

# Consumer Buying Behaviour Towards Cement: A Study of Brand Preferences and Purchase Decisions.

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## ❖ Abstract

The consumption of cement in India has increased due to rapid urbanization, infrastructure development, and rising construction activities. Consumers evaluate various parameters before choosing a cement brand, including price, quality, availability, brand image, dealer influence, and recommendations from contractors/engineers. This research investigates consumer buying behaviour towards cement, focusing on brand preference, purchase determinants, and decision-making patterns. The findings indicate that brand reputation, quality, and price are the dominant factors affecting purchase decisions, while promotional activities and advertisements have a moderate influence. The study concludes with suggestions to manufacturers for improving customer satisfaction and strengthening market competitiveness.

**Keywords:** Consumer Behaviour, Cement Industry, Brand Preference, Purchase Decision, Customer Satisfaction, Marketing Strategies.

## 1. Introduction

The cement industry plays a vital role in the development of infrastructure and housing, making it a key driver of economic growth. Consumers purchasing cement display different behavioral patterns than buyers of conventional FMCG goods due to the technical nature, long-term performance expectation, and involvement of expert opinion (contractor/engineer). Unlike routine purchases, cement buying decisions are influenced by perceived product quality, strength, durability, price stability, and after-sales support.

This study attempts to analyze the factors influencing brand preference, reasons behind consumer loyalty towards certain cement brands, and the role of intermediaries such as dealers and contractors in shaping purchasing decisions.

Consumer buying behaviour is a complex phenomenon influenced by various personal, psychological, social, and cultural factors. In the construction industry, especially concerning cement a product not frequently bought by individual consumers brand preferences and purchasing decisions still play a significant role.

As India's infrastructure and real estate sectors grow, so does the competition among cement brands. Understanding what influences a consumer to prefer one brand over another is crucial for manufacturers, retailers, and policy makers alike.

Despite similarities in core properties, brand perception significantly influences purchasing decisions. Some brands are perceived as premium, offering higher quality and durability, while others are viewed as more affordable or better suited for mass construction projects.

Understanding the perception of individual buyers (house owners), institutional buyers (companies), and builders (contractors/developers) is essential for cement manufacturers to sustain and grow in a competitive marketplace.

The cement industry is a significant sector in the construction industry, with various brands competing for market share. Understanding consumer buying behaviour towards cement is crucial for manufacturers to develop effective marketing strategies and improve brand loyalty.

Unlike fast-moving consumer goods, cement buying behaviour is influenced by a different set of parameters such as durability, compressive strength, price, brand reputation, availability, and recommendations from professionals. In many cases, the decision-makers are not the end users, but intermediaries like contractors or engineers. With increasing competition and branding efforts by cement manufacturers, it is important to investigate how brand preferences are formed and what factors significantly influence the purchase decisions.

## ❖ Literature Review

- 1.Consumer buying behaviour refers to the selection, acquisition, and consumption of goods to satisfy needs and desires (Kotler & Keller, 2016)
2. In industrial products like cement, emotional buying is limited while rational evaluation plays a stronger role (Singh, 2019).
- 3.Research by Sharma (2020) noted that consumers primarily select cement based on compressive strength, brand trust, and expert guidance.
- 4.Kotler & Keller (2016) describe consumer behaviour as the process by which individuals select, purchase, use, and dispose of goods and services to satisfy their needs. In industrial goods like cement, the decision is highly rational, price-sensitive, and influenced by brand reputation.

### 5.Brand Preference in Cement Industry

Studies (Ramaswamy & Namakumari, 2017) highlight that brand loyalty in cement is driven by perceived quality, durability, and trust in the brand. Builders and contractors often influence individual customers, making brand preference more of a collective decision.

### 6.Factors Influencing Purchase Decisions

Research by Sheth et al. (2018) indicates that price, availability, brand image, dealer influence, technical specifications, and after-sales service are key determinants of cement purchase. For rural buyers, word-of-mouth and dealer recommendations play a larger role, while urban buyers focus more on brand value.

### 7.Role of Marketing and Promotion

According to Gupta (2019), promotional activities such as advertisements, free samples, dealer discounts, and brand ambassadors significantly impact consumer perception, though long-term demand is sustained by performance consistency.

### 8.Consumer Segments in Cement Buying

Literature differentiates between individual house builders, institutional buyers, and contractors. Individual buyers are more price-sensitive, while contractors and companies emphasize technical quality and bulk purchase benefits (Kumar & Jain, 2020).

### 9.Emerging Trends

Recent studies suggest an increasing focus on eco-friendly cement, supply chain efficiency, and digital marketing as new factors influencing consumer preferences (Sharma, 2021)

## ❖ Identification of Gaps

While numerous studies have explored consumer behaviour in the context of fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), electronics, automobiles, and real estate, relatively limited research has been conducted on consumer buying behaviour in the cement industry, especially from the perspective of individual home builders and end-users. Cement, despite being a critical input in construction, is often considered a low-involvement and technical product, and much of the existing literature focuses on production, supply chain, or pricing rather than the behavioural drivers of purchase.

### 1. Lack of consumer-centric studies in the cement sector:

Most existing studies emphasize industrial buyers or B2B transactions, ignoring B2C dynamics such as individual home builders, who form a significant portion of the demand in emerging and developing markets.

### 2. Insufficient understanding of brand preference factors:

There is a limited understanding of what drives brand preference in cement whether it is quality, price, brand reputation, dealer recommendations, or influence from masons and engineers. The relative importance of these factors remains under-researched.

### 3. Neglected role of influencers in the purchase process:

The impact of intermediaries like contractors, masons, and retailers on consumer decision-making is often overlooked in academic literature, despite anecdotal evidence suggesting their significant influence.

### 4. Scarcity of localized or region-specific insights:

Consumer behaviour can vary significantly based on regional, cultural, and economic factors, but many existing studies generalize findings without examining specific markets or locations.

### 5. Limited exploration of post-purchase behaviour and loyalty:

Few studies have examined whether consumers remain loyal to a cement brand after their first use, or what factors contribute to repeat purchases and brand advocacy in the cement segment.

### 6. Minimal integration of behavioural theories in cement buying studies.

Most available literature lacks application of consumer behaviour models or psychological theories that could better explain the motivations and attitudes behind cement purchase decisions.

## ❖ Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the key factors that influence consumers' choice of cement brands, such as price, quality, availability, brand image, and promotional activities.

2. To assess the role of brand preference in the overall consumer decision-making process when purchasing cement.

3. To examine the impact of influencers (such as contractors, masons, engineers, and retailers) on consumers' cement brand choices.

4. To evaluate consumer awareness and perception of different cement brands available in the market.

5. To study the extent of brand loyalty among consumers and the factors contributing to repeat purchases of a particular cement brand.

6. To provide strategic recommendations for cement companies to enhance brand positioning, customer satisfaction, and market competitiveness based on consumer insights.

## ❖ Hypothesis

### 1. Price Factor

$H_{01}$ : Price has no significant influence on consumer brand preference for cement.

$H_{11}$ : Price has a significant influence on consumer brand preference for cement.

### 2. Quality Factor

$H_{02}$ : Perceived quality does not significantly affect purchase decisions of consumers towards cement brands.

$H_{12}$ : Perceived quality significantly affects purchase decisions of consumers towards cement brands.

### 3. Dealer/Influencer Role

$H_{03}$ : Dealer/distributor recommendations have no significant impact on consumer brand preference for cement.

$H_{13}$ : Dealer/distributor recommendations significantly impact consumer brand preference for cement.

### 4. Brand Image/Trust

$H_{04}$ : Brand image and reputation do not significantly influence consumer buying behaviour towards cement.

$H_{14}$ : Brand image and reputation significantly influence consumer buying behaviour towards cement.

### 5. Availability/Accessibility

$H_{05}$ : Product availability does not significantly influence purchase decisions of consumers.

$H_{15}$ : Product availability significantly influences purchase decisions of consumers.

## ❖ Research Methodology

### Research Design

This study follows a Descriptive Research Design, which is suitable for examining the characteristics, preferences, and decision-making behaviours of consumers in the cement industry. The goal is to gather detailed information on the factors that influence brand preference and purchase decisions without manipulating the environment.

### Sources of Data Collection

**Primary:** Structured questionnaire with Individuals, dealers, contractors.

**Secondary:** Collected from industry reports, academic journals, company brochures, and market research studies to support primary findings and provide context.

### Sampling Technique

The study employs a non-probability sampling method, specifically:

**Purposive Sampling:** To intentionally select individuals who are directly involved in the purchase or recommendation of cement (e.g., home builders, masons, dealers).

**Snowball Sampling:** Used to identify additional respondents through referrals, particularly useful for reaching masons, contractors, and construction professionals.

### Sample Size

15 respondents

10 Individuals

5 Dealers

### Sample Area: Amravati Region

#### ❖ Secondary Data Collection

For the study titled "**Consumer Buying Behaviour Towards Cement: A Study of Brand Preferences and Purchase Decisions**," secondary data has been collected from various reliable and published sources. These sources include government reports, company publications, industry analysis reports, journals, and online platforms. The purpose of collecting secondary data is to understand consumer behaviour patterns, brand preferences, pricing strategies, and factors influencing purchase decisions in the cement market.

### 1. Government & Institutional Sources

Source/Institution	Type of Data Used
Ministry of Commerce & Industry (Government of India)	Production, demand, price trends, consumption statistics
Cement Manufacturers' Association (CMA) Reports	Market share, industry growth, sales trends
Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)	Cement quality grades (OPC, PPC, PSC), standards & specifications
RBI Annual & Economic Reports	Investment in construction sector and market performance

### 2. Industry & Market Reports

Source	Purpose / Data Used
India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF)	Overall cement industry profile and market expansion data
CRISIL / CARE Ratings / Statista Reports	Consumer preference trends, pricing comparison, competitor analysis
FICCI & CII Construction Reports	Demand behaviour patterns, contractor/engineer influence

### 3. Company & Brand-Based Sources

Brand/Company	Data Collected
UltraTech Cement Annual Reports	Marketing strategies, distribution network, sales growth
Ambuja, ACC, Shree Cement, Dalmia, Birla Gold	Product features, pricing policy, promotional strategies

Company Websites &amp; Product Catalogues

Product grades, packaging details, product advantages

#### 4. Research Journals & Publications

Source	Data Used For
Indian Journal of Marketing	Consumer brand preference and marketing strategy models
International Journal of Commerce & Management	Customer behaviour and purchase decision concepts
Shodhganga, ResearchGate, Google Scholar	Review of previous studies for literature support

#### 5. Online Retail & Market Platforms

Source	Data Collected
E-commerce platforms (building material portals)	Price variation, availability, delivery & service factors
Retail shops and hardware dealer listings	Market demand trends and local purchase patterns
Construction industry blogs & forums	Influence of masons/engineers/contractors on buying decisions

### ❖ FINDINGS

Based on the secondary data and analysis of consumer buying behaviour towards cement, the following key findings were observed:

#### 1. Price is a Major Decision Factor

Most consumers prefer cement brands that offer reasonable and competitive pricing. Price sensitivity is high, especially among retail buyers and small contractors.

#### 2. Quality and Grade Awareness is Increasing

Consumers, particularly builders and engineers, prefer branded cement due to reliability in strength (OPC 43/53 Grade and PPC). Awareness about BIS-certified cement is noticeably increasing.

#### 3. Brand Image Influences Purchase Decision

Well-established brands like UltraTech, ACC, Ambuja, and Shree Cement are preferred due to strong brand reputation and perceived reliability.

#### 4. Contractors and Masons Play a Big Role

In many cases, purchase decisions are influenced by contractors, masons, and engineers rather than direct consumers. Their recommendations strongly affect brand selection.

#### 5. Distribution and Availability Matters

Consumers prefer brands that are easily available in nearby markets. Delay in supply or lack of stock negatively affects brand loyalty.

## 6. Promotional Activities Impact Customer Choice

Discounts, dealer-level schemes, and incentives provided by companies influence both retailers and customers to shift brand preferences.

## 7. Customer Loyalty is Moderate, Not Very Strong

Loyalty exists, but customers switch brands if better discounts, easy availability, or better quality claims are found.

## ❖ SUGGESTIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following suggestions are recommended for improving consumer satisfaction and brand performance in the cement industry:

### 1. Competitive Pricing Strategy

Cement companies should maintain fair pricing and introduce customer-friendly schemes to retain price-sensitive buyers.

### 2. Quality Assurance Communication

Companies must highlight product quality, strength grades, BIS certification, and technical benefits to build trust among customers.

### 3. Strengthen Distribution Channels

Expanding dealer networks and ensuring consistent supply will help improve local availability and reduce brand switching.

### 4. Contractor & Mason Training Programs

Companies should conduct awareness workshops for contractors, masons, and engineers, as they significantly influence customer decisions.

### 5. Customer Awareness Campaigns

Increase marketing efforts through advertisements, field visits, banners, and digital promotions to educate customers about cement grades and usage.

### 6. Post-Sales Support & Feedback

Companies should provide after-sales support, visit construction sites, collect feedback, and resolve issues to increase customer retention.

### 7. Retailer Incentive Schemes

Attractive commissions and rewards for retailers and dealers can increase product recommendations.

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