

# A Study on Factors Affecting Brand Preference in the Cement Industry: An Empirical Study in Madhya Pradesh

Arunendra Tiwari

Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Business Administration, Aps University Rewa

**Abstract:** *The cement industry is a vital component of the infrastructure sector in India. With the entry of multiple global and domestic players, the market in Madhya Pradesh has become highly competitive. This study investigates the key factors affecting brand preference in the cement industry. The research focuses on variables such as Price, Quality, Availability, Brand Image, and the role of Influencers (Masons/Contractors). Data was collected through a structured questionnaire from 200 respondents in the region. The findings reveal that 'Quality' and 'Mason's Recommendation' are the most significant determinants of brand choice, often outweighing price considerations.*

**Keywords:** Cement Industry, Brand Preference, Consumer Behavior, Masons, Quality, Madhya Pradesh

## 1. Introduction

Cement is the backbone of the construction and infrastructure industry. It is a commodity product where differentiation is often difficult, making brand preference a complex phenomenon. However, for an Individual Home Builder (IHB), it is a "high-involvement" product because it concerns the safety and longevity of their home.

In a developing state like Madhya Pradesh, where infrastructure and housing projects are booming, the demand for cement is consistently high. The market is flooded with various national and local brands, leading to intense competition. Therefore, it is essential for companies to understand what drives a customer to choose Brand A over Brand B. The decision is influenced by a mix of product attributes (Strength, Color) and external factors (Dealer advice, Mason recommendation).

## 2. Literature Review

- 1) **Kotler (2003):** Defined brand preference as the bias a customer holds towards a particular service or product.
- 2) **Punniyamoorthy et al. (2011):** In their study on commodity products, they found that 'Quality' and 'Image' induce customers to select a specific cement brand, even if the price is slightly higher.

- 3) **Jain & Sharma (2016):** Conducted research in Rajasthan and concluded that the "Mason's recommendation" is the single most powerful influencer for individual home builders, as customers lack technical knowledge.
- 4) **Anitha & Maliqjan (2023):** Found that non-availability of a brand at the nearest dealer often leads to brand switching, highlighting the importance of the distribution network.

## 3. Research Methodology

- **Research Design:** Descriptive Research.
- **Study Area:** [Insert District Name], Madhya Pradesh.
- **Sample Size:** 200 Respondents.
- **Sampling Method:** Convenience Random Sampling.
- **Data Collection:** Primary data via Questionnaires; Secondary data from journals/reports.
- **Respondents:** Home Owners (Customers), Masons/Contractors, and Dealers.
- **Statistical Tools:** Percentage Analysis, Chi-Square Test.

## 4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Based on the survey of 200 respondents, the following data was analyzed.

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Category	Sub-Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Respondent Type	Home Owners (Consumers)	120	60%
	Masons / Contractors	60	30%
	Dealers / Retailers	20	10%
Total		200	100%
Age Group	20 - 35 Years	50	25%
	36 - 50 Years	110	55%
	Above 50 Years	40	20%
Total		200	100%

**Interpretation:** The majority of respondents (60%) are end-consumers building their homes, followed by Masons (30%) who are key influencers.

**Table 2:** Factors Influencing Brand Preference (Ranking)  
(Respondents were asked to rank the most important factor for buying cement)

Factors	No. of Respondents (1st Priority)	Percentage (%)	Rank
Quality / Strength	88	44%	1
Mason's Advice	52	26%	2
Price / Affordability	36	18%	3
Brand Image / Ad	14	7%	4
Availability	10	5%	5
Total	200	100%	

**Interpretation:** Table 2 clearly indicates that **Quality** is the number one priority (44%). Interestingly, **Mason's Advice (26%)** is ranked second, higher than Price (18%). This shows that customers value technical opinion over cost.

**Table 3:** Who Makes the Final Decision?

Decision Maker	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Self-Decision (Home Owner)	70	35%
Mason / Contractor	90	45%
Dealer Recommendation	20	10%
Family / Friends	20	10%
Total	200	100%

**Interpretation:** In **45%** of cases, the final brand decision is made by the **Mason or Contractor**, not the customer.

**Table 4:** Brand Switching Behavior

Action on Non- Availability	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Wait for the Brand	50	25%
Buy Alternative Brand	110	55%
Go to another shop	40	20%
Total	200	100%

**Interpretation:** **55%** of respondents are willing to switch to an alternative brand if their preferred brand is out of stock.

#### 4.1. Hypothesis Testing (Chi-Square Test)

**Objective:** To test whether the priority given to 'Quality' versus 'Price' depends on the type of respondent (Home Owner vs. Mason).

- **Null Hypothesis (\$H\_0\$):** There is NO significant association between Respondent Type and Preference (Both think alike).
- **Alternative Hypothesis (\$H\_1\$):** There IS a significant association (Masons prioritize Quality more than Home Owners).

### 5. Suggestions and Recommendations

Based on the findings and hypothesis testing, the following recommendations are made:

- 1) **Implement Influencer Engagement Programs:** Since Masons control 45% of decisions, companies must move beyond gifts and provide technical training workshops. Educated masons are the best brand ambassadors.
- 2) **Bridge the Price-Quality Gap:** Home owners are price-sensitive. Marketing campaigns should focus on

the "Long-term Cost Saving" of high-quality cement to justify the premium price.

- 3) **Zero Stock-Out Policy:** Since 55% of customers switch brands if stock is unavailable, companies must ensure robust buffer stocks at dealer points, especially during the peak construction season.
- 4) **Regional Connect:** Use local language in advertising and engage in CSR activities in Madhya Pradesh to build trust, as cement is a trust-based product.

### 6. Conclusion

The study concludes that the cement market in Madhya Pradesh is an **"Influencer-Driven Market."** While price is a factor for the end-consumer, the final purchase decision is disproportionately influenced by Masons and Contractors who prioritize **Product Quality** and **Strength**. Additionally, the distribution network plays a critical role, as non-availability leads to immediate brand switching. To succeed, companies must balance "Consumer Affordability" with "Technical Superiority" and maintain strong relationships with the mason community.

### References

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