongly Disagree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Neither agree or disagree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Strongly agree

9)When an export booking is placed to the freight forwarder, how quickly do you receive the shipment details once the booking is placed?

[ ] Within 10 – 15 Minutes   [ ] Within 16 – 30 Minutes   [ ] More than 30 Minutes

10)When an export booking is placed to the freight forwarder, how accurately do you receive the shipment details once the booking is placed?

[ ] Strongly Disagree   [ ] Disagree   [ ] Neither agree or disagree   [ ] Agree   [ ] Strongly agree

11)Which communication method is used to get the information from the freight forwarder?

[ ] Telephone Call   [ ] E-mail   [ ] Telephone Call And E-mail   [ ] In Person

12)If the export shipment details are viewed through a digital platform, will it be useful, and do you all require it from the freight forwarders? (Website / Mobile App)

[ ] Yes   [ ] No

13) If the export shipment details are viewed through a digital platform, the previously time consumed to get the information will not be necessary?

[ ] Yes   [ ] No   [ ] Maybe

14) If the export details are viewed using digital platform, will the time management and transparency will be very effective?

[ ] Strongly Disagree   [ ] Disagree   [ ] Neither agree   [ ] Agree   [ ] Strongly agree

15) If the export process is digitized will the documentation errors will be mitigated, and the manual documentation can be avoided?

[ ] Strongly Disagree   [ ] Disagree   [ ] Neither agree or disagree   [ ] Agree   [ ] Strongly agree

16) If a digital platform is provided by the freight forwarder, will it be more useful as the information will be on the fingertips?

| | Yes | | No | | Maybe |

17) The shipment tracking details on digital platform will it be an advantage to coordinate with your buyers?

| | Yes | | No |