

Institutional Purchase Behaviour and Consumer Satisfaction toward Hygiene and Housekeeping Products: A Study of a Regional B2B Supplier

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ABSTRACT

The hygiene products market in India is experiencing rapid growth; however, there has been very little academic research on consumer behaviour and satisfaction related to regional institutional business-to-business (B2B) supply chain operations. This research attempts to determine the factors affecting institutional purchase decisions and subsequent customer satisfaction with ABC Care Private Limited, a regional manufacturer/wholesaler of hygiene and cleaning products for institutional consumers located in Bhopal and Indore, Madhya Pradesh. In this quantitative research, a descriptive-correlational cross-sectional survey research design was utilized. The sample consisted of 120 institutional respondents who were chosen using purposive convenience sampling from four types of institutions. Approximately 30% of surveys were completed in each of the following sectors: hotels and guesthouses, hospitals and clinics, corporate offices, and educational institutions. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert-type scale, then analyzed through frequency distributions, descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), inter-rater reliability assessment (Cronbach's alpha), and Pearson's correlation coefficients to evaluate the strength and direction of the two constructs.

The major criteria driving purchase decisions were product quality and cleaning effectiveness (31.7%), followed by perceived price/value (20.0%) and product availability (15.0%). All core satisfaction areas produced average scores greater than 4.00 (with 84.2% of respondents reporting some or high level of satisfaction) on a 5 point scale. The scale demonstrated an acceptable level of reliability ($\alpha = 0.84$). Resulted in a strong positive correlation between product quality and overall satisfaction ($r = 0.76$, $p < 0.01$) and also between overall satisfaction and intention to repurchase ($r = 0.80$, $p < 0.01$). The safe packaging and product info received the lowest average score ($M = 3.96$) indicating that this is an area for management improvement. While the correlational analysis found statistically significant associations, it does not allow for causal conclusions. To determine directionality will require conducting experimental or quasi-experimental studies outside of this applied research. This research advances the theoretical understanding of the Theory of Planned Behaviour, Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory and SERVQUAL in a unique regional B2B hygiene supply market in Central India, providing practical suggestions to improve supplier performance and retain institutional customers.

Keywords: Institutional purchase behaviour; customer satisfaction; B2B hygiene products; regional supplier; Pearson's correlation; descriptive-correlational research; Madhya Pradesh

INTRODUCTION

Buyers identify their needs, compare available options and choose products or services based on their buying process, also known as consumer purchasing behaviour (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In institutional procurement, decisions are based on multiple factors beyond just price and physical attributes of a product, but also by how well it works, whether it complies with regulations that apply to healthcare facilities, that it will not pose a health risk to guests or patients due to contamination or lack of proper cleaning, whether it will be delivered as promised (supply), and whether they will receive the level of service they expect after the product is delivered.

The commercial hygiene and cleaning product market is transforming in India due to the increased importance of hygiene post-COVID-19 pandemic, the rise of professional facility management companies, and the continued establishment of formal institutional purchasing practices. The Indian institutional cleaning chemicals market segment, valued at approximately USD2,093.6 million in 2024, is anticipated to experience growth exceeding USD4,539.1 million by 2033 (Grand View Research, n.d). Furthermore, the disinfectant product segment will display similarly strong double digit growth from 2025 to 2034 (IMARC Group, 2026b). These trends will continue to demonstrate the growing commercial and operational significance of institutional hygiene product supply.

ABC Care Private Limited is a regional manufacturer and wholesaler based in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, where its distribution centre is located in Indore. The company only sells directly to other businesses, supplying disinfectants, floor cleaners, bathroom cleaners, hand hygiene products, tissue and similar products to the following categories of institutions: hotels, hospitals, corporate offices and educational institutions. While ABC can be considered a local player in the market, the product category characteristics suggest the company operates within a low supplier-switching cost environment, and uses multiple criteria to evaluate potential suppliers. Accordingly, ensuring that current customers remain satisfied and, therefore, retained is strategically critical for ABC Care.

A problem in the academic literature is that, although there is much published research on consumer behaviour in retail fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) markets, organic food, and personal care product categories (Beneke et al., 2013; Patak et al., 2021), there is relatively little empirical evidence examining the purchasing habits of institutional customers supplied by state level B2B manufacturers of hygiene products in India. The purpose of this study is to fill this gap, by describing and testing the factors affecting purchase decisions of ABC Care's institutional customers, as well as testing the strength of the statistical associations between key supplier performance dimensions and customer satisfaction related to ABC Care.

Research Objectives

The study is guided by the following objectives:

- Assess factors that impact how institutional customers purchase from ABC Care in Bhopal and Indore (for example; product quality, pricing/value perception, availability of items in stock, buying reliability, how product is packaged, how fast the service is provided).
- Identify level of customer satisfaction among institutional purchasers of ABC Care products/services.
- Determine strength and directionality of association between independent variables (product quality/price fairness/availability of products/service support) and dependent variables (purchasing behaviour/customersatisfaction/repurchase intention).
- Provide evidence-based recommendations for managers/contribution to increased customer retention/improved competitive position within regional/hygiene market.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundations

Three general theoretical frameworks inform the conceptualisation of this study. The first is Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), which proposes that the intention to perform a behaviour is a function of three precursors. The first precursor is an individual's attitude toward performing the behaviour; the second is an individual's subjective or perceived social pressure (norm); and the third is an individual's belief in his or her ability to perform the behaviour. Within the context of institutional procurement, the intention of a purchasing officer to select or retain a supplier is influenced by the purchasing officer's attitudinal evaluations about the supplier's performance, the internal organisational expectations of the supplier based on the organisation's procurement policies or procedures, and the purchasing officer's perception of the amount of autonomy he or she has to make procurement decisions. Although TPB was designed to investigate individual behaviour, its constructs also apply well to the collective decision making that occurs within an institutional procurement team (Ajzen, 1991).

Oliver's (1980) Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory (EDT), which posits that customer satisfaction is determined by comparing pre-purchase expectations with actual post-purchase performance levels, serves as the second theoretical framework. It further posits that when actual performance levels exceed pre-purchase expectations, positive disconfirmation occurs, resulting in increased customer satisfaction and a higher likelihood of repurchasing; conversely, when actual performance levels fall below pre-purchase expectations, negative disconfirmation occurs, resulting in customer dissatisfaction and increased risk of switching to a different supplier. EDT is directly relevant to ABC Care's provision of supplies and services to institutional purchasing organisations because institutional buyers generally have operationally grounded performance expectations, and repeated cycles of purchasing result in ongoing comparisons between expectations and actual performance.

The SERVQUAL framework, which was originally created in 1988 by Parasuraman and his colleagues, describes service quality by identifying five characteristics along which service can be evaluated: tangibles; reliability; responsiveness; assurance; and empathy. In B2B institutional supply relationships, reliability (i.e., consistent and timely delivery) and responsiveness (i.e., the speed and effectiveness with which complaints are resolved) are especially important determinants of customer satisfaction (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Collectively, the three foregoing frameworks will aid in identifying variables for inclusion in surveys, generating surveys, and interpreting findings in the current study.

Empirical Evidence on Purchase Behaviour and Customer Satisfaction

Zeithaml (1988) introduced a major finding that consumers perceive price not as an absolute measure of cost, but rather as an indicator of product quality and perceived value. This insight applies particularly to institutional procurement, where the total cost of ownership of a product over its useful life (including dilution rates, usage yields, and reliability) generally takes precedence over the nominal unit price. Beneke et al. (2013) supported this relationship through a study that examined household cleaning products, which found that perceived quality, relative price, and perceived risk all influenced consumers' willingness to buy. Zhao et al. (2021) established that customer satisfaction is an important mediator of the relationship between product information, price, and actual buying behaviour, confirming that having adequate product information is a key enabler of the feeling of confidence to purchase.

Studying Indian consumers in relation to the institutional market provides critical empirical evidence. Singh and Verma (2017) identified the following antecedents of Indian actual purchase behaviour: health consciousness, product knowledge, subjective norms, and price perception. Kim and Chung (2011) also found that prior product experience, perceived value, and behavioural control were significant predictors of purchase intention in relation to personal care product categories.

The intention to purchase a hygiene product is influenced by both the perceived price and the consumer's attitude toward the product (Dlamini and Mahowa, 2024). Dlamini and Mahowa (2024) provide evidence of both the dual evaluative and informational dimensions of purchase behaviour in the emerging market context.

Dlamini and Mahowa (2024) also confirm the validity of the purchase drivers identified in prior research conducted by Patak et al. (2021) and Barbu et al. (2022). They identified the following purchase drivers using different types of „green” consumer chemical and eco-friendly product purchases: product information, environmental concern, personal values, and social influence. With respect to the continued development of sustainable and safe institutional cleaning products, these studies provide evidence that suggests the existence of a multidimensional purchase behaviour construct that consists of product quality, price-value perception, availability of product, informational clarity, service support, and prior experience, which collectively develop a framework for the current study to operationalise within a regional B2B institutional hygiene supply context, a research area that has not previously been addressed in the literature.

Market Context: Institutional Hygiene Products in India

The market for institutional hygiene and cleaning products in India is experiencing rapid growth as a result of post-COVID awareness of hygiene, the growth of service sector industries and the growing professionalisation

of the way that institutions procure goods. The market for household cleaners in India alone is expected to reach USD 11.9 billion by 2025 (IMARC Group, 2026a) while the industrial and institutional cleaning chemicals segment is anticipated to grow from USD 2.1 billion in 2024 to USD 4.5 billion in 2033 (Grand View Research, n.d.). The majority of this demand is attributed to the healthcare sector (i.e. hospitals and clinics), the hospitality sector (i.e. hotels and resorts), the food processing sector, and the educational sector.

In particular, the Madhya Pradesh government's Healthcare Investment Policy (2025) indicates that the government will continue to invest in infrastructure which should lead to an increase in the consumption of disinfectants and other hygiene consumables. The hotel industry in India is expected to grow by about 12% in FY2026 (IBEF, 2026) and this will also result in a larger requirement for housekeeping supplies. The market for facility management services in India is also expected to experience significant growth with soft services including housekeeping supplies accounting for a considerable portion of that growth (Mordor Intelligence, 2026; Technavio, 2025). These macroeconomic trends emphasise the need to understand institutional purchaser behaviour in this regional market.

Variable Identification and Conceptual Framework

Based on the works of Zeithaml (1988), Parasuraman et al. (1988), and Zhao et al.(2021) but with adaptations made for the context of institutional hygiene, the research has identified six independent variables that must be examined: (i) product quality and cleaning effectiveness; (ii) price fairness and perceived value for money; (iii) availability and reliability of delivery; (iv) the safety of packaging and the amount of product information supplied by manufacturers; (v) adequate range of products available to meet needs; and (vi) responsiveness in providing sales/service support. The two dependent variables will be determined through consumer behavior (i.e., number of purchases made, categories of products purchased and likelihood of purchasing again) and overall satisfaction with the customer (i.e., total rating of satisfaction with previous purchased items using an evaluative method). For an explanation of all variables please see Table 1.

Table 1: Variable Identification and Operational Definitions

Variable Type	Variable	Operational Definition
Independent	Product quality & effectiveness	Perceived cleaning performance in actual institutional use
Independent	Price fairness / value for money	Assessment of bulk pricing relative to perceived performance benefit
Independent	Availability & delivery consistency	Ease of procurement, stock continuity, and delivery timeliness
Independent	Packaging safety & product information	Clarity of usage instructions, safe handling cues, and label information
Independent	Adequacy of product range	Supplier's capacity to satisfy multiple housekeeping needs
Independent	Sales/service support responsiveness	Promptness and helpfulness in addressing queries and orders
Dependent	Purchase behaviour	Frequency, category preference, and repurchase intention
Dependent	Consumer satisfaction	Overall post-purchase evaluation of product and service performance

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design used in this project can be characterised as descriptive and correlational, comprising an exploratory phase that provided support for both participatory instrument creation and validities of all measurement variables and a descriptive-correlational phase that provided information about the demographic characteristics of participants, their purchasing behaviours, and satisfaction levels across each of the possible participant categories. The exploratory phase provided guidance regarding the development of the data collection instrument through questionnaire design and was used to confirm face validity of this measurement instrument through exploratory research techniques. The descriptive phase provided descriptive statistics for the respondents to illustrate their demographic characteristics, describe their purchasing behaviours, and describe their satisfaction levels within all potential participant categories. The correlational analysis provided insight into the degree and direction of the correlations between all independent variables and all dependent variables through the use of Pearson's correlation analysis.

It should be noted that there are limited epistemological boundaries related to the type of analysis conducted as part of this research design. Pearson's correlation analysis can identify the degree of linear correlation between two variables; however, it cannot be used to examine whether a causal relationship exists between two variables or to identify the direction of any possible causal effect. Experimental or quasi-experimental research designs, which include appropriate controls, would be necessary in order to formulate conclusions regarding causal relationships (e.g., to state that product quality leads to satisfaction). The research conducted did not attempt to formulate any statements related to causal relationships; all of the relationships described throughout this research project are associative in nature. It is believed that this cross-sectional, applied design will provide descriptive and associative information to improve decision-making processes at ABC Care Pty. Ltd.

Sample and Data Collection

A group of people who made decisions about buying from ABC Care in Bhopal and Indore was studied. This group included people such as purchasing agents, buyers, facility managers, and supervisors from the housekeeping departments. They were all responsible for purchasing products from ABC Care. A total of 120 people completed the survey, with most people being selected due to their experience buying from ABC Care and their willingness to take the survey. While this method was effective for gathering data from the right population, it is important to note that this type of sampling is not representative of a larger population.

The data was collected in two cities, with Bhopal having 62 out of 120 (51.7%) of the responses and Indore having 58 out of 120 (48.3%) of the responses, representing the company's current footprint in both cities. There were four different types of institutions that responded to the survey, 38 (31.7%) of which were hotels/guest houses; 31 (25.8%) of which were hospitals/clinics; 27 (22.5%) of which were corporate offices; and 24 (20.0%) were educational and other institutions.

Instrument Design and Measurement

Structured questionnaires were used to collect data, which consisted of three sections: Section 1 captured the demographics of the respondents, including their type of institution, length of association with ABC Care, and frequency of purchasing from ABC Care; Section 2 captured primary purchase decision factors based on categorical rankings (Ranked Categorical Responses); and Section 3 measured customer satisfaction using 10 Likert-type statements (5 Ratings from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) regarding product quality, delivery reliability, price fairness, adequacy of packaging, service support, and overall satisfaction.

The measurement scales demonstrated acceptable levels of internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of $\alpha = 0.84$ for the 10-item satisfaction subscale), which exceeds the recommendation of Nunnally (1978) of $\alpha \geq 0.70$ for social science research, therefore the satisfaction items reliably measure a common underlying construct. Content validity for the instrument was supported by the basis of items developed using other SERVQUAL-based & validated purchasing behavior scales (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988).

Analytical Approach

Three different analyses were used in the study. The first step was to create frequency distributions and percentages for each of the variables included in the study (e.g., respondents' demographic profile; profile of respondent's institution; how often do most people buy the item(s); major factors influencing their decision to purchase). The second step was to calculate descriptive statistics (i.e., mean and standard deviation) for each item to determine how likely respondents are to agree with statements on the Likert-type scale. A mean of more than 4.00 indicates strong positive agreement, a mean between 3.50 and 4.00 indicates moderate agreement, a mean of approximately 3.00 indicates neutral agreement, and a mean of less than 3.00 indicates an area of concern. The third step was to calculate Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients (r) to determine the nature and strength of relationships among the variables (i.e., relationships among product quality, satisfaction, and intention to repurchase).

Correlation coefficients are reported only to quantify how closely related one variable is to another. As noted earlier, correlation does not establish a cause-and-effect relationship between variables; thus this study does not propose any cause-and-effect relationships. All correlations are considered statistically significant at the $p < 0.01$ level. Finally, Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.84$) and item correlation coefficients provide additional information regarding scale reliability. All analyses were undertaken using the SPSS Version 26.0 software program.

RESULTS

Respondent Profile and Purchase Behaviour

The following table lists the number of respondents that reside in each sector. The majority of respondents are hotel and guest house businesses (31.7%), followed by healthcare facilities (25.8%)—these two sectors use hygiene products frequently due to the operational-critical nature of hygiene product usage; therefore, they account for more than half (57.5%) of the sample and have the most opportunity to provide strong supplier satisfaction evaluations (through frequent supplier interactions).

Table 2: Sector-wise Distribution of Respondents (N = 120)

Sector	n	% of Sample
Hotels / Guest Houses	38	31.7%
Hospitals / Clinics	31	25.8%
Corporate Offices	27	22.5%
Educational / Other Institutions	24	20.0%
Total	120	100.0%

Most of the respondents (40) have been purchasing from ABC Care for 2–4 years, while 34 respondents have purchased from ABC Care for 1–2 years, 24 for more than 4 years, and 22 for less than 1 year. This range allows for a high degree of reliability with respect to the evaluation of satisfaction with ABC Care, as most respondents have been purchasing from ABC Care long enough to offer satisfaction evaluations on a good basis. This is complemented by the subgroup of recently acquired buyers to provide early adopter views that can assist with the understanding of the first-time user experience with suppliers. In terms of frequency of purchase, the frequency category of weekly was indicated by 38.2% of all respondents, fortnightly by 23.2%, monthly by 28.2%, and occasionally by 10.0%. With the combined total of weekly and fortnightly purchasers at 61.6%, it follows that the institutional hygiene products are predominantly high-frequency repeat consumption items; thus, the buyer's performance is continually measured throughout short purchase cycles, making even small service failures an important consideration for potential switching behaviour. The top five purchase categories were 1) floor cleaners (28.2%), 2) disinfectants (23.3%), 3) bathroom cleaners (15.0%), 4) hand hygiene products (13.3%), and 5) tissue and paper products (11.7%). All other items totalled 8.2%. The breakdown of the purchase

categories shows that ABC Care offers a high degree of diversification in its product offering, and further supports the relevance of a multidimensional supplier evaluation rating system.

Primary Factors Influencing Purchase Decisions

The ranked distribution of primary decision factors for purchasing is presented in Table 3, with the most significant factor being product quality and cleaning effectiveness (the most important criterion was identified as product quality and cleaning effectiveness (31.7%), followed by price and value for the price (20.0%), product availability (15.0%), delivery reliability (13.3%), brand reputation (8.3%), packaging and safety information (6.7%), and sales and service support (5.0%). Results from this ranking support Zeithaml’s (1988) quality-value model, Beneke et al. (2013) indicator that institutional buyers evaluate products on a utilitarian basis and performance-based criteria; therefore, functional product attributes dominate brand-based criteria.

Table 3: Primary Factors Influencing Purchase Decision (N = 120)

Purchase Decision Factor	n	% of Respondents	Cumulative %
Product quality / cleaning effectiveness	38	31.7%	31.7%
Price and value for money	24	20.0%	51.7%
Availability of products	18	15.0%	66.7%
Delivery reliability	16	13.3%	80.0%
Brand reputation	10	8.3%	88.3%
Packaging and safety information	8	6.7%	95.0%
Sales / service support	6	5.0%	100.0%

Descriptive Analysis of Satisfaction Dimensions

Mean scores and standard deviations for all key dimensions of satisfaction, including product quality and cleaning effectiveness, which were rated highest (M= 4.23; SD=1.02), as expected based on these attributes being the most critical in relation to the reason for purchase. The next highest rated dimensions were Availability and Consistency of Delivery (M=4.16; SD=0.95), and Responsiveness to Sales Support (M=4.16; SD=1.03). Both of these dimensions exceeded the 4.00 benchmark. Other highly rated dimensions included Pricing Fairness and Value for Volume (M=4.15; SD=0.86) and Adequacy of Product Range (M=4.11; SD=0.97). Overall Satisfaction was rated similarly (M=4.20; SD=0.74) and met the overall rating above 4.00 with regard to consistency-based off a lower standard deviation than other dimensions.

With a low mean score of 3.96 (1.05 SD), packaging safety and product info are rated as having the least satisfaction. The average falls just below the standard expected score of 4.00 indicating moderate positive responses. Results are consistent with Patak et al. (2021) and Barbu et al. (2022) since these researchers have identified that clear packaging including dilution instructions, labelling on the batch, and hazard communication needs improvement. Overall satisfaction with future purchase intention had the lowest mean (3.83) but remained within moderately positive rankings (0.37) from overall satisfaction (4.20) suggests that there is a gap between current levels of satisfaction and expected behavioural loyalty commitments - this aligns with B2B loyalty studies that view attitudinal satisfaction differently than behaviourally committed (Oliver, 1999).

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Key Study Variables (N = 120)

Variable	Mean (M)	Std. Dev. (SD)	Interpretation
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Product quality and cleaning effectiveness	4.23	1.02	Strong positive
Overall satisfaction	4.20	0.74	Strong positive
Availability and delivery consistency	4.16	0.95	Strong positive
Sales / service support responsiveness	4.16	1.03	Strong positive
Price fairness / value for bulk purchase	4.15	0.86	Strong positive
Adequacy of product range	4.11	0.97	Strong positive
Packaging safety and product information	3.96	1.05	Moderately positive
Future purchase intention	3.83	0.86	Moderately positive

The CV (Coefficient of Variation = Standard Deviation / Mean x 100) is used as a measure of relative variability for each of the different dimensions. The average product quality (with a CV of 24.1%) had a moderate response variability (heterogeneity) between different individuals even though there was a higher mean.

This may imply a process specific variation in perceptions based on the quality of a product in the same sector. Compared to product quality, overall satisfaction (with a CV of 17.6%) had a lower response variability (heterogeneity) between individuals indicating that people were likely to agree about the supplier to whom they responded to.

Overall Satisfaction Distribution and Sector Analysis

A total of 84.2% of survey participants were either satisfied or very satisfied (37.5% very satisfied, 46.7% satisfied) with ABC Care's products and services, 14.2% were neutral, and 1.7% were dissatisfied, with none being very dissatisfied. High overall satisfaction is a valuable strategic advantage for retention of customers and for institutional referrals via word-of-mouth.

The 14.2% of neutral respondents should not be viewed as satisfied; they represent potential risk of switching due to the lower future purchase intention score (mean of 3.83). Disaggregation by sector indicates significant differences: Corporate offices have the highest level at 88.9% satisfied; Educational institutions are at 87.5% satisfied; Hospitals and Clinics are at 87.1%; Hotels and Guest Houses have lower, but still high, level of satisfaction at 76.3%. Factors contributing to lower hospitality sector satisfaction include higher standards for operations, greater intensity of use for products, variety of products being used and increased sensitivity to quality and consistency with delivery and packaging. Therefore, a differentiated service and account management strategy may be appropriate for hospitality sector accounts.

Correlation Analysis

Table 5 presents Pearson's correlation coefficients for the key bivariate associations examined in the study. All reported correlations are statistically significant at the $p < 0.01$ level (two-tailed), indicating that the observed associations are unlikely to reflect sampling error.

Table 5: Pearson's Correlation Coefficients — Key Bivariate Associations (N = 120)

Variable Association	r	r ² (Shared Variance)	Strength of Association
Overall satisfaction → Repurchase intention	0.80**	64.0%	Very strong positive

Product quality → Overall satisfaction	0.76**	57.8%	Strong positive
Product quality → Repurchase intention	0.73**	53.3%	Strong positive
Availability/delivery → Overall satisfaction	0.62**	38.4%	Moderate-strong positive
Service support → Overall satisfaction	0.49**	24.0%	Moderate positive
Price fairness → Overall satisfaction	0.45**	20.3%	Moderate positive

** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed). Note: All associations are correlational; no causal inference is drawn.

The r^2 (coefficient of determination) indicates the extent of shared variance for the two variables in question, so that in this case, the amount of shared variance between overall satisfaction and repurchase intentions is 64.0% ($r = 0.80$), which demonstrates that the two are highly correlated. This supports the theoretical construct proposed by Oliver (1980) within his Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory (i.e., satisfaction is a major contributor to the intention to purchase again). However, the remaining 36.0% of variance in the intention to purchase again can be explained by factors that are not included in this study. These factors will likely include limitations imposed by procurement policies, the requirements of competitive tendering, the constraints of the budget cycle, and the management of supplier relationships. This would further highlight the multitude of factors that influence B2B loyalty.

The overall satisfaction and product quality share 57.8% of the variance ($r = 0.76$), which supports previous findings by Zeithaml (1988) that quality perceptions are the supplier performance dimension most strongly related to overall satisfaction. Furthermore, availability and delivery consistency ($r = 0.62$; $r^2 = 38.4\%$) have a moderate to strong correlation (i.e., they are also related) with the overall satisfaction, which corresponds to the dimensions of reliability in SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1988). While both price fairness ($r = 0.45$) and service support responsiveness ($r = 0.49$) exhibit a moderate positive relationship to satisfaction, they contribute less to the overall evaluation of customers than quality or availability. These associations provide an empirical foundation for the theoretical frameworks employed and assist in determining managerially prioritized direction; however, advances from an associative to a causal basis of evidence will require additional analytical methodologies, such as structural equation modelling (SEM) or regression-based path analysis.

DISCUSSION

Product Quality as the Central Driver of Satisfaction

Quality of the product is the number one measure when making a purchase decision and is the main factor of satisfaction along with overall satisfaction ($r = 0.76$) and is consistent with Zeithaml's (1988) definition of quality as the primary link between price-value and purchase. For institutional buyers of hygiene supplies quality can easily be evaluated in some very specific and observable ways: Does a floor cleaner provide proper removal of contamination? Is the disinfectant adequate for infection control? Will the hand sanitiser continue to maintain adequate hygiene in frequently used areas? These evaluations of quality provide evidence that buyers have a utilitarian purchasing approach similar to that determined by Beneke et al. (2013) for other similar product categories.

Therefore, for ABC Care, quality assurance and performance consistency must be viewed as the primary competitive advantage. Investments in a quality management system such as production of documentation to prove efficacy; independent testing to show good test results; and evidence of product performance will have a positive influence on buyer's perception of quality and particularly new customers or potential customers purchasing from ABC Care.

Price Perception and Value-Based Procurement

According to Zhao et al. (2021), customer satisfaction plays an important role in mediating the relationship between price and purchasing behaviour; therefore, the moderate positive correlation between price fairness and overall satisfaction ($r = 0.45$) is supportive of their study findings, which also distinguishes between relative and absolute price evaluations in purchasing contexts. ABC Care institutional purchasers are primarily focused on maximising operational value and not on minimising unit costs, therefore pricing strategies need to be based on providing an overall total cost of ownership that combines dilution economies, product yield, and operational efficiency rather than just competing on nominal prices alone.

Delivery Reliability and Supply Chain Performance

The moderate-to-strong correlation between availability/delivery consistency and overall satisfaction ($r = .62$) reinforces the importance of the reliability dimension (SERVQUAL) in B2B institutional supply chain relationships. Since cleaning schedules are consistent within institutional settings — hotel rooms cleaned by usage, wards cleaned prior to patient arrival, and offices maintained by scheduled rotation — supply disruptions will create an operational impact that is greater than the apparent magnitude of the disruption. In this instance, ABC Care's mean availability score ($M=4.16$) is an indication that the results of these correlations suggest that promoting additional predictability in delivery (e.g., implementing advance order incentive programs, establishing standing order arrangements, and employing digitally enabled inventory visibility tools) will enhance overall satisfaction and decrease switching risk.

Packaging and Product Information as an Improvement Opportunity

Within this study, the area identified for greatest improvement is determined to be packaging safety and product information ($M = 3.96$), as evidenced by the below-threshold mean score. This particular finding supports those found by Patak et al. (2021) and Barbu et al. (2022) that found informational adequacy to be a key factor for driving consumer purchase intentions and satisfaction of similar product categories. While aesthetic branding may be considered to be an important consideration for institutional purchasers in terms of their needs when it comes to the function of packaging – packaging must also provide critical operational information, including but not limited to correct dilution ratios, application instructions, labelling to indicate batch consistency and appropriate hazard communication to comply with safety regulations. Lack of deficiency in these areas could result in inefficiencies in operation (such as improperly diluted products or increased waste), compliance-related risks and diminished perceptions of product performance; all of which impact negatively on the level of customer satisfaction. Therefore, addressing this gap through a redesign of packaging that is focused upon the needs of institutional users represents a cost-effective, high-impact opportunity for improvement.

The Satisfaction-Loyalty Gap

The 0.37-point gap between the Overall Satisfaction ($M = 4.20$) and Future Purchase Intention ($M = 3.83$) requires justification. While the aggregate level of satisfaction is generally high, there is a considerable portion of respondents who do not exhibit unequivocal behavioral loyalty, as documented comprehensively in prior B2B loyalty research. Oliver (1999) breaks loyalties down into four types — i.e., cognitive, affective and conative and action (sequential phases). Oliver also notes that attitudinal satisfaction does not automatically turn into behavioral commitment when an organization has a formalized procurement process, budget restrictions, or competitive alternatives. Additionally, for ABC Care, this finding indicates that managing relationships (through proactive account management, service contracts specific to sector, performance reviews held regularly, and incentivized loyalty programs) is an important strategic lever in converting attitudinal satisfaction into a long-term behavioral loyalty.

Sector-Specific Service Differentiation

Hospitality sector respondents have a much lower level of satisfaction (76.3% compared to 87% - 89% for other sectors). This difference is due to the added complexity of hotel and guest house operations, requirements for broader categories of products, and sensitivity to packaging and delivery execution when using hygiene products throughout the functionally distinct operational zones of guest rooms, common areas, and back-of-house. Operational complexity in the hospitality sector raises the level of expectation for the consistency of supplier

performance. Based on these findings, manufacturers should consider establishing account management protocols specific to the hospitality sector. Such protocols may include: a dedicated hospitality account manager; continuous product performance reviews; and customized service level agreements.

CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

The study measured how ABC Care Private Limited and its customers buy their hygiene products and the way that customers view their businesses. The study had 120 people from different institutions respond, from which data were collected using the methods of descriptive-correlational cross-sectional design and purposive convenience sampling. The statistical analysis included frequency analysis, descriptive statistics (mean, SD, CV), Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis and Pearson's correlation analysis.

The study gave some important findings:

1. The most important reason for customers buying products from ABC Care is product quality and how effective the products are at cleaning (31.7% of respondents chose this reason), which also results in the highest correlation with overall satisfaction ($r = .76, p < .01$).
2. All nine measures of supplier performance scored above 4.00, and the mean overall satisfaction score of 4.20 had a standard deviation of 0.74. Eighty-four point two percent (84.2%) of respondents rated their level of satisfaction as satisfied or very satisfied with ABC Care.
3. The measurement tool demonstrated adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.84$).
4. The highest correlation of the variables was between overall satisfaction and intentions to repurchase ($r = .80; r^2 = 64\%, p < .01$), reinforcing Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory.
5. The only item that required improvement is the safety of packaging materials and product information (mean = 3.96).
6. A satisfaction-loyalty gap exists between satisfaction and intention to repurchase ($M \text{ satisfaction} - M \text{ intention} = 0.37$), indicating a need for effective relationship management to convert attitudinal satisfaction into behavioural loyalty.

Theoretical Contributions

The use of three well-established models has been used to evaluate a unique area in the Development of Goods/Services in a Single Market (D - G/M, S or D-G/S). This study explored the foundational theory of Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior, the central reasoning behind Oliver's Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory, along with the rationale supporting why we should use Parasuraman et al.'s SERVQUAL Model within one research field. The purpose of this research study was to evaluate the applicability of these three theoretical models to the specific context of hygiene products marketed to the business-to-business (B2B) sectors of the Central Indian provinces. The results demonstrate that all three of these models retain their theoretical explanatory power and validity for the area being studied and for use within an emerging market. The high correlation of positive satisfaction with repeat purchases supports the foundation of EDT; the importance of reliable product delivery supports that reliability is an important factor related to SERVQUAL; and the finding related to quality being more important than price supports Zeithaml's (1988) quality-value model.

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, there are four evidence-informed recommendations that could be implemented by ABC Care, and similar regional B2B suppliers:

Develop a coherent communication strategy with respect to product quality. It is critical that all evidence of product quality (e.g., efficacy data, certification records, performance comparisons) be systematically documented and communicated since quality is one of the main factors driving both purchase decisions and ultimate satisfaction with purchased goods.

Provide value beyond just unit price. Pricing proposals should be revamped to provide a total-cost-of-ownership for each product; total-cost-of-ownership should take into account dilution economies, yield from product use, and operational efficiency, which will assist purchasers in making the best value decisions when evaluating products.

Redesign packaging to meet the needs of institutional users. Packaging must be redesigned to improve ease of use, operational efficiency, and contain clear instructions regarding dilution ratios, labels for batch production, instructions for application, and safety/hazard issues in order to address the packaging adequacy gap which has been identified in previous studies.

Establish sector-specific account management protocols. Service protocols must be developed with respect to how to manage customers by sector; for instance in the hospitality sector, account managers need to focus on developing a relationship with the customer, conducting regular reviews of product performance, and developing formal service-level agreements, with the objective of minimising the risk of customers switching vendors, and converting high levels of customer satisfaction to long-term loyalty.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Several limitations must be considered. First, the limitation of the geographic scope of the study (Bhopal and Indore) suggests the findings may not be applicable to other cities, states, or institutional segments in the market. Second, the use of purposive non-probability sampling may introduce sampling bias which could limit the generalisability of statistical results. Third, the cross-sectional nature of this study does not allow for longitudinal tracking of customer satisfaction and/or purchasing behaviour changes over time (through multiple procurement cycles). Fourth, self-reported data are prone to response bias and social desirability effects. Fifth, and most importantly, the correlational design used in the study has identified associations between the variables studied, but cannot determine the direction of any causal relationship. As this has been reiterated throughout the document, all associations established by the current research should be viewed as descriptive and associative, and not causal.

To address the limitations discussed above there are several potential avenues of future research to consider. For example: 1) To enhance the generalisability of this research and to enable cross-regional comparisons, multi-state random probability samples should be used; 2) To investigate satisfaction dynamics that are inaccessible via cross-sectional studies, » longitudinal panel (longitudinal) designs should be used to follow the satisfaction/switching behaviour of institutional buyers across multiple procurement cycles; 3) To enhance the explanatory precision and to make more accurate inferential conclusions from this research, advanced analytical techniques (e.g. structural equation modelling (SEM) to test concurrently (both directly and indirectly) several pathways, and hierarchical regression to analyse the incremental contributions of each predictor variable) should be applied as opposed to the correlational methods which have been utilised here; and 4). Qualitative follow-up research (based on the previous quantitative methodology) should be conducted in future to verify the degree to which sustainability credentials, digital ordering capabilities and relationship development practices are of importance to institutional buyers.

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