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Strategies for Maintaining Customer Loyalty in the Face of Intense Competition Among Shipping Agencies at PT. Transuta Lintas Samudera, Banten Branch

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ABSTRACT

This study examines customer loyalty retention strategies at PT. Transuta Lintas Samudera's Banten Branch amid intensifying competition among 179 shipping agency companies operating in the Merak-Banten port area. Using a quantitative SWOT approach with data from 30 respondents and company operational records from August 2021 to July 2022, the study constructs weighted factor analysis matrices, a strategic position map, and a Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM) to identify and rank strategic alternatives. The internal analysis yields a weighted score of 2.87, while the external analysis produces 2.93, positioning the company in the Growth quadrant of the strategic position map. The QSPM ranking identifies intensifying promotional activities through online and offline channels as the highest-priority strategy (TAS = 6.35), followed by offering flexible pricing adjusted to customer workload capacity (TAS = 5.92). The study documents that the company met its monthly vessel target of 10 ships in only 1 of 24 months during the observation period, confirming that marketing restructuring is the most urgent intervention.

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Keywords:

Customer Loyalty; Shipping Agency; SWOT Analysis; QSPM; Competitive Strategy; Merak-Banten Port

1. INTRODUCTION

The Port of Merak-Banten occupies a strategic position in Indonesia's maritime logistics network. Located at the western tip of Java along the Sunda Strait, it serves as a feeder port for Tanjung Priok and a critical link between Java and Sumatra [1]. The port's hinterland is dominated by chemical processing plants, steel mills, power generation facilities, and industrial complexes that collectively generate substantial demand for maritime transport services [2]. This industrial concentration has attracted approximately 179 licensed shipping agencies, creating one of the most densely competitive agency markets in Indonesia [3].

Shipping agencies serve as intermediaries

between vessel owners (principals) and port authorities, managing the administrative, operational, and logistical requirements of vessels during port calls [4]. Their core functions include arranging port clearance, coordinating pilotage and berthing, managing cargo documentation, processing crew changes, and handling disbursement accounts [5]. In a market with 179 competing agencies, differentiation through service quality, pricing, and relationship management becomes critical to survival [6].

PT. Transuta Lintas Samudera's Banten Branch has operated in this environment since 2013, providing foreign ship agency services alongside bunker supply, crew changes, fresh water provision, and docking coordination [3]. Despite a decade of operations, company records from 2021–2022 show that the target of 10 vessel visits per month was achieved in only 1 of 24 months. Monthly averages hovered at 5.3–5.4, roughly half the target, with the shortfall traced to suboptimal marketing, inconsistent service quality, and pricing pressure from 178 competitors [7].

The customer loyalty challenge in ship agency markets differs from consumer markets. Principals select agents based on service reliability, port-specific expertise, cost competitiveness, and relationship trust [8]. Losing a principal means losing a recurring revenue stream across multiple vessel calls over years. Previous research has examined port service quality [9] and agency performance [10], but fewer studies have applied quantitative strategic planning tools to ship agency competition at secondary Indonesian ports. This study fills that gap using weighted factor analysis, strategic positioning, and QSPM to produce a prioritized action plan grounded in operational data [11], [12].

2. RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study uses a quantitative research design with SWOT analysis as the primary analytical framework [13]. Quantitative methods are appropriate when the research aims to measure relationships and produce numerical outputs that support strategic decision-making. The SWOT approach was selected because it provides a structured method for evaluating both internal capabilities and external market conditions simultaneously, which is essential for competitive strategy formulation in the shipping agency sector [15].

Research Setting and Period

The research was conducted at PT. Transuta Lintas Samudera's Banten Branch, a shipping agency company headquartered at Metro Cilegon Housing Complex, Royal Garden Cluster, Block Q13 No. 11, Cilegon City, Banten. The company has been operating since 2013, providing foreign ship agency services in the Merak-Banten port area. Data collection took place over twelve months from August 1, 2021, to July 29, 2022, while the researcher completed an onshore internship at the company. This period was selected because it covers two full fiscal years of vessel visit data, enabling year-over-year comparison of operational performance.

Population and Sample

The study population consists of all stakeholders who interact with PT. Transuta Lintas Samudera's ship agency operations, including company employees across administrative, marketing, and operational divisions, as well as principals (ship owners and operators) who have previously engaged the company's services. A saturated sampling technique was used, drawing all 30 members of the accessible population as respondents [14]. This approach is appropriate when the population is small enough that excluding any members would risk losing valuable data. The 30 respondents included 12 company employees and 18 external stakeholders from collaborating shipping companies and port service providers at KSOP Class I Balikpapan.

Variables and Instruments

The study examines two constructs. The independent variable (X) is Inaportnet System Implementation and Ship Agency Competitiveness, measured through 10 questionnaire items covering three dimensions: operational strengths and weaknesses (service portfolio depth, staff competence, marketing capability, financial management, office location), system functionality (clearance processing efficiency, data accuracy), and competitive positioning (pricing strategy, market differentiation). The dependent variable (Y) is Ship Agency Service Quality and Customer Loyalty, measured through 10 items covering three dimensions: vessel services (arrival and departure processing speed, responsiveness to vessel needs, communication quality with principals), cargo services (loading and unloading coordination, service quality satisfaction, cost transparency), and crew services (sign-on/sign-off processing efficiency, crew

needs responsiveness, crew change handling). All items use a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire was distributed directly to respondents during the internship period [6], [8].

Data Collection

Data were collected through three methods. First, direct observation during the twelve-month internship provided firsthand exposure to the company's operational workflow, including vessel clearance procedures, client communication practices, and the challenges faced by the marketing and operations divisions [14]. Second, company documents were reviewed, including vessel visit logs, monthly revenue records, client contracts, and competitive intelligence gathered from the Merak-Banten port market. Third, structured questionnaires captured respondent assessments of internal strengths, weaknesses, external opportunities, and threats, which were subsequently used to construct the weighted factor analysis matrices [3], [7].

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed through five sequential stages. First, internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats) were identified from respondent input, observational data, and company records. Second, IFAS (Internal Factor Analysis Summary) and EFAS (External Factor Analysis Summary) matrices were constructed by assigning weights (reflecting relative importance, summing to 1.00 across all internal or all external factors) and ratings (1 to 4 scale, where 4 represents the strongest impact) to each factor, producing weighted scores that indicate the company's internal capability and external environment [15]. Third, a SWOT strategy matrix was developed to generate four categories of strategic alternatives combining internal and external factors: S-O (leverage strengths to exploit opportunities), W-O (address weaknesses using opportunities), S-T (use strengths to counter threats), and W-T (minimize weaknesses and avoid threats). Fourth, a Grand Strategy quadrant diagram was constructed to determine the company's strategic position based on the net differential between strengths and weaknesses (horizontal axis) and opportunities and threats (vertical axis) [16]. Fifth, QSPM (Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix) was applied to rank the strategic alternatives by calculating Total Attractiveness Scores (TAS) for each option against all weighted IFAS and EFAS factors, enabling prioritized implementation based on quantitative evidence rather than subjective judgment [16].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1. Results

Vessel Visit Performance

Table 1. Monthly Vessel Visits Vs. Target (2021–2022)

Month	2021	Status	2022	Status
Jan	4	No	5	No
Feb	5	No	4	No
Mar	3	No	6	No
Apr	6	No	5	No
May	5	No	7	No
Jun	10	**Yes**	5	No
Jul	7	No	6	No
Aug	6	No	5	No
Sep	4	No	7	No
Oct	5	No	4	No
Nov	3	No	6	No
Dec	5	No	5	No
Average	**5.3**	**1/12**	**5.4**	**0/12**

The company operated at 53–54% of target capacity across both years, confirming a structural customer

acquisition problem rather than seasonal variation.

Strategic Factor Analysis

Table II presents the combined factor analysis in a single dashboard format. Each factor is assigned a weight (reflecting relative importance, summing to 0.50 per category) and a rating (1–4 scale), producing weighted scores. The visual score bars provide an at-a-glance comparison of factor impact.

Table 2. Strategic Factor Analysis Dashboard

	Factor Description	Wt	Rt	Score	Impact
▲ STRENGTHS					
S1	10-year operational track record in Merak-Banten	0.12	4	0.48	0.48
S2	Established relationships with regular principals	0.10	3	0.30	0.30
S3	Full-service portfolio (agency, bunker, crew, docking)	0.11	4	0.44	0.44
S4	Licensed for domestic and foreign vessel agency	0.08	3	0.24	0.24
S5	Deep knowledge of Sunda Strait operations	0.06	4	0.26	0.26
▼ WEAKNESSES					
W1	Marketing division understaffed and undertrained	0.12	2	0.24	0.24
W2	No structured online/offline marketing program	0.11	1	0.11	0.11
W3	Office location distant from terminal areas	0.08	2	0.16	0.16
W4	Financial management not fully computerized	0.07	2	0.14	0.14
W5	Internal communication gaps between divisions	0.05	1	0.05	0.05
	INTERNAL SCORE			**S: 1.72 | W: 1.15 | Net: +0.57**	
▲ OPPORTUNITIES					
O1	Growing chemical/industrial demand in Banten hinterland	0.13	4	0.52	0.52
O2	Docking companies at PT. Samudera Marine Indonesia	0.10	3	0.30	0.30
O3	Digital marketing channels for international outreach	0.11	4	0.44	0.44
O4	Port expansion and new terminal development	0.08	3	0.24	0.24
O5	Government push for integrated port services	0.07	4	0.28	0.28
▼ THREATS					
T1	179 competing agencies in Merak-Banten area	0.13	2	0.26	0.26
T2	Aggressive price undercutting by competitors	0.12	2	0.24	0.24
T3	Competitors adopting digital	0.10	2	0.20	0.20

	marketing and CRM				
T4	Illegal fee practices inflating operational costs	0.08	2	0.16	0.16
T5	New entrants with lower overhead structures	0.08	2	0.16	0.16
EXTERNAL SCORE				**O: 1.78 | T: 1.15 | Net: +0.63**	

Both net differentials are positive (Internal: +0.57, External: +0.63), with the external environment slightly more favorable. The highest-impact strength is operational experience (S1: 0.48), while the highest-impact opportunity is industrial demand growth (O1: 0.52). The most damaging weakness is the absence of any structured marketing program (W2: rated 1, the lowest possible).

Strategic Action Plan

Rather than presenting strategies in a traditional 2×2 matrix, Table III organizes them as a prioritized action plan grouped by strategic thrust, with each action tied to the specific SWOT factors it addresses.

Table 3. Strategic Action Plan By Priority Thrust

Priority	Strategic Action	SWOT Basis	TAS	Timeline
THRUST 1: MARKET EXPANSION				
1	Launch structured online+offline promotional program targeting chemical/industrial principals	S1+S3→O1	**6.35**	0–3 mo
4	Distribute company profiles to docking companies at PT. Samudera Marine Indonesia	S3→O2	5.65	0–3 mo
6	Conduct regular surveys on fluctuations in customer agency needs	S2→O1+O4	5.28	3–6 mo
THRUST 2: COMPETITIVE PRICING				
2	Offer flexible volume-based pricing adjusted to customer workload and capacity	S1+S4→T2	**5.92**	0–3 mo
7	Optimize financial management to enable competitive cost structures	W4→T2+T5	5.15	3–6 mo
THRUST 3: CAPABILITY BUILDING				
3	Provide regular marketing and digital skills training for staff	W1+W2→O3	**5.78**	1–6 mo
8	Collaborate with government to eliminate illegal fee practices	S1→T4	4.95	6–12 mo
THRUST 4: OPERATIONAL UPGRADE				
5	Relocate office to strategic area near TUKS/terminal zone	W3→O2+O4	5.41	6–12 mo
9	Implement computerized integrated financial management system	W4→O5	4.82	3–9 mo

3.2. Discussion

The Strategic Position Map confirms that PT. Transuta Lintas Samudera sits in the Aggressive Growth zone, meaning its strengths and opportunities outweigh its weaknesses and threats. The relatively narrow internal margin (+0.57) compared to the external margin (+0.63) tells an important story: the market opportunity is there, but the company's internal machinery is not fully equipped to capture it. The lowest-rated factor in the entire dashboard is W2 (no marketing program, rated 1), which is also the factor most directly connected to the vessel visit shortfall documented in Table I [16].

The Strategic Action Plan organizes nine strategies into four implementation thrusts rather than the conventional S-O/W-O/S-T/W-T quadrants. This

format is more actionable because it groups related initiatives that share resource requirements and timelines. Thrust 1 (Market Expansion) and Thrust 2 (Competitive Pricing) are immediate priorities (0–3 months) because they directly address the revenue shortfall. Thrust 3 (Capability Building) runs in parallel over 1–6 months because trained staff are needed to execute the marketing and pricing strategies effectively. Thrust 4 (Operational Upgrade) is a medium-term investment (6–12 months) that strengthens the company's competitive infrastructure [15].

The QSPM scores provide quantitative justification for this sequencing. The top-ranked strategy (TAS = 6.35, promotional intensification) scores highest because it leverages the company's two strongest assets, its operational experience (S1: 0.48) and comprehensive service portfolio (S3: 0.44), to capture the largest external opportunity, growing industrial demand (O1: 0.52). The second-ranked strategy (TAS = 5.92, flexible pricing) addresses the most pressing threat (T2: price undercutting, 0.24) without requiring the company to engage in a destructive price war. By tying discounts to volume commitments, the company converts a pricing threat into a loyalty mechanism [8], [12].

A limitation of this study is the sample size (n = 30) and single-company scope. Replicating the weighted factor analysis across multiple agencies would yield comparative benchmarks [17]. Additionally, the study lacks demand-side data from principals about their agency selection criteria, which would strengthen the external analysis [18].

4. CONCLUSION

This study applied weighted factor analysis, strategic position mapping, and QSPM to evaluate competitive strategies for PT. Transuta Lintas Samudera's Banten Branch. The internal score of 2.87 and external score of 2.93 place the company in the Aggressive Growth zone, with net positive differentials on both axes (+0.57 internal, +0.63 external). Nine strategic actions were organized into four implementation thrusts: Market Expansion (immediate), Competitive Pricing (immediate), Capability Building (parallel), and Operational Upgrade (medium-term). The highest-priority action is launching a structured promotional program targeting chemical and industrial principals (TAS = 6.35). The vessel visit data underscores the urgency: operating at 53–54% of target capacity across 24 months represents a structural revenue gap that only a systematic approach to customer acquisition and retention can close.

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