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Digital Capability, Inter-Organizational Trust, and Logistics Competitiveness: An Integrative Analysis in the Indonesian Logistics Sector

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Abstract
The increasing complexity of logistics operations requires logistics companies to develop capabilities that extend beyond operational efficiency and regulatory compliance. Digital technology and inter-organizational trust have become important elements in supporting coordination, responsiveness, and competitive performance. This study aims to examine the relationship between digital capability, inter-organizational trust, and logistics competitiveness by integrating findings from previous empirical studies conducted in the Indonesian logistics sector. A qualitative integrative analysis was employed using two recent studies concerning logistics competitiveness, regulatory convergence, information technology, and trust formation in inter-organizational relationships. The analysis identified three interconnected mechanisms. First, digital capability facilitates information exchange, operational coordination, responsiveness, and adaptation to regulatory requirements. Second, inter-organizational trust reduces uncertainty and coordination friction by strengthening confidence in partners' reliability, competence, and commitment. Third, digital capability and trust appear to complement one another in strengthening logistics competitiveness. Technology can improve the availability and accuracy of information, while trust facilitates the willingness of organizational actors to use and share information effectively. The integrated findings indicate that competitiveness in logistics is not determined by technology or relational capability independently, but by the interaction between technological, institutional, and relational resources. The study contributes an integrated perspective on logistics competitiveness in emerging-market contexts and provides practical implications for logistics managers seeking to combine digital transformation with sustainable inter-organizational relationships.

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INTRODUCTION

The logistics industry plays an important role in supporting the movement of goods, information, and economic activities. Increasing market complexity, customer expectations,

technological development, and regulatory requirements have made logistics operations increasingly dependent on coordination among multiple organizational actors. Logistics companies are therefore required not only to provide reliable transportation and distribution services but also to develop capabilities that enable them to respond rapidly to changes in the business environment (Barata et al., 2022).

Previous research has identified logistics as an important component of competitive advantage because efficient logistics activities can improve service quality, responsiveness, and customer value. The development of logistics competitiveness is particularly important in emerging economies where infrastructure, regulatory arrangements, technological adoption, and organizational capabilities may develop at different rates. In the Indonesian context, the logistics sector also faces challenges associated with fragmented regulations, infrastructure limitations, intermodal connectivity, and the need for greater integration among logistics actors. These conditions increase the importance of organizational capabilities that can support coordination and adaptation (BRATA et al., 2023).

Information technology has become one of the major resources available to logistics companies in addressing these challenges. Digital technologies can facilitate information exchange, improve operational visibility, support decision-making, and increase responsiveness to customer requirements. Evidence from the first study used as the basis of this analysis demonstrates that information technology has a significant relationship with logistics competitiveness and that regulatory convergence is also associated with both information technology and logistics competitiveness. The study further identifies information technology as a mediating mechanism between regulatory convergence and logistics competitiveness (Ratnasari et al., 2026).

However, technological capability alone may not be sufficient to explain the effectiveness of inter-organizational logistics activities. Logistics operations involve relationships among companies, customers, suppliers, business partners, transport providers, and other stakeholders. These relationships require the exchange of information and coordination of activities under conditions of uncertainty. Consequently, trust becomes an important relational resource.

The findings of these two studies suggest that technological and relational capabilities should not necessarily be examined independently. Digital systems can provide accurate and timely information, but organizations still need sufficient trust to exchange information, coordinate activities, and respond collaboratively to unexpected situations. Conversely, strong inter-organizational relationships may be strengthened when supported by reliable digital information systems (Barata, 2026).

Despite the importance of these factors, studies concerning logistics competitiveness frequently examine technological capability, regulatory conditions, and relational mechanisms separately. This creates an opportunity to develop an integrated perspective that considers both technological and relational resources as interconnected foundations of logistics competitiveness.

The contribution of this study lies in connecting technological and relational perspectives into a single analytical framework. Rather than treating technology and trust as independent factors, this study views them as complementary organizational capabilities that can jointly support operational coordination, responsiveness, and competitive advantage.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed an integrative qualitative research design based on document analysis. The purpose of the analysis was not to reproduce the empirical results of previous studies but to identify relationships and conceptual connections between their principal findings.

Two empirical articles concerning the Indonesian logistics sector were used as the primary analytical sources. The first study examined the relationship between regulatory convergence, information technology, and logistics competitiveness using a quantitative survey involving 100 employees of FAB Enterprises Logisindo and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

The second study examined trust formation in inter-organizational logistics relationships using a qualitative case study involving a logistics manager, a business partner, and two operational staff members. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and observations and analyzed using thematic analysis.

Data Sources

The analytical material consisted of the two uploaded research articles. The first article focused on the effect of regulatory convergence and information technology on logistics competitiveness, while the second focused on the formation and maintenance of trust in inter-organizational logistics relationships.

The two studies were selected because they examine related dimensions of logistics performance within an Indonesian organizational context but employ different theoretical and methodological perspectives.

Data Analysis

The analysis was conducted through four stages. First, the researchers identified the main concepts, variables, and findings reported in each study. Second, the findings were grouped into three analytical dimensions: technological capability, relational capability, and logistics competitiveness. Third, similarities and complementary relationships between the findings were identified. Finally, the findings were synthesized into an integrated conceptual interpretation.

The analysis focused particularly on information exchange, responsiveness, coordination, reliability, communication, regulatory adaptation, and competitive performance.

This approach allows the study to generate a broader conceptual explanation while maintaining a clear distinction between findings directly reported by the source studies and the interpretation developed through the integration process.

RESULTS

Digital Capability as a Foundation of Logistics Competitiveness

The integrated analysis indicates that digital capability constitutes an important organizational resource for logistics competitiveness. The quantitative study found a significant relationship between information technology and logistics competitiveness, with a path coefficient of 0.459 and a t-statistic of 4.634. The relationship was statistically significant at the 5% level.

The finding indicates that technology can support competitiveness by facilitating operational activities and improving the organization's ability to respond to changing requirements. Information technology can provide logistics organizations with faster access to information, support coordination, and improve the accuracy of information used in managerial decision-making.

The quantitative study also reported an R-square value of 0.627 for logistics competitiveness, indicating that 62.7% of the variance in the logistics competitiveness construct was explained by the constructs included in the model.

These findings suggest that digital capability should not be understood merely as the possession of technological infrastructure. Rather, its contribution to competitiveness depends on the organization's ability to use technology as part of operational and managerial processes.

Inter-Organizational Trust as a Relational Capability

The second major finding concerns the importance of trust in inter-organizational logistics relationships. The qualitative study demonstrates that trust involves both cognitive and relational dimensions. Participants associated trust with competence, reliability, consistency, honesty, mutual respect, and confidence that business partners would fulfill their commitments.

Trust was also found to develop progressively through repeated successful interactions. Small initial commitments, consistent performance, accurate documentation, and timely delivery created behavioral evidence that increased confidence between organizational actors.

Communication emerged as another central mechanism. Transparent and timely communication helped reduce uncertainty, align expectations, and maintain credibility, particularly when operational problems occurred.

Thus, inter-organizational trust can be interpreted as a relational capability that facilitates coordination and reduces the need for excessive monitoring. When organizations trust one another, operational interactions can become more flexible and responsive.

The Complementary Relationship between Technology and Trust

The most important integrated finding is that digital capability and inter-organizational trust represent complementary rather than competing resources.

Technology provides the infrastructure through which information can be generated, exchanged, stored, and processed. Trust, meanwhile, influences how organizational actors interpret information, communicate with one another, and respond to uncertainty.

For example, digital systems may provide real-time information concerning shipment status, delivery schedules, documentation, and operational disruptions. However, the usefulness of such systems also depends on the willingness of organizational actors to communicate accurately and transparently. Trust therefore provides a relational foundation that can support effective utilization of technological systems.

The second study shows that communication and transparency are fundamental to maintaining trust, while the first study demonstrates the importance of information technology for competitiveness. When these findings are considered together, information technology can be viewed as an enabler of communication and coordination, while trust can facilitate the effective relational use of information.

Regulatory Adaptation, Technology, and Competitive Performance

The first study also found a significant relationship between regulatory convergence and information technology, with a path coefficient of 0.763 and a t-statistic of 20.194. Regulatory convergence was also significantly associated with logistics competitiveness, with a path coefficient of 0.734 and a t-statistic of 18.306.

Furthermore, the indirect effect of regulatory convergence on logistics competitiveness through information technology was reported at 0.350, with a t-statistic of 4.403.

These findings indicate that regulatory adaptation and technological capability are interconnected. In practical terms, regulatory requirements may encourage organizations to improve their information systems and operational processes. Technology can subsequently help organizations implement and monitor regulatory requirements more effectively.

When integrated with the trust findings, this suggests a broader framework in which institutional adaptation, digital capability, and relational capability jointly support logistics competitiveness.

DISCUSSION

Moving from Technology Adoption to Digital Capability

The findings indicate that the strategic value of information technology does not arise solely from technological adoption. Logistics companies need to integrate technology into organizational processes so that information can support operational coordination and decision-making.

This perspective is consistent with the findings of the quantitative study, which demonstrated a significant relationship between information technology and logistics competitiveness. The study also emphasized that information technology can support the transformation of logistics organizations and improve their ability to respond to competitive pressures.

Therefore, digital transformation should involve organizational adaptation rather than simply purchasing new technological systems. Employees, managers, and business partners must understand how digital information is generated, communicated, and used in logistics activities.

Trust as an Organizational Resource

Trust should also be understood as more than an interpersonal characteristic. The qualitative findings indicate that trust reduces monitoring requirements, facilitates decision-making, and improves coordination between business partners.

From a theoretical perspective, this interpretation is consistent with Social Exchange Theory, which emphasizes the development of trust through repeated exchanges, and Relational Exchange Theory, which recognizes the importance of relational mechanisms in sustaining inter-organizational cooperation.

Trust can also be considered an intangible organizational resource. When business partners have confidence in one another's competence and reliability, organizations can coordinate activities with less friction. Consequently, trust may contribute indirectly to operational efficiency and long-term relationship stability.

Communication as the Link between Digital Capability and Trust

Communication represents an important connection between technology and trust. The qualitative findings demonstrate that transparent communication reduces uncertainty and strengthens credibility.

Digital technologies can enhance the speed and accessibility of communication, but the presence of technology does not automatically guarantee transparency. Organizations still need to provide accurate information and communicate proactively when problems occur.

This distinction is important because logistics operations are exposed to uncertainty. Delays, documentation problems, transportation disruptions, and changing customer requirements can affect operational performance. Under such circumstances, transparent communication can help maintain trust even when operational problems cannot be completely avoided.

The Role of Consistency and Reliability

Both studies indirectly emphasize the importance of consistency. The competitiveness study highlights the importance of reliable logistics operations and information technology, while the trust study identifies consistent performance as a major foundation of trust.

This suggests that competitiveness is not created by isolated technological innovations or individual successful transactions. Instead, it is accumulated through repeated organizational performance.

Consistent delivery, accurate documentation, timely information, responsive communication, and reliable technological systems can gradually strengthen the confidence of customers and business partners. Over time, this accumulated confidence may become an intangible source of competitive advantage.

Formal and Relational Mechanisms

Another important implication concerns the relationship between formal mechanisms and relational mechanisms. Regulatory frameworks and formal agreements provide structure for logistics activities, while trust and interpersonal relationships facilitate cooperation in situations that cannot be fully anticipated by formal rules.

The qualitative study indicates that informal relationships, mutual respect, and harmony complement formal contractual mechanisms in the Indonesian business context.

Therefore, logistics competitiveness can be approached through a combination of formal and relational governance. Formal systems provide clarity and accountability, while relational trust can facilitate flexibility and cooperation.

CONCLUSIONS

This study provides an integrative perspective on logistics competitiveness by connecting digital capability and inter-organizational trust within the Indonesian logistics context. The analysis indicates that information technology contributes to logistics competitiveness by supporting information management, coordination, responsiveness, and operational decision-making. At the same time, inter-organizational trust supports cooperation by reducing uncertainty, facilitating communication, and strengthening confidence in business partners.

The integrated findings further indicate that technology and trust should not be treated as independent organizational resources. Digital systems provide the infrastructure for information exchange, whereas trust provides an important relational foundation for using that information effectively. Their interaction can therefore contribute to more responsive and coordinated logistics operations.

The findings also highlight the importance of combining formal and relational mechanisms. Regulatory arrangements and formal agreements provide organizational structure, while trust, communication, reliability, and interpersonal relationships contribute to flexibility and sustained cooperation.

From a managerial perspective, logistics companies should develop digital capabilities together with relationship-management capabilities. Investment in information technology should be accompanied by efforts to improve communication quality, transparency, service reliability, employee capability, and partner relationships.

This study has limitations because it is based on an integrative analysis of two existing empirical studies rather than newly collected primary data. Consequently, the proposed relationships should be tested through future empirical research involving larger samples, multiple logistics organizations, and additional variables such as service innovation, human resource capability, supply chain integration, and organizational resilience.

Future studies may also develop and empirically test an integrated structural model examining whether inter-organizational trust strengthens the relationship between digital capability and logistics competitiveness. Such research would provide stronger empirical evidence concerning the interaction between technological and relational resources in emerging-market logistics.

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