EXPECTATION AND REALITY - RETAILERS PERCEPTION TOWARDS A BRAND OF INDUSTRIAL GLASS MANUFACTURER

PRAVEEN PAUL. J

Associate Professor, Management Studies, MepcoSchlenk Engineering College, Sivakasi, India

ABSTRACT

This study attempts to find the difference between the retailers' opinion on the expected attributes from the manufacturers to the actual attributes offered by the manufactures and compare the expected and actual satisfaction of retailers of a particular brand of popular industrial glass manufacturers based in south India. The research is descriptive in nature and IBM®SPSS Statistics® was used to analyze the data collected. Data was collected from 81 industrial glass retailers in Madurai, Sivaganga, Trichy and Coimbatore districts of Tamilnadu. Chi-square for cross-tabulation was used to describe the data and to test if there was a significant difference between the different groups of retailers. Based on the chi-square test it was concluded that there is a significant difference in the frequency of order placed by the retailers based on their experience in business and the locality of the retail shop has nothing to do with the frequency of the retailers ordering glasses. A paired sample t-test was used to compare the expected level of satisfaction from the various attributes considered with the actual level of satisfaction. Based on the analysis, it was concluded that there was a statistically significant difference between the retailers' expectation and the actual performance of the manufacturers satisfying the needs of the retailers.

KEYWORDS: Retailers' expectation, Retailer Satisfaction & Paired Sample t Test

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INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

In this modern, multidimensional, and omnichannel environment, consumers are barraged with information about goods and services. Retailers who can connect with their customers by providing targeted information and offer value to customers will stand apart and have the potential to create deep customer engagement (DhruvGrewal, 2017). Retailers not only provide manufacturers with a distribution system that reaches the end-customer more efficiently but also provide much necessary and important customer support on the manufacturers' behalf (Webster, 2000).

In this context, the brand can be regarded as a 'resource tie' that links manufacturers and retailers together in order to serve the end customer (Ford, 1998). Thus undeniably, many manufacturers' marketing strategies require the full cooperation of the retailers for their successful implementation (Ghosh, Chakaborty and Ghosh, 1995). Retailers are considered to be one of the most significant partners in a manufacturing organization's supply chain who are responsible in delivering the products to the end consumers (Dobson, 2005, Defee et al., 2009). Simpson et al. (2001) too highlighted the importance of increased collaboration between manufacturers and retailers. In business-to-business (B2B) settings, the relationship between the organizations involved in the transaction is one of the most critical elements contributing to their success (Lauren Skinner Beitelspacher et al.,

2017).

Generally, in most of the business context, a retailer deals with many brands from many manufacturers and these manufacturers also supply to a retailer's competitors (Holmström, 1997). Thus, in order to get the full support of the retailer to place the product for the customer, the manufacturer must take efforts to keep the retailers satisfied. In this regard, business-to-business (B2B) firms endeavor to improve the overall satisfaction of the channel members apart from the financial performance by improving satisfaction on key attributes (Vikas Mittal et al., 2017).

It is a germane fact that retailers support brands that give them high profits. But satisfactory profit alone may not motivate them to stock a brand. Factors such as Brand image of the supplier (Glynn et al., 2007), Price to the retailer (Yoo, Donthu and Lee, 2000), Availability of product (Glynn et al., (2007), Nilsson (1977)), Adequate profit (Johnson J. L., 1999), Attractive Trade Promotions (Kasulis et al. (1999), Glynn et al. (2007)), Timely delivery of products, quick replacement of damaged product, increased credit period, complaints handling by sales person, frequent visit by sales person, sales person courteousness are considered important in keeping a retailer satisfied.

In a research by Mark S. Glynn et al., (2012) the researchers found that the retailer's satisfaction of the brand, the retailer's trust of the manufacturer, commitment to the brand, cooperation on issues concerning the brand, dependence on the manufacturer and the assessment of brand performance within the store, were important. Further, in the same research, the authors found that financial benefits, brand support, brand equity and customer expectations influence retailers' satisfaction (Mark S. Glynn et al., 2012). They also have found that retailer satisfaction with the brand emerged as a key relationship outcome.

The J. D. Power 2017 Appliance Retailer Satisfaction Study measured the satisfaction with retailers by investigating seven factors such as Sales Staff and Service; Store Facility; Price; Delivery Service; Sales and Promotions; Merchandise; and Installation Service (J. D. Power, 2017).

Sadia Samar Ali, Rameshwar Dubey, (2014) have observed that in spite of all the advantages of maintaining or improving the retailers' satisfaction, virtually there are very few efforts made on the part of manufacturers to keep the retailers satisfied. Thus the present research study is relevant and significant and will continue to remain so as long as manufacturers depend on retailers to take their products to the end consumers.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The main focus of the research was to study the difference or gap between the retailers' opinion on their expectation from the attributes provided by the manufacturers to the actual attributes offered by the manufactures and compare the expected and actual satisfaction of retailers of a particular brand of popular industrial glass manufacturers based in south India. In continuation with this objective, it was pertinent to identify the retailers' opinion to increase the sales of an industrial glass manufacturer. In this regard, the null hypothesis proposed is that there is no significant difference between the retailers expectation on the satisfaction attributes to the retailer's actual experience on the satisfaction attributes by the retailers. Thus the hypothesis is:

H₀: No significant difference between expected and actual satisfaction attributes among retailers

METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

The Opinion of the retailers on the above objective was collected to find their opinion on the attributes considered. This research study is descriptive in nature. The nature of the data used for this research is both primary and secondary in nature. The various items relevant to the research were identified and included in the questionnaire and were compiled from the previous research done on retailer satisfaction through review of the literature. The antecedents considered for measuring the satisfaction are listed below in Table.1. The questionnaire contained five-point Lickert scale questions whose responses ranged from Highly Satisfied to Highly Dissatisfied and relevant demographic questions. Data were collected from 81 industrial glass retailers in Madurai, Sivagangai, Trichy, and Coimbatore districts of Tamilnadu through a survey conducted with a structured questionnaire. Since the research is confined to the above-mentioned districts and does not necessarily shows a pattern applicable to the all of the country.

In order to compare the opinion of retailers on their expectation and the actual satisfaction attributes, a paired sample t-test was done using IMB® SPSS Statistics®. To describe the responses and to gain insights into the general purchase behavior of glass by the retailers, chi square test for cross tabulation was done using IMB® SPSS Statistics®.

Table 1: Antecedents for Comparing the Expected with Actual Retailer Satisfaction

Sl.	Attributes
1.	Brand image of the supplier
2.	Price to the retailer
3.	Availability of product
4.	Adequate profit
5.	Attractive Trade Promotions
6.	Timely delivery of products
7.	Quick Replacement for damaged products
8.	Increased Credit period
9.	Complaints handling by sales person
10.	Frequent visit by sales person
11.	Sales person Courteousness

In order to compare the expected service from the manufacturer with the retailer's opinion on the reality, the following model is proposed and is shown in Table2. The various factors considered for the study is from the previous researches done on retailer satisfaction.

Table 2: Expected against Actual Attributes of Retailer Satisfaction

ExpectedAttributes		Actual Attributes
Ideal Brand image of the supplier	↔	Actual Brand image of the supplier
Ideal Price to the retailer	↔	Actual Price to the retailer
Ideal Availability of product	↔	Actual Availability of product
Ideal Adequate profit	↔	Actual Adequate profit
Ideal Attractive Trade Promotions	↔	Actual Attractive Trade Promotions
Ideal Timely delivery of products	↔	Actual Timely delivery of products
Ideal Quick Replacement for damaged goods	↔	Actual Quick Replacement for damaged goods
Ideal Increased Credit period	↔	Actual Increased Credit period
Ideal Complaints handling by sales person	↔	Actual Complaints handling by sales person
Ideal Frequent visit by sales person	↔	Actual Frequent visit by sales person
Ideal Sales person Courteousness	↔	Actual Sales person Courteousness

DESCRIPTION OF DATA

Data were collected regarding the information about the demographics of the eighty-one retailers of industrial glass in the districts mentioned above and their demographics is presented in Table 3. The information collected narrates the factors such as the number of years they are in this business, the educational qualification of the retailers, frequency of placing an order and the locality of the outlets.

It can be seen from Table 3 that a large chunk of the retailer is quite new to the business with a retailing experience within a decade. Of that, some of the retailers are dealing with industrial glass for only less than five years.

Table 3: Description of Retailers that are Dealing with Industrial Glass

Factors	Particulars	No. of Retailers
Experience in business	Up to 5 years	19
	6-10 years	44
	11-20 years	17
	Above 20 years	1
Frequency of orders Placed	Weekly twice	21
	Weekly once	31
	Monthly once	26
	Quarterly	3
Locality	Semi-urban	21
	Urban	60
Educational qualification	SSLC	7
	HSC	23
	UG	44
	PG	7

Similarly, it can also be noted that only one retailer is in the business for more than twenty years. Further, a quarter of the retailers place order quite frequently, that is twice a week while about 40% of the retailers place orders once a week and most of the rest go for monthly orders.

In order to gain more insights into the relationship with the experience of the retailer to the frequency of placing order and locality of the retailer to the frequency of placing an order and to test if there is a significant difference in the between groups, a chi-square test for cross tabulation was done. The results of the cross-tabulation are presented in Table 4, and the results of the chi-square test are given in Table 5, 7.

Table 4: Cross Tabulation between the Experience of the Retailer in Business and the Frequency of Order Placed for Glass

Purchase Frequency	Experience in Business	Up to 5 yrs	6 yrs – 10yrs	11 yrs – 20 yrs	Above 20 yrs	Total
Quarterly	Count	1	1	0	1	3
	% within Frequency of order	33.3%	33.3%	0.0%	33.3%	100.0%
	% within Experience	5.3%	2.3%	0.0%	100.0%	3.7%
	% of Total	1.2%	1.2%	0.0%	1.2%	3.7%
Monthly once	Count	9	14	3	0	26
	% within Frequency of order	34.6%	53.8%	11.5%	0.0%	100.0%
	% within Experience	47.4%	31.8%	17.6%	0.0%	32.1%
	% of Total	11.1%	17.3%	3.7%	0.0%	32.1%
Weekly once	Count	5	18	8	0	31
	% within Frequency of order	16.1%	58.1%	25.8%	0.0%	100.0%
	% within Experience	26.3%	40.9%	47.1%	0.0%	38.3%

Table 4: Contd.,						
	% of Total	6.2%	22.2%	9.9%	0.0%	38.3%
Weekly twice	Count	4	11	6	0	21
	% within Frequency of order	19.0%	52.4%	28.6%	0.0%	100.0%
	% within Experience	21.1%	25.0%	35.3%	0.0%	25.9%
	% of Total	4.9%	13.6%	7.4%	0.0%	25.9%
Total	Count	19	44	17	1	81
	% within Frequency of order	23.5%	54.3%	21.0%	1.2%	100.0%
	% within Experience	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	23.5%	54.3%	21.0%	1.2%	100.0%

Exploring the cross tabulation between the frequency of order placed for glass and the experience of the retailer in business, it can be seen that out of all the retailers (81) fourteen of them with a business experience of more than eleven years order glass at least once a week or more. In the six to ten years category almost equal number of retailers place orders once a week or more and equal number place monthly orders. The same is the case with retailers who have less than five years of business experience.

To test if there is a significant difference in ordering of glasses between the groups of retailers with different business experience, a chi-square test are carried out and the results are presented in Table 5. The null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the retailers with different business experience in ordering frequency of glass is considered for the test.

Table 5: Chi-Square Test for Experience of the Retailer in Business and the Frequency of Order Placed

	Value	Degrees of Freedom	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	31.382*	9	.000
Likelihood Ratio	12.684	9	.177
N of Valid Cases	81	* 0 cells have expected count less than 5.	

While observing the results from the Chi-square test exhibited in Table 5 it can be realized that the asymptotic significance is less than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$). Thus we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant difference in the frequency of order placed by the retailers based on their experience in the business. We could infer from the analysis that the retailers with six to ten years of experience place orders more often than other retailers.

To investigate if there is a significant difference between the locality of business and the frequency of order placed for glass, chi-square test for the cross-tabulation between the two factors is applied. The cross tabulation results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Cross Tabulation between the Locality of Business and the Frequency of Order Placed for Glass

Purchase Frequency	Locality of Business	Semi urban	Urban	Total
Monthly once	Count	6	20	26
	% within Frequency of order	23.1%	76.9%	100.0%
	% within Locality	28.6%	33.3%	32.1%
	% of Total	7.4%	24.7%	32.1%
Quarterly	Count	1	2	3
	% within Frequency of order	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
	% within Locality	4.8%	3.3%	3.7%

Table 6: Contd.,				
	% of Total	1.2%	2.5%	3.7%
Weekly once	Count	7	24	31
	% within Frequency of order	22.6%	77.4%	100.0%
	% within Locality	33.3%	40.0%	38.3%
	% of Total	8.6%	29.6%	38.3%
Weekly twice	Count	7	14	21
	% within Frequency of order	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
	% within Locality	33.3%	23.3%	25.9%
	% of Total	8.6%	17.3%	25.9%
Total	Count	21	60	81
	% within Frequency of order	25.9%	74.1%	100.0%
	% within Locality	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	25.9%	74.1%	100.0%

Examining the cross tabulation the locality of glass retailers and the frequency of order placed for glass presented in Table 6, it can be understood that out of all the retailers a large part of them have their business in the urban area and in that 38 of them order a glass at least once a week or more. It can also be observed that a quarter of the retailers in the urban area order glasses once a month. Even though only a few retailers are in the rural area, a similar trend can be seen with them too.

To examine if there is a significant difference in ordering of glasses between the groups of retailers from different locality, a chi-square test is carried out and the results are presented in Table 7. The null hypothesis is that there is no significant difference between the retailers from different locations on ordering frequency of glass.

Table 7: Chi-Square Test for the Locality of Business and the Frequency of Order Placed for Glass

	Value	Degrees of Freedom	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.976 ^a	3	.807
Likelihood Ratio	.948	3	.814
N of Valid Cases	81	* 0 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5.	

Observing the results from the Chi-square test shown in Table 7 the asymptotic significance is greater than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$). Thus we accept the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no significant difference in the frequency of orders placed by the retailers with their experience in the business. Thus, we can conclude that the locality of the retail shop has nothing to do with the frequency of the retailers ordering glasses.

ANALYSIS OF DATA AND OUTCOME

In an ideal retail situation, it is expected that the expectations of the retailers are matched by the performance of the manufacturer (Palmer, 2010). To analyze if that is true in the sample of retailers considered, a paired sample t-test was used to compare the expected level of satisfaction from the various attributes considered with the actual level of satisfaction. The outcome of the test which is the Paired Samples Statistics and the Paired Samples Test are shown in Table 8 and Table 9 respectively. The Paired-Samples Statistics shows the descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviations of the expected and actual opinion on the various factors.

Table 8: Paired Samples Statistics

Factors Paired		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	A Brand image of the supplier	4.23	.712	.079
	I Brand image of the supplier	4.74	.441	.049
Pair 2	A Price to the retailer	3.88	.509	.057
	I Price to the retailer	4.70	.459	.051
Pair 3	A Availability of product	4.65	.528	.059
	I Availability of product	4.80	.401	.045
Pair 4	A Adequate profit	3.52	.776	.086
	I Adequate profit	4.80	.401	.045
Pair 5	A Attractive Trade Promotions	3.78	.949	.105
	I Attractive Trade Promotions	4.75	.434	.048
Pair 6	A Timely delivery of products	4.09	.636	.071
	I Timely delivery of products	4.70	.459	.051
Pair 7	A Quick Replacement for damaged products	3.99	.929	.103
	I Quick Replacement for damaged products	4.77	.426	.047
Pair 8	A Increased Credit period	3.17	.787	.087
	I Increased Credit period	4.78	.418	.046
Pair 9	A Complaints handling by sales person	3.89	.791	.088
	I Complaints handling by sales person	4.58	.497	.055
Pair 10	A Frequent visit by sales person	3.93	.703	.078
	I Frequent visit by sales person	4.67	.474	.053
Pair 11	A Sales person Courteousness	3.53	.882	.098
	I Sales person Courteousness	4.68	.470	.052

Observing the mean values between the actual reality and the retailer expectation, it can be seen that in factors such as a brand image of the supplier, availability of products, timely delivery of products (highlighted – pair 1,3,6) it's almost the same. Thus it can be proposed at this point that the retailers' expectation on these factors match with the actual performance of the manufacturer of industrial glasses. Similarly, it can be proposed that in all the other factors, the retailers' expectation doesn't match with the actual performance of the manufacturer. In most of these cases, the gap between the actual performances of the expected performance is wide.

In order to check if the difference or congruence between the expected and actual experience is statistically significant, the values shown in paired samples test (Table 9) is investigated. The null hypothesis proposed here is that there is no significant difference in the expected and actual attributes of satisfaction.

Table 9: Paired Samples Test

Factors Paired		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig.
		$\bar{x}$	σ	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	A Brand image of the supplier – I Brand image of the supplier	-.506	.760	.084	-.674	-.338	-5.992	80	.000
Pair 2	A Price to the retailer – I Price to the retailer	-.827	.738	.082	-.990	-.664	-10.086	80	.000
Pair 3	A Availability of product – I Availability of product	-.148	.422	.047	-.241	-.055	-3.162	80	.002
Pair 4	A Adequate profit – I Adequate profit	-1.284	.978	.109	-1.500	-1.068	-11.819	80	.000
Pair 5	A Attractive Trade Promotions – I Attractive Trade Promotions	-.975	1.095	.122	-1.217	-.733	-8.015	80	.000
Pair 6	A Timely delivery of products – I Timely delivery of products	-.617	.751	.083	-.783	-.451	-7.396	80	.000
Pair 7	A Quick Replacement for damaged products – I Quick Replacement for damaged products	-.778	1.025	.114	-1.004	-.551	-6.831	80	.000
Pair 8	A Increased Credit period – I Increased Credit period	-1.605	1.080	.120	-1.844	-1.366	-13.371	80	.000
Pair 9	A Complaints handling by sales person – I Complaints handling by sales person	-.691	.970	.108	-.906	-.477	-6.414	80	.000
Pair 10	A Frequent visit by sales person – I Frequent visit by sales person	-.741	.877	.097	-.935	-.547	-7.600	80	.000
Pair 11	A Sales person Courteousness – I Sales person Courteousness	-1.148	1.108	.123	-1.393	-.903	-9.326	80	.000

In all cases the p-value is less than 0.05, thus there is a statistically significant difference between the retailers' expectation and the actual performance of the manufacturers satisfying the needs of the retailers (null rejected). From Table 7, the one-tailed paired sample t-test revealed that the actual performance is less ($\bar{x} = 4.23$, $\sigma = 0.712$) compared to the expected performance ($\bar{x} = 4.74$, $\sigma = 0.441$), $t(80)$, $p \leq 0.05$. In Table 8, looking into the first opinion, the mean difference between the actual opinion on brand image (A Brand image of the supplier) and the expected brand image (I Brand image of the supplier) is -0.506; the actual opinion value is less than expected, $t(80) = -5.992$, $p \leq 0.05$. The same interpretation can be had for all the other cases too, and in all the cases, the gap is negative (paired difference $\bar{x}$) signifying the fact that the expectation is more than the reality.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The gap between what the retailers expect from the manufacturers on the various attribute that will motivate them to stock industrial glasses and they actually experience from the manufacturers were analyzed and it was found that in almost all the factors taken for study, the expectation of the retailers was greater than the actual performance of the manufacturer.

In factors such as the profit margin, credit period and the sales person courteousness, the gap between the expectation and the actual experience is much wider. Since the responses were sought in a five-point scale the negative mean of over one is a very significant value. This means that the retailers take these factors very seriously as affecting their satisfaction. The scope for the manufacturer to close this gap is also higher but this is subjected to the practical implications of the trade. The factor 'price to the retailer' is closely related to the profit margin. This factor too has a significant negative gap. This factor could directly affect the patronage given by the end customer for the products since the price quoted to them will be higher and the freedom of the retailer to offer discounts on the maximum retail price is lower. The gap in the availability of the product at the expected time to the retailers has the lowest gap, which signifies the fact that the manufacturers are able to make the products available with the retailers at the right time.

Finally, it could be concluded that the manufacturer of industrial glass should concentrate on the various factor leading to the satisfaction of the retailer. This is very important because, in a B2B model, the marketing characteristics of high customer loyalty, high customer switching cost, specific marketing channels, and distinct enterprise image (brand cognition) (Yu & Lin, 2010) are significant in keeping a retailer satisfied and retaining them.

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