A STUDY ON BRAND PREFERENCE BY CUSTOMERS AND DEALERS OF CEMENT INDUSTRY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CHENNAI REGION

Dewan Hameed P M[1], Dr. A. Govindarajan[2]

[1]MBA Student, Measi Institute Of Management, Chennai, India.

[2]Assisstant Professor - Measi Institute Of Management, Chennai, India.

ABSTRACT

Cement is one of the important building components used worldwide and it has become a brand in its own right. Cement was first invented by the Egyptians. It was later reinvented by the Greeks and Romans sand and heated limestone were used to create lime, which was then mixed coarser stones to make mortar. The aim of the paper is to find out the factors influencing the buying behaviour of consumer, awareness level of consumer, brand preference, problem faced by consumer and their satisfaction level. The study concludes the majority of consumer preferring the quality of the cement, Consumer satisfaction helps to increase brand equity. The major problem faced by the consumer is to find preferable brand of cement and its non-availability of cement.

Keywords: Buying behaviour, Preference, Awareness level, Performance, Satisfaction level.

1. INTRODUCTION

The cement industry in India is one of the oldest and largest in the world, dating back to the early 1900s. The cement industry in India is predominantly located in the western and southern parts of the country, with major production centres in states like Gujarat, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu.

The industry is dominated by a few large players, including UltraTech Cement, ACC Limited, India Cements and Shree Cement which are the best among others. The growth of the cement industry in India can be attributed to various factors, including the country's robust economic growth, rising urbanization, and the government's emphasis on infrastructure development.

The industry has also benefited from advancements in technology, increased efficiency in production processes, and the availability of raw materials such as limestone and gypsum. The cement industry in India faces several challenges, including the high cost of production, fluctuating demand, and environmental concerns related to emissions and waste disposal.

2. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to investigate brand preference and customer satisfaction in the cement industry, focusing on the manufacturing sector and potentially including related construction materials.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the factor influencing the buying behaviour of cement.

2. To study the awareness level of consumers towards the product.

3. To study the respondent's preference towards the product.

4. To analyse the problem faced by the respondent even as using branded cements.

5. To identify the satisfaction level of consumers in purchase of cement.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

T. Anitha (2023) stated that Cement is one of the essential building materials, is a binding agent that sets and hardens to adhere to various building materials, including bricks, tiles, and stones. With a capacity of about 565 million tons, India is the world's second-largest manufacturer of cement. By 2025, it is anticipated that the production will reach 600 million tons.

Bhavik U. Swadia (2017) in his study has described that just after China but ahead of the US and Japan, the Indian cement industry is the world's second largest manufacturer of cement. In any event, when compared to global averages, per capita production and consumption are low.

Vigneshwar Mekha (2017) mentioned in his study that the Indian Cement Industry (ICI) currently has the most advanced cement facilities using the newest technologies dispersed throughout the nation from east to west and north to south.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology involves specific techniques that are adopted in research process to collect, assemble and evaluate data. It defines those tools that are used to gather relevant information in a specific research study. Surveys, questionnaires and interviews are the common tools of research. An optimum sample may be defined as the one that satisfies the requirements of representativeness, flexibility, efficiency, and reliability. A sample size of 85 respondents were taken for the study. A pilot study was conducted by pre-testing the questionnaire with 20 respondents. The target respondents are the organizations that are involved in cement purchasing.

Limitations of the study:

The study may focus on specific regions, limiting the generalizability of the findings across different markets. A small or non-representative sample may affect the reliability of the results. Consumer preferences and satisfaction are subjective, leading to variability in responses. Data collected may reflect only a specific time period, overlooking trends and changes over time.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The reliability statistics revealed that the data is consistent and reliable

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.719	15

- The study shows the reasons for the largest purchase, as reported by the respondents. The most common reason is profit (39%) followed by supply (34%) and customer enquiry (23%). Exclusivity (4%) is the least common reason for the largest purchase.

- The study shows the number of customers asking for different brands of cement. The brand that is most popular among customers is Ultratech (38%), with a significantly higher number of inquiries compared to the other brands. Chettinad (7%) and Dalmia (7%) have the lowest number of inquiries.

- The study shows the brand image of different cement brands among engineers. The brand with the highest perceived brand image among engineers is Ultratech (50%), with a significantly higher number of positive responses compared to the other brands. Chettinad (5%) and Dalmia (5%) have the lowest perceived brand image among engineers.

- The study shows the factors that influence brand choice among respondents. The most influential factor is advertisement (36%), followed by the recommendations from masons and engineers (22%) and from shop owners (22%). Friends (20%) have the least influence on brand choice.

- The study shows how the demand for cement has changed over the past year. The majority of respondents (around 55%) have seen an increase in demand for cement, while a smaller percentage (around 15%) have seen a decrease. About 20% of respondents have seen the demand for cement remain relatively stable.

- The study shows the current market trends affecting the cement industry. The most significant trend identified by respondents is price fluctuations (52%), followed by regulatory changes (25%) and technological advancements (23%).

- The study shows the types of projects that customers are involved in. The most common type of project is residential (60%), followed by commercial (29%) and industrial projects (11%).

- The study shows the factors that customers prioritize when purchasing cement. The most important factor for customers is the Quality (68%) of the cement, followed by Brand reputation (16%). Delivery time (4%) and price (12%) are less important factors for customers.

6. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Factors	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Performance	2.6824	.67280	85
Awareness level	1.7576	.39412	85
Preference	1.4863	.31936	85
Satisfaction level	1.5353	.41395	85

ANOVA						
Factors		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Performance	Between Groups	1.256	4	.314	.683	.606
	Within Groups	36.768	80	.460		
	Total	38.024	84			
Awareness level	Between Groups	.370	4	.092	.584	.675
	Within Groups	12.678	80	.158		
	Total	13.048	84			
Preference	Between Groups	1.273	4	.318	3.491	.011
	Within Groups	7.294	80	.091		
	Total	8.567	84			

- The Descriptive analysis and ANOVA results provide statistical insights. Descriptive test shows the mean difference between the variables, while ANOVA suggests there is a significant difference among the group. The cautionary note on the tests emphasizes potential limitations due to low expected counts.

7. CONCLUSION

The cement market shows a dynamic landscape with strong competition among key players. Price fluctuations and quality considerations are primary drivers of customer decision-making. Technological advancements and regulatory changes are shaping the future of the industry. Companies that can balance quality, price stability, and efficient delivery are likely to maintain a competitive edge in this market.

The study on brand preference and customer satisfaction in the cement industry reveals the critical interplay between consumer choices and company strategies in a sector that significantly impacts economic growth and infrastructure development. Given the robust growth of the Indian cement market, driven by urbanization and government initiatives, understanding the nuances of consumer behaviour is essential for cement manufacturers to maintain a competitive edge.

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