

# QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW GUIDE B2B

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## Description

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## Update

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## Validation

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## Objectives

- Know the use and purchasing practices of plumbers and heating engineers
- Confirm if plumber/heating engineer = 1 trade or 2 separate trades

## The research of the existing literature

The activity of a plumber falls within the typology of "low involvement" activities that define the emotional process at work in the buyer. Although mainly applied to the B2C domain, we propose a new reading of this dichotomous reading of purchasing and satisfaction by applying it to B2B. The reasons are as follows:

- The lack of perceived differentiation of a product or service could lead to a non-reflective purchase on the part of the professional, bringing into play mechanisms based on habit (cerebellum) rather than reason (cerebrum)
- The absence of added value for the final customer could, by using product X rather than product Y, justify a non-reflective purchase mechanism

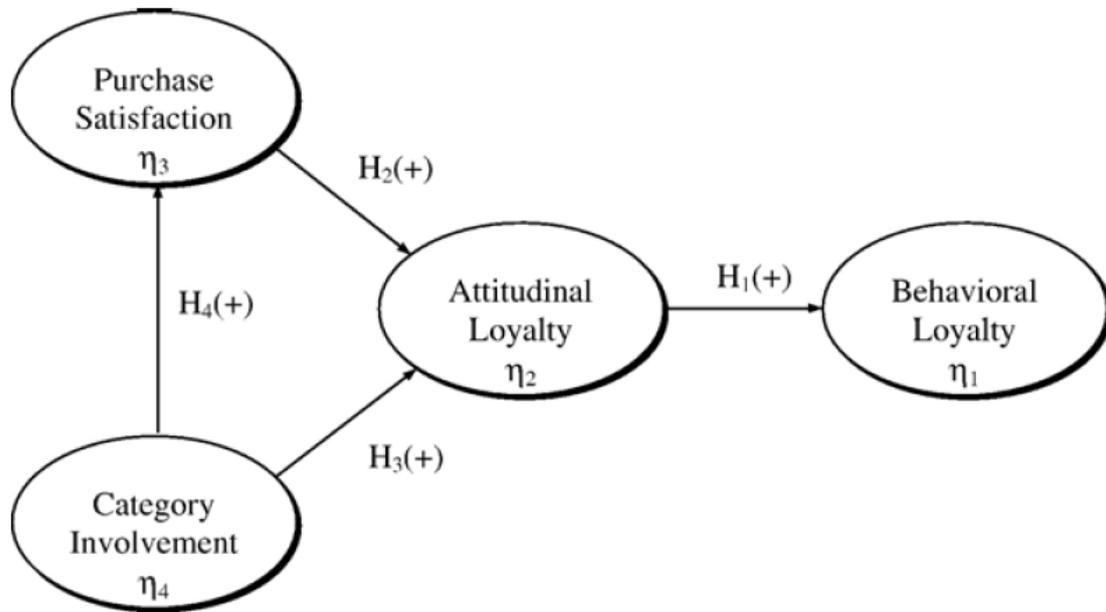
The academic literature is full of works on decision-making processes within small structures (see in particular the work of Gilmore A.). In this respect, it seems appropriate to us to approach the interviews more globally by considering the axis of the underlying "business processes," informal most of the time, and yet determining the purchasing patterns. The work of Russell-Bennett et al. (2007) on loyalty in a B2B context seems particularly relevant to us. The model proposed by the authors combines elements from the literature on small companies with attitudinal components (category involvement) that link with the literature on B2C purchasing behavior.

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This model teaches us that particular characteristic of the purchasing chain should be sought in the interviews:

- The role of the wholesaler or retailer from whom the professional buys: advice, duration of the relationship, type of relationship, loyalty to the sales outlet, and possible episodes of infidelity
- The cognitive effort that is/was realized for the choice of the product used or the choice of a brand
- Satisfaction with the brand used and possible points of comparison, episodes of infidelity to the brand
- Does satisfaction with the retailer take precedence over the satisfaction with the product?

The assessment of these three constructs taken individually would then make it possible to evaluate the probability of switching to another brand and the likely characteristics of the product to put forward to simplify this switch. As the authors point out:

*« When business customers are involved with a product, they are more likely to be satisfied with the outcome. This may become an issue for purchases that become habitual and automated over time, such as straight rebuys. In this case, as the involvement level decreases with the habitual nature of the purchase, the level of satisfaction may also decrease. If the satisfaction levels reach a point of less than optimal, this may be a trigger for the consumer to seek alternatives or try alternative suppliers».*

It, therefore, seems essential to us to look for this point of no return in the interviewee, as long as the sample size allows us to find a respondent who has already reached it.

## **Approach strategy for interviews**

We have included two specific techniques in the interview guide:

- Funnel" approach: we start from the broadest framework and gradually narrow it down to more specific themes
- Emotional elicitation: based on the CIT technique (Critical Incident Technique), we propose investigating the possible "accidents" that have impacted satisfaction with the product implemented.

## 1. THE GLOBAL FRAMEWORK

Can you describe your activity to me? (start by defining the context in a very general way to give the interviewee confidence and confirm the products implemented)

What interventions do you realize most frequently? (Possibly ask the question of the breakdown in % if open, and explore the question of maintenance contracts and their place in the respondent's business)

Do the same personnel realize plumbing/heating interventions? (Investigate then the reasons: difference or not in terms of personnel qualifications, facilities for planning interventions)

Do you see a difference between interventions for individuals and those for companies? Do you favor one segment over the other? Why or why not?

We will tackle the main subject of this interview, that of the consumables that you use in your activity. By consumables, we mean:

- PVC glues / socket paste
- Sealing threaded connections for drinking water/sanitary water pipes (jointing paste + filasse, Teflon tape, anaerobic resin, etc.)
- Soldering (flux stripper, filler metals ...)
- Sanitary sealants and silicones
- Maintenance products for heating circuits (descaling agent, de-sludging agent, antifreeze, inhibitor, biocide...)

What raw materials/consumables do you need to purchase in your business? What is the budget for a typical job? (If the respondent cannot answer the budget questions, ask, "why do you think you cannot answer these questions?")

Are any consumables vital to you? (first involvement check)

Why are they important? What would happen if the quality of one of these consumables was not up to par?

Has this ever happened to you? (CIT if yes, ask to recount the episode) Has this caused you to change your purchasing habits?

## 2. PROCUREMENT PROCESS

How do you purchase the consumables you use? (explore here the place close or not to the building sites, the "approvals" of the product, i.e., its suitability for a particular implementation, for example, in contact with drinking water, the online/offline purchasing processes with delivery or not (+ the name of the webshops), the links with the suppliers, the seniority of the relation, possible infidelities to the supplier/wholesaler, preferred brands, preferred packaging and the reason for this choice, changes due to promotions, time of purchase during the day/frequency, type of packaging and why, anticipation or not of the needs (order or not, therefore better-regulated purchasing process).

The following question is only asked if the price criterion is mentioned directly by the respondent: Do you always buy the cheapest products? Why or why not? Can you give me the price of some of your business's most commonly used products? (e.g., PVC glue, sealant, or silicones)

Are you attached to any particular brand? Do you remember how you came to use this brand (in this question, we will explore the possible objective motivations of purchase like price, amenities, packaging, ...)

Have you changed your buying habits in the last few years? (if yes, explore, if no, test the sensitivity to environmental problems, ecology, the danger of the products)

Do you get information before choosing a new product? (media, internet, explore possible subscriptions) Are you more interested in some information than others?

Can you describe your last visit to a sales outlet for a material purchase? (Limit the question to the material, if necessary, explore habits (+ ask for the name of stores where the respondent usually buys), orientation in the aisles, the persistence of POS-type information, or possible promotions.

Have you ever had to travel a distance that you consider to be important to buy your products? (CIT: not sure if this question is appropriate. Alternatively, test "have you ever had to take a break in your shopping habits?") Can you tell me about the occasion? (explore the distance traveled, the reason, ...)

Do you plan your purchases of raw materials? (I would like to explore possible changes in offline vs. online purchasing habits (if yes, change for which brand or webshop?), check the quantities purchased, if there are habits in terms of the time of day, quantities purchased, and if these quantities depend on a particular factor such as available space)

### 3. THE SEQUENCE OF AN INTERVENTION / THE DAILY WORK

Can you tell me about a specific request/intervention? How does it happen? (check that the request is in the segment identified above, i.e., B2B or B2C)

Do the interventions realized on new installations differ from those realized on a renovation? Do you see any differences in the techniques and materials used?

Materials to be mentioned if nothing comes spontaneously PER, Multi-layer, PVC - U, PVC-C, ABS, Soft PVC, Copper, Cast iron, Galvanized steel

Techniques to mention if nothing comes spontaneously: Crimping, Gluing, Fitting, Welding, Screwing

Do you ever use the following products?

(by reviewing the products below, the scope of the next question will be reduced)

When you think of the products you use, what brand comes to mind?

Can you tell me what this brand means to you? Does it evoke a particular memory?

#### 4. THE ROLE OF PACKAGING IN THE PURCHASE PROCESS

Among the types of products mentioned above, have you recently repurchased any of them?

- If yes, what image do you keep of the packaging?
- If not, do you remember a particular packaging among the products you use?

#### 5. PRACTICAL TESTING PHASE

##### a. Recall of packaging information

principle: show packaging for 5 seconds and ask what the respondent remembers about it.

=> For 5 respondents : PRODUCT 1, PRODUCT 2, PRODUCT 3

=> For 5 respondents: PRODUCT 4, PRODUCT 5, PRODUCT 6

##### b. Exploration of the information sought

**Principle:** show several packagings of the same product category for x seconds and ask the respondent to explain the information they are looking for and retains (in particular, we will explore the search for information on product amenities, information that the respondent associates with differentiation or value criterion)

=> For 5 respondents: PRODUCT 7, PRODUCT 8, PRODUCT 9

=> For 5 respondents: PRODUCT 10, PRODUCT 11, PRODUCT 12

##### c. Pricing

**Principle:** show several packages of the same product category and ask the respondent to rank them according to an increasing price scale. Ensure that the containers have the same capacity so that only the perceived intrinsic value is measured.

Would they be willing to buy it if the respondent ranks [CUSTOMER PRODUCT] (usually an unknown brand) as one of the most expensive products? Ask the respondent to explain their ranking (do they know the products and prices? is it a judgment only on the packaging, the brand image...)