A Study on Retailer Satisfaction and Consumer Buying Behaviour towards Finolex Plasson Products in Tamil Nadu

Dr. R. Ramachandran[1], Mr. C. Vishnu[2]

[1]Assistant Professor, Mepco School of Management Studies, Mepco Schlenk Engineering College, Sivakasi, Tamil Nadu, India.
[2]II MBA Student, Mepco School of Management Studies, Mepco Schlenk Engineering College, Sivakasi, Tamil Nadu, India.

ABSTRACT

The present research paper focuses on retailer satisfaction and consumer buying behaviour for Finolex Plasson products, a leading brand in India's micro-irrigation industry. With increasing demand for sustainable irrigation solutions, the role of retailers and consumer perception becomes vital. Primary data was collected from 103 retailers using a structured questionnaire. The study was analyzed by using the tools like Frequency Analysis, Chi-Square Tests, and Regression to interpret results. Findings reveal that long-term retailer associations are strongly linked with satisfaction in product quality, while consumer choices are mainly influenced by product durability, trust, and retailer recommendations. Supply chain and promotional factors showed limited impact on satisfaction. The study concludes that maintaining strong retailer relationships and consistent product performance enhances brand loyalty and market presence, especially in rural markets.

Keywords: Retailer Satisfaction, Consumer Behaviour, Finolex Plasson, Agri-Marketing, Micro-Irrigation, Rural Marketing.

1. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the backbone of the Indian economy, employing over half of the country's workforce and contributing significantly to the nation's GDP. Despite this, Indian agriculture faces multiple structural challenges most notably, water scarcity, fragmented landholdings, and the dependence on monsoons. These challenges demand a radical shift from traditional irrigation methods to more efficient, technology driven solutions. Over the last few decades, the agricultural landscape has evolved to embrace micro-irrigation technologies especially drip and sprinkler irrigation systems as a means to enhance water use efficiency and improve crop productivity. The irrigation equipment and plastic piping industry has thus become a vital component of agricultural infrastructure. The use of PVC, CPVC, and HDPE pipes, along with automated and semi-automated irrigation systems, has become common in both commercial and subsistence farming. This transformation is not only driven by innovation but also heavily supported by central and state government schemes, NGOs, and the private sector. With initiatives such as Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY), Har Khet Ko Pani, and Per Drop More Crop, the demand for reliable and efficient irrigation products has surged in recent years. In parallel, Indian consumers especially in rural and semi-urban areas are becoming increasingly informed and quality-conscious. Their purchasing behaviour is influenced by multiple factors such as product performance, peer recommendations, retailer opinions, and post-sale service. Similarly, retailers have evolved from merely selling products to becoming influencers and advisors who guide consumer decisions. In rural markets, they are often seen as experts and play a pivotal role in shaping consumer perceptions of a brand. In the evolving landscape of India's agriculture and irrigation sector,

companies are increasingly recognizing the need to focus not just on product quality and innovation, but also on channel effectiveness and end-user satisfaction. A well-functioning and loyal distribution channel particularly retailers is fundamental for reaching rural and semi-urban consumers. At the same time, the buying behaviour of consumers, especially farmers and agriculturists who are the end-users of irrigation products, is shaped by numerous social, economic, psychological, and environmental factors. This dual dynamic of retailer influence and consumer behaviour is the core of this study. Finolex Plasson Pvt. Ltd. is a leading player in the micro-irrigation and water management space in India. The company is known for manufacturing high-quality drip irrigation systems, pipes, fittings, emitters, valves, and accessories, which are critical to sustainable water usage in agriculture. Its wide product range is complemented by a strong presence in rural markets through an extensive retail network. However, despite its technical excellence and established brand name, the success of Finolex Plasson is ultimately tied to how effectively it serves its retailers and consumers the two most crucial links in its value chain. Retailers act as the face of the brand at the ground level. They are not merely intermediaries, but influencers, problem-solvers, and first-line support for customers. Conversely, lack of support, delayed deliveries, inadequate profit margins, or poor after-sales coordination can lead retailers to switch brand preferences or reduce their engagement with the company. This can have a direct negative impact on sales, customer retention, and market share. On the consumer side, particularly among small and medium-scale farmers, buying behaviour is heavily influenced by perceptions of quality, pricing, durability, retailer recommendations, and availability of after-sales service. For a farmer investing in micro-irrigation products, the purchase is not a small decision. It involves a financial commitment with long-term implications. Thus, consumer decisions are shaped by practical experience, peer suggestions, government subsidy schemes, perceived value for money, and confidence in the retailer or brand representative.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies highlight the significance of distributor and retailer satisfaction in irrigation marketing.

Kasar, U. S. (2023) focuses on evaluating the satisfaction levels of distributors and service engineers in drip irrigation companies, particularly regarding their marketing mix. Recognizing the importance of customer satisfaction post-sale, the research aims to understand expectations for product and service improvements. The findings offer insights into satisfaction levels and expectations, which can be useful for similar studies in other regions or for other agriculture-based companies.

Ravikumar, R. (2018) examines brand preference in drip irrigation systems among coconut farmers in Pollachi taluk, Coimbatore, where coconut cultivation dominates. Data from 100 randomly selected coconut farmers was analyzed using various statistical tools. Key findings revealed that water saving and labor cost reduction were primary reasons for adopting drip systems. Factors like sales executive response, promotions, peer influence, quality, and price influenced brand preference. Additionally, awareness of advanced systems like subsurface and inline drip is low, and no adoption of automation technology was observed.

Kewat, R. K. (2017) conducted during 70-day in-plant training at Netafim Irrigation India Pvt. Ltd. in Bemetara district, Chhattisgarh, focusing on market share, market potential, and customer satisfaction. Objectives included analyzing farmer perceptions, company performance, and conducting a SWOT analysis. Data was collected from dealers and farmers using pre-tested questionnaires. 20 Netafim, a global leader in micro-irrigation, is known for quality products and social initiatives. The study found growing demand for irrigation

products, with farmers preferring reliable suppliers. Customer satisfaction and market potential were assessed using a 5-point rating scale.

Praveenraj, D. W. (2016) explores brand preference in drip irrigation systems among farmers in Coimbatore district, focusing on how to increase food production with less water use. Data from 100 randomly selected farmers was analyzed using various statistical methods. Key factors influencing adoption were water saving and labour cost reduction. Major determinants of brand preference included sales response, promotions, peer influence, product quality, and price. Farmers were satisfied with pricing, spare parts availability, and government subsidies, but dissatisfied with after-sales service.

Rowell, B., & Soe, M. L. (2015) explores Drip irrigation, known for its efficiency and high yields, is widely used in developed countries but remains costly and unfamiliar in Southeast Asia. To support small farmers, the NGO International Development Enterprises (IDE) introduced low cost, gravity-fed drip systems in Myanmar starting in 2006. These systems used low pressure, were adapted for local conditions, and supported with educational materials and farmer training.

Waldron, R. C., Presson, C. R., & Plaskett, J. L. (2019) focuses on refining a gravity-fed drip irrigation system for small-scale applications like raised garden beds. Sponsored by Tina Creel, the project aims to improve the tank support system and water supply to the existing piping, excluding changes to the tank, bed, or piping. Key specifications include load capacity, dimensions, leak prevention, durability, and ease of assembly. Multiple design concepts were evaluated to select the best option. The report outlines the research, design development, manufacturing process, and prototype testing results.

Vos, J. (2016) explores the agricultural exports have significantly increased, but this growth has led to environmental issues such as water depletion and pollution. In response, global retailers and agribusinesses introduced water stewardship standards (e.g., Global GAP, BCI, RTSB), promoting technologies like drip irrigation for efficiency. However, these standards are set by Global North corporations, often lack effective monitoring, and exclude smallholders who cannot afford certification or technology.

Avrigean, E., & Grecu, V. (2014) investigates challenges in welding polyethylene pipe and fittings by collecting insights from certified welders, technicians, and supervisors involved in the process. It highlights that welding conditions, such as ambient temperature, can impact the quality and strength of welded joints, emphasizing the importance of proper techniques and environmental control to prevent failures.

Shah, T., & Keller, J. (2014) explains that although micro-irrigation technologies like drip and sprinkler systems were developed in Israel in the 1960s and are well-suited for water-scarce regions like western and southern India, their adoption in India has been limited. As of now, only about 60,000 hectares use drip irrigation, mostly in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka, despite having a potential of 145 million hectares. These systems have proven successful for crops like grapes, oranges, coconuts, and mulberry. However, widespread adoption is hindered by perceptions of high initial costs, complex maintenance, and the need for skilled labor and technical knowledge, making them more popular among large or well-off farmers rather than smallholders.

Bhamoriya, V., & Mathew, S. (2014) expresses a deep gratitude to Indian farmers and agri-input partners for their contributions and cooperation. It acknowledges their efforts in experimenting with micro-irrigation technology and sharing valuable insights. Additional appreciation goes to supply chain stakeholders and research assistants who supported the study's successful execution and completion.

This study builds upon prior research by focusing specifically on the dual relationship between retailer satisfaction and consumer behaviour for Finolex Plasson.

Research Objectives

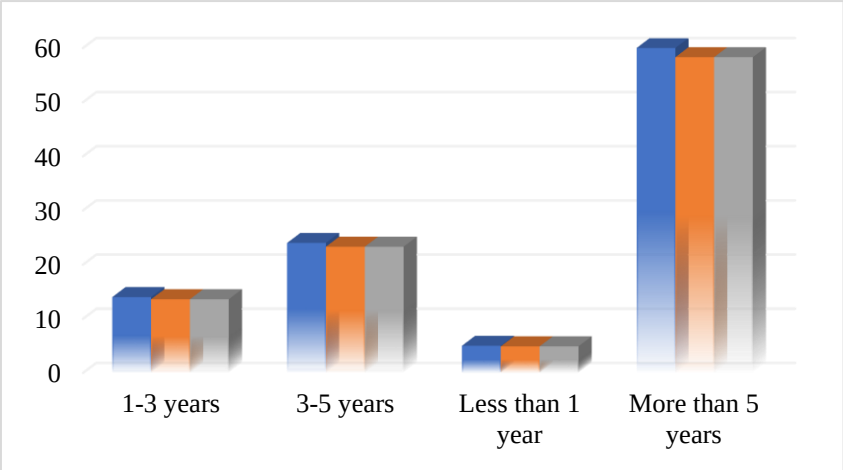
- To analyze the level of satisfaction among retailers dealing in Finolex Plasson products and understand the key factors influencing consumer buying behaviour.
- To assess retailer satisfaction regarding profit margins, pricing strategies, and promotional support provided by the company.
- To study the quality of after-sales service and support experienced by retailers.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of Finolex Plasson's supply chain and product availability from the retailer's perspective.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- **Type of Research Design:** This study adopts a descriptive research design.
- **Type of Data used:** Primary data was collected from 103 authorized retailers dealing with Finolex Plasson products.
- **Data Collection Instrument:** Structured Questionnaire
- **Sampling Method:** Convenience Sampling.
- **Statistical tools Used:** Frequency, Chi-Square, and Regression analysis were employed to determine relationships between experience, satisfaction, and perceptions.

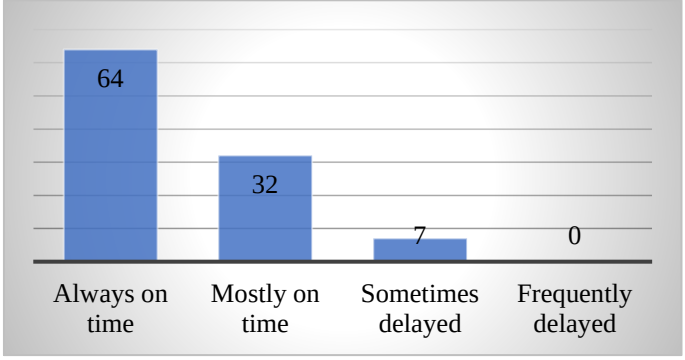
Data Analysis & Intrepretation:

Years of Selling Finolex Plasson Products



Inference: The majority of respondents (58.3%) have sold Finolex Plasson products for more than 5 years, reflecting trust and long-term engagement.

The Deliveries from the Company/Distributor



Inference: From the above diagram, Over 62.1% of respondents report timely deliveries, highlighting strong logistics and supply chain performance. Followed 31.1% retailers meet with Mostly on Time. 6.8% retailers meet with Sometimes Delayed.

Table 1. The Level of Satisfaction among Retailers

S. No	Product Factors	Significance	Null Hypothesis	Interpretation
1	Satisfied with the overall quality of Finolex Plasson products.	0.039	Rejected	There is a significant relationship between years of selling and satisfaction with product quality.
2	Consumers often mention product quality as a reason for choosing Finolex Plasson.	0.234	Accepted	No significant association.
3	Customers are satisfied with the durability of Finolex Plasson products.	0.134	Accepted	No significant association.
4	Finolex Plasson products are widely recognized and trusted by consumers.	0.078	Accepted	No significant association.
5	Consumers are influenced by promotions while choosing Finolex Plasson.	0.222	Accepted	No significant association.

Inference: Chi-square analysis revealed a significant relationship between experience and satisfaction with product quality ($p = 0.039$). This suggests that experience (years of selling) is positively influencing retailers' satisfaction with product quality. Other consumer behavior factors (like trust, durability, and promotional influence) do not significantly vary based on the retailer's years of experience.

Table 2. Supply Chain and Product Availability

Particulars	Unstandardized Coefficients		Significance value	Null Hypothesis
	B	Std. Error		
Constant	3.659	0.497		
Finolex Plasson products are readily available when needed.	0.035	0.089	0.694	Accepted
Deliveries are timely and consistent.	0.009	0.086	0.918	Accepted
The company's order and inventory management process is smooth.	0.066	0.087	0.448	Accepted
The supply chain process supports my retail operations effectively.	0.151	0.079	0.059	Accepted
Discounts and promotions influence my decision to buy green products over	0.007	0.052	0.899	Accepted

conventional ones.				

Inference: Regression results indicated that supply chain factors had limited predictive power on satisfaction. The findings confirm that product quality and brand reputation drive retailer satisfaction and consumer preference more than promotional efforts.

4. CONCLUSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This study reveals that retailer satisfaction is strongly driven by product quality and long-term brand engagement. The findings revealed that experienced retailers stated that Finolex Plasson as a reliable brand with trustworthy products and strong market recognition. While delivery efficiency and product availability are important, they currently play a supportive rather than dominant role in shaping retailer satisfaction. Retailers prefer comprehensive irrigation solutions, favoring bundled products over standalone offerings. Although promotional schemes and after-sales support are part of the value proposition, they show limited impact on satisfaction when isolated. The success of Finolex Plasson in rural and semi-urban markets hinges on deepening its engagement with long-term retailers, maintaining product excellence, and fine-tuning its marketing and service strategies to align with market feedback. This will ensure sustained loyalty and enhance its competitive edge in India's evolving agri tech landscape.

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