

Retailers Perception and Preference towards Patronizing Industrial Products: Industrial Flat Glass Products as Base Case

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ABSTRACT:

The industrial flat glass sector plays a vital role in supplying different glass products offering a wide range of products to various needs in numerous industries such as infrastructure, automotive, construction, etc. The research purports to explore the perceptions and preference of industrial flat glass retailers towards patronisation and promotion of brands of industrial glass products. This study also aims to know the retailer awareness level and the factors influencing their opinion towards industrial glass products. A methodical survey was created to gather the necessary primary data. Convenience sampling was used to gather data from 112 retailers of industrial glass products. Simple linear regression and chi-square test were used to examine the gathered data. The analysis's conclusion indicates that there is a substantial correlation between brand preference and location, but not between retailer awareness of industrial glass products and location. Further it was found that there is a significant relationship between product quality, brand reputation, profitability, services offered by glass manufacturers to retailers with overall satisfaction of retailers towards industrial glass products.

Keywords: Industrial glass products, Retailers Perception, Retailers Preference, Product quality, Profitability, Service, Brand reputation.

1. INTRODUCTION

In India, the growing pace of automobile industry (IBEF 2024), construction industry (Kumar 2024), solar panel (Mordor Intelligence 2024) etc, had attributed to the growth in the demand for flat glass products and is predicted to take an upward trajectory (Sinha 2024). The industrial glass industry is experiencing a remarkable growth in India, with the market reaching USD 3.5 Billion and growing at a rate of 7-8% year on year. Further, it is forecasted to reach USD 6.1 Billion in 2032. The industrial glass market growth rate from 2024 to 2032 is estimated to be around 6.1% (IMARC Group 2024).

The industrial glass industry is distributed into different sectors based on type of manufacture, application of the end product etc. Industrial glass industry may be classified as flat glass sector (which manufactures touchscreens for various applications including smart phones, windscreens for automobiles, glass top for furniture, facades and glazing for buildings etc), container glass sector (manufacturing bottles and jars for various applications from storing food to chemicals), glass fibre sector (used for reinforcement, insulation and fibre optics), scientific hollow glass sector (manufacture of tubing and vials such as the ones used in scientific laboratories), domestic glassware (which manufactures products such as cups, saucers, tumblers, jugs and vases), glass beads (which

finds used in reflective paint, wet and dry blast cleaning and water filtration etc) (British Glass, 2024) (Copley, 2001) (Berenjian & Whittleston, 2017).

In today's multidimensional and omnichannel world, there is an abundance of information available to consumers about goods and services. Retailers who are able to establish a solid bond with their clients by providing them with useful information and adding value will distinguish themselves from the competition and may even grow a loyal following (Dhruv & Roggeveen, 2017). Retailers not only provide manufacturers with a more efficient way to reach the end user, but they also take care of the manufacturers' critical and substantial customer support (Webster, 2000). The retail sector acts as a conduit between producers and customers and is vital to the economy.

A variety of internal and external factors, such as shifts in the industry as a whole, the economy, price points, convenience, the amount of time needed for shopping, customer demographics, and personality, can affect a consumer's preference for a specific retail channel or format (Le Tuong, 2014). A number of factors affect retailers' views and preferences regarding industrial glass products. First and foremost, retailers' perceptions and preferences are greatly influenced by the quality of the products they sell. Retailers' decision-making is influenced by various factors related to the quality of industrial glass products, including material, design, and durability. Accordingly, the textile manufacturer's study provides an illustration of how retailer preference is influenced by product quality. Consumers typically see retailers as the last and most noticeable link in the grocery supply chain. As a result, changes made at this level directly impact customer preferences regarding the availability, selection, and cost of goods (Dobson 2002).

In the highly competitive retail landscape, understanding the factors that drive retailers to patronize a particular brand is crucial for marketers and brand managers. Existing literature suggests that retailer brand equity, consumer experiences, and various psychological and social factors can significantly impact a retailer's decision to carry and promote a specific brand (Broyles et al., 2011) (Yunos & Lasi, 2020) (Kazemi & Zarei, 2014). One of the key factors identified in the literature is the brand equity of the manufacturer or supplier brand. Customers' perceptions, feelings, and attitudes towards a brand can directly influence a retailer's decision to stock and promote that brand. Retailers are more likely to carry brands that are well-known, trusted, and have a strong reputation in the eyes of consumers, as these brands are perceived to have higher sales potential and can contribute to the retailer's own brand image.

Furthermore, the in-store presence and visibility of a brand can also be a significant factor in a retailer's brand selection process. Brands with a strong in-store presence, through effective product placement, promotions, and merchandising, are more likely to be favored by retailers, as they can enhance the overall shopping experience and drive customer engagement (Hariharan et al., 2021). In addition to brand equity and in-store presence, the comparative loyalty of customers to retail brands versus manufacturer brands is another important consideration for retailers. Retailers may be more inclined to promote and carry their own private label brands if customers exhibit stronger loyalty towards these brands over national or manufacturer brands. Retailers also take into account the brand equity of their competitors when deciding which brands to carry. The brand equity of competing brands can moderate the relationship between a brand's equity and the retailer's loyalty towards that brand, as retailers may prioritize brands that offer a distinct value proposition and can help them differentiate from their competitors.

Organizations are attempting to understand why a customer leaves and how to retain them now that they understand how important it is to have happy consumers. Even when a customer is happy, they may still search elsewhere for even greater satisfaction. Additionally, one of the most crucial ideas in marketing, satisfaction has garnered a lot of attention from researchers in recent years. Previous

research on customer satisfaction has emphasized the significance of service quality as a precondition for customer satisfaction. Research on customer relationship management (CRM) as a means of drawing in and keeping consumers revealed that businesses who neglected to provide the products and services that consumers desired risked declining market share and earnings (Ali & Dubey, 2014).

A variety of product types and business customer types are appropriate for industrial retailing; business customers making business to business (B2B) transactions make sense when they conduct relatively low volume transactions through a store. McGoldrick defines business-to-consumer (B2C) retailing as the sale of goods or services to the person who consumes them. Industrial retailing is defined as the sale of goods to businesses for their use in creating a finished product or service (Noad & Rogers, 2008). The phrase "customer experience" has gained popularity among consultants, but academics are unsure if terms like "customer experience management," "total customer experience," and "customer experience" are just marketing jargon or if they provide a useful conceptual framework for understanding marketing in general. There seems to be a shift in the language used by businesses from "customer relationships" to "customer experience." Furthermore, others contend that the customer experience has not produced the anticipated levels of customer value and organizational profitability suggests that customer experience management might serve as an integrated framework that addresses the theoretical and practical constraints of customer relationship management (Palmer, 2010).

The foundation of all retailing is the actual consumption of goods and services by consumers. Retailers and service providers must design products that are valuable to their customers. Offering a better customer experience may set businesses apart from the competition and also drive customer contentment. However, little is understood about how businesses can profit from tracking retailers' satisfaction, and there are essentially less efforts made to maintain retailers' pleasure. Because the things that merchants sell frequently varies slightly from shop to store with varying services, they may find that their customer service is the only way to set themselves apart from rivals. When a company's performance meets or exceeds the expectations of its clients, those clients feel satisfied (Ali & Dubey, 2014).

Manufacturers now find it more challenging to manage their brands due to changes in the retail industry. Understanding how shifts like internet retailing, buying group formation, and consolidation of the retail and distribution industries affect their brands is a challenge for manufacturers. Since a brand's revenue is frequently derived from a small number of retailers, decisions made by these retailers about their brands can have an impact on consumer purchasing behaviour as well as manufacturer performance.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Traditionally, marketing has emphasized the need for strong supplier-customer relationships. Extensive research exists on how manufacturers build connections and deliver value to both final consumers (end-users) and industrial customers. However, this focus hasn't been as prevalent when it comes to the relationship between suppliers and retailers in general (Hansen & Skytte, 2017). In industrial purchasing, buyers classify products based on their perceptions categorizing them as generic or non-generic. This distinction reflects how they view brands within a product category. Perceptual bias further influences their decision-making by selectively attending to and distorting information according to their mental framework (Parket, 1972).

The perspectives of retailers are undertaken, focusing on the distinctions between their anticipated manufacturers' attributes and the actual attributes delivered. Additionally, the study aims to attached the anticipated satisfaction levels with the tangible satisfaction experienced by retailers in their dealings with a prominent brand of industrial glass manufacturers (Jeyapaul, 2018). There are several

factors which affects the opinion of retailers towards industrial glass products such as brand reputation, product quality, profitability, aesthetic and design and profitability. Evaluating the actual quality of industrial glass products can be challenging for retailers, as some properties like durability might not be readily apparent. This is especially true for experience goods, where the true value is realized only after use (Purohit & Srivastava, 2001).

The four product quality signals that are the subject of this study are pricing, physical attributes, retailer reputation, and branding. These signals have received the greatest attention in the marketing and economics literature. Cross-culturally consistent consumer behaviours within a segment and towards a particular product category are known as marketing universals. Using three different criteria for universality and multiple definitions of culture, the authors evaluate whether using brand, price, retailer reputation, and physical product appearance as signals of quality are marketing universals for consumer electronics products (Dawar & Parker, 1994).

Brand reputation is becoming more and more important. Success and profitability depend on having a positive brand perception. It is the general consensus of outsiders about the salient features of companies or brands. Beyond just keeping customers satisfied, a company's brand reputation is something it develops over time and refers to how various audiences view the brand. A brand will eventually lose its positive reputation and acquire a negative one if it continuously fails to live up to its stated intentions or marketing signals. Reputable companies and brands are probably going to attract more clients (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009).

A company's brand is thought to be a reflection of its essence. This declaration makes the claim that a company's brand does not represent its products; rather, it is its name, logo, trademark, and other distinctive symbols that set it apart and form the basis of brand loyalty. Brands demonstrate end users' loyalty. Once a brand is used consistently, consumers begin to identify it with them (Afzal et al., 2010). The core of Nelson's theory is the notion that consumers should reasonably assume that only high-quality products would invest a significant amount of money in advertising when it comes to experience goods. This is due to the fact that only premium brands are likely to see a sizable number of recurring sales. It is impossible for low-quality brands that pose as high-quality to justify matching once customers "discover" after making their first purchase that they are poor values and won't encourage further purchases (Hawkins & Moorthy, 2005).

The company is an entity established with the intention of making a sizable profit. Additionally, the business prioritized its survival in order to carry on as a going concern. A business entity was employed by the assumption of going concern to manage its operations. When an organization has a going concern, it means that it will not be liquidated in the near future and can continue to operate for the foreseeable future (Hernant et al., 2007). Aesthetic product design and marketing is becoming more and more important in markets where many consumers' basic needs are met. Businesses are focusing their differentiation efforts on less tangible features like aesthetics rather than tangible product characteristics like quality and functionality as core attributes like these become more and more similar (Reimann, 2010).

2.1 Perception of the Retailers

Perception is when a person selects, organizes, and interprets stimuli to form a meaningful picture of the external world. Regarding industrial glass products, the opinion of retailers is a major factor in determining the market's demand for these products (San & Yazdanifard, 2014).

The retailers believe industrial glass products to be strong, long-lasting, and visually appealing. Retailers need to know these perceptions in order to give their customers products that live up to their standards and expectations. Additionally, the study discovered that retailers believe industrial

glass products are long-lasting and resistant to a variety of outside influences, including heat, chemicals, and breakage.

This view is important because it gives retailers confidence that the goods they are selling won't break or hurt their customers. Furthermore, the perceived cost-effectiveness of industrial glass products affects retailers' opinions of them (Zeng et al., 2015). It was discovered that merchants believe industrial glass products to be more affordable than alternative materials. This belief stems from the fact that industrial glass products are less expensive to replace than other materials, last a long time, and require little upkeep (Lee et al., 2017). Retailers also view industrial glass products as environmentally friendly because they can be recycled, which is in line with the growing demand from customers for sustainable goods (Palmer, 2010).

2.2 Preference of the Retailers

Retailers' perceptions are closely associated with their preference for industrial glass products. According to, a person's attitude determines their preferences and purchasing decisions after their perception. As a result, retailers favour industrial glass products over those made of other materials due to their favourable perception of them. Retailers that favour industrial glass products do so for reasons other than just perception, like availability, variety, and customer demand (San & Yazdanifard, 2014). Retailers favour industrial glass products with a range of sizes, shapes, and designs that are easily accessible, according to a 2019 study. This is because it makes it possible for them to satisfy the various requirements and tastes of their clientele, which eventually boosts revenue and customer satisfaction (Greggio et al., 2021).

Additionally, the demand from customers for industrial glass products affects retailers' preferences for them. Customers are growing more aware of and thoughtful about the products they buy in today's market. Retailers therefore like to carry products that their customers are interested in buying. Retailers believe that industrial glass products are in great demand because of their sustainability, quality, and durability. Retailers then choose to stock these products in their stores as a preferred option (Zeng et al., 2015). The perception and preference of retailers towards industrial glass products is significantly influenced by the relationship that exists between manufacturers and retailers. A solid rapport between the two can promote greater trust in the products' quality and a better understanding of them. On the other hand, a poor relationship may result in a lack of product knowledge and reduce retailers' ability to believe what the manufacturer says (Lee et al., 2017). Additionally, retailers' inclination towards industrial glass products is also influenced by the manufacturer's after-sales support and customer service. Manufacturers who offer prompt and effective customer service are preferred by retailers. This is because it makes it easier for them to handle any problems or queries that clients may have, which increases client satisfaction (Greggio et al., 2021).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research methodology was employed in this study, and 112 retailers who stock and retail industrial glass products were sampled as respondents. Primary and secondary data was gathered through surveys and structured questionnaires. Secondary data was gathered from already existing sources. The data was analysed using regression and chi-square analysis in addition to convenience sampling. The objectives of this research are to know the awareness level of glass product among retailers, to know the factors influencing retailer's perception and preference towards industrial glass products. To know about the factors impacting the overall satisfaction towards industrial glass product among retailers, linear regression was used. To examine the relationship between the location and purchase behaviour of retailers, and also to examine the relationship between location and years of existence, a chi-square test was used.

4. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The data below provides an overview of the demographic profile of retailers, including the types of glass they deal with (laminated, insulated, U V digital, and toughened glass), their purchase patterns (weekly, twice, two weeks, and monthly), their target customers, the number of years in business, the size of their stores (square footage), brand recommendations, and the reasons behind their purchases.

Table1: Demographic Profile of Retailers

Variables	Category	Respondents counts
Type of Glass product deal	Toughened glass	67
	Laminated glass	2
	U V digital printed glass	5
	All	38
Location of the shop	Madurai	95
	Dindigul	17
Year of existence	01-05 Years	01
	05-10 Years	17
	Above 10 Years	94
Size of the shop	Less than 500 sq.	59
	1000-2000 sq.	47
	2500-5000 sq.	5
	More than 5000 sq.	1
Reason for recommending a brand	More profit	16
	Popular brand	29
	Quality product	67
Purpose of purchase	Doors	94
	Windows	43
	Walls	5
	Sound proof	4
Target customers	Architects and construction	101
	Hospitality Industry	6
	Food and beverage	2
	Designers	13
Purchase pattern	Weekly once	11
	Weekly Twice	32
	Two weeks once	34
	Monthly once	35
Awareness level of retailers towards Industrial glass products	Toughened glass	100
	Laminated glass	98
	Insulated glass	94
	Bend glass	91
	U V digital printed glass	85

It is seen from the table that toughened glass is the most commonly dealt product among the retailers, followed by a significant number dealing with all types of glass products. The majority of the retailers (95 out of 112) are located in Madurai, indicating it as a major hub for glass product retailers in the region. Most retailers (94 out of 112) have been in existence for more than 10 years, suggesting a well-established glass product retail market. A large proportion of retailers (59 out of 112) have small shop sizes (less than 500 sq. ft.), while a considerable number (47 out of 112) have medium-sized shops (1000-2000 sq. ft.). The primary reason for recommending a particular brand is the quality of the product (67 out of 112 retailers), followed by the brand's popularity (29 out of 112 retailers). The most common purpose for purchasing glass products is for doors, indicating a significant demand for construction and renovation projects. The primary purpose of purchase for glass products is for doors (94 out of 112 retailers), followed by windows (43 out of 112 retailers). The target customers for most retailers (101 out of 112) are architects and construction companies, indicating a focus on the construction and building industry. The purchase patterns vary, with weekly twice (32 out of 112 retailers), two weeks once (34 out of 112 retailers), and monthly once (35 out of 112 retailers) being the most common frequencies. Toughened glass, laminated glass, Insulated glass has the highest awareness level among retailers suggesting that it is more well known and commonly used in industrial glass product, While the bend glass and UV digital printed glass has slightly lower-level awareness among retailers.

5. ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND OUTCOME

To examine the relationship between the location and purchase behaviour of retailers, as well as the relationship between location and years of existence, a Chi-square test was used and the results were analysed. Additionally, a straightforward linear regression analysis was carried out to look into the significant effects of different influencing factors on the overall satisfaction of retailers towards industrial glass products. These factors included product quality, brand reputation, aesthetic and design, profitability, and service. The outcomes were examined after being combined into a single table.

5.1 Relationship between location, purchase behaviour and years of existence among retailers

In this section, it is attempted to examine if the retailers' purchase behaviour and location are significantly correlated, if or not retailers' years of existence are significantly correlated with their location. The null hypotheses proposed were to assess if retailers' purchase behavior and location are significantly correlated, if or not retailers' years of existence are significantly correlated with their location.

H₀₋₁: There is no significant relationship between location and the purchase behaviour

H₀₋₂: There is no significant relationship between location and the years of existence

The Table 2 presents the results of two hypotheses tests conducted to examine the relationships between the location of retailers and their purchase behaviour, as well as their years of existence. The hypotheses tests used chi-square statistical method to determine if there is a significant association or dependence between the variables being analysed.

Table 2: Relationships between the location of retailers and their purchase behavior, as well as their years of existence.

Hypothesis	P	Result	Outcome
Relationship between the location and the purchase behaviour of retailers	0.828	Accepted	There is no significant relationship between the location and the purchase behaviour of retailers – signifying that purchasing decisions are not impacted

Relationship between the location and the years of existence among retailers	0.492	Accepted	There is no significant relationship between the location and the years of existence – signifying that is not substantially influenced.
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The results of the chi-square test between the location and the purchase behaviour of retailers towards industrial glass products the p-value is 0.828 which is greater than the commonly used significance level of 0.05, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. This indicates that there is no significant relationship between the location and the purchase behaviour of retailers. Therefore, retailers' purchasing decisions or patterns are not significantly impacted by their geographic location. Retailers dealing with industrial glass products may have relatively consistent demand and requirements from their customers regardless of their location.

While observing the results of the chi square test between the location and the years of existence among retailers, the p-value of 0.492 is also greater than 0.05, resulting in the acceptance of the null hypothesis. This suggests that there is no significant relationship between the location and the years of existence among retailers. In other words, the longevity or the number of years a retail business has been in operation is not substantially influenced by its physical location.

5.2 Impact from the influencing factors and the overall satisfaction of the retailers towards industrial glass products

To find if there is any impact from the variables such as brand reputation of industrial glass products, product quality, aesthetic and design of industrial glass product, profitability and service with overall satisfaction of retailers towards industrial glass products, simple linear regression was computed and the individual results are compiled in Table 3. The null hypothesis in each case was that there is no significant impact from the antecedents on the overall satisfaction towards industrial glass products.

Table 3: Impact from the influencing factors and the overall satisfaction of the retailers towards industrial glass products

Factors	R	R ²	Adjusted Change Statistics				Coefficient	Constant
			Adjusted R ²	Change R ²	F	Sig. F		
Brand reputation of industrial glass products	.370	.137	.129	.137	17.432	.000	.377	2.589
Product quality	.387	.150	.142	.150	19.387	.000	.384	2.565
Aesthetics and design	.217	.047	.038	.047	5.444	0.21	.228	3.261
Profitability	.443	.196	.189	.196	26.821	.000	.612	1.585
Service	.491	.241	.234	.241	34.906	.000	.427	2.687

The regression analyses conducted on various factors influencing overall satisfaction yield valuable insights into customer preferences and behaviours. Starting with brand reputation, the findings demonstrate a positive association with satisfaction, with a coefficient of 0.370. This indicates that as brand reputation improves, so does overall satisfaction. The analysis suggests that approximately 13.7% of the variation in satisfaction can be attributed to brand reputation, emphasizing its significant influence. Moving on to product quality, the results indicate a substantial positive impact on satisfaction, with a coefficient of 0.387. This underscores the importance of high quality products in driving customer satisfaction, with approximately 15% of the variation in satisfaction explained by product quality. In contrast, aesthetic and design factors appear to have a smaller impact on satisfaction, with a coefficient of 0.217.

Although enhancements in aesthetics contribute modestly to satisfaction levels, only about 4.7% of the variance in satisfaction can be explained by aesthetic and design attributes. Moreover, the relationship is not statistically significant, suggesting that other factors may play a more prominent role in shaping satisfaction. Regarding profitability, the analysis reveals a substantial positive effect on satisfaction, with a coefficient of 0.443. This indicates that as profitability increases, satisfaction levels tend to rise as well, with approximately 19.6% of the variability in satisfaction explained by profitability. Finally, service quality emerges as a significant driver of satisfaction, with a coefficient of 0.491. Improvements in service quality correspond to higher levels of satisfaction, with approximately 24.1% of the variability in satisfaction attributed to service quality. These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of satisfaction, influenced by various factors such as brand reputation, product quality, aesthetics, profitability, and service quality. Understanding and prioritizing these factors can aid businesses in enhancing customer experiences and driving overall satisfaction levels.

6. CONCLUSION

The industrial glass sector plays a crucial role in catering to the diverse needs of various industries like construction and architect, Automotive, Pharmaceuticals and Laboratories, Energy, aerospace and defence, household, kitchenware, interior design and furniture offering a wide range of products. This study aimed to explore retailers' perceptions and preferences towards industrial glass products, as well as their awareness levels and the factors influencing their opinions and to find out if there is a significant relationship between the location and the purchase behaviour of retailer and the awareness level of retailers. Additionally, the analysis included a look at how different factors—like brand reputation, product quality, profitability, aesthetics and design, and service—affect retailers' overall satisfaction with industrial glass products and their manufacturers.

The result of the study demonstrates a strong correlation between merchants' choice for particular brands of industrial glass items and their location. There is no significant relationship between the location and the years of existence of shops among retailers - it signifies that the longevity or the number of years a retail business has been in operation is not substantially influenced by its physical location. The relationship between brand reputation and the dependent variable is moderately positive ($R = 0.370$), meaning that an increase in brand reputation is associated with an increase in the outcome under study. Product quality exhibits a slightly stronger positive correlation ($R = 0.387$) with the dependent variable, with a comparable coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.150$). Product attributes like durable, resistant to breakage and effective safety measures increases the overall satisfaction of retailers towards industrial glass products. Aesthetic and design have no role to play in the overall satisfaction of retailers; they don't consider this factor as much in the purchasing decision.

Profitability emerges as influential factor with a coefficient of 0.443 and an R-squared value of 0.196, it signifies retailers consider competitive pricing and a reasonable profit margin which increases their overall satisfaction towards industrial glass products. Service also emerged as a significant factor, with the highest coefficient of 0.491 and an R-squared value of 0.24. Service attributes which include timely delivery, replacement policies, responsiveness and the warranty policies increases the overall satisfaction of retailers towards industrial glass products. The managerial implication of the research's findings is that marketing strategies can pinpoint the elements that influence retailers' satisfaction with industrial glass products. They can also pinpoint the need for manufacturers to enhance their promotional efforts and boost sales representative visits in order to better serve retailers and raise their level of satisfaction with these products. By understanding and addressing retailers' preferences and perceptions, manufacturers can better align their products and marketing strategies to meet retailer demands and ultimately satisfy consumer needs in the industrial glass product market.

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