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   REVIEW OF LITERATURE

   NEED/IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

   OBJECTIVES

   HYPOTHESES

   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

   RESULTS & DISCUSSION

   FINDINGS

   RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

   CONCLUSIONS

   SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

   ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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   APPENDIX/ANNEXURE

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BOOKS

- Bowersox, Donald J., Closs, David J., (1996), "Logistical Management." Tata McGraw, Hill, New Delhi.
- Hunker, H.L. and A.J. Wright (1963), "Factors of Industrial Location in Ohio" Ohio State University, Nigeria.

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UNPUBLISHED DISSERTATIONS AND THESES

- Kumar S. (2011): "Customer Value: A Comparative Study of Rural and Urban Customers," Thesis, KurukshetraUniversity, Kurukshetra.

ONLINE RESOURCES

- Always indicate the date that the source was accessed, as online resources are frequently updated or removed.

WEBSITES

- Garg, Bhavet (2011): Towards a New Natural Gas Policy, Political Weekly, Viewed on January 01, 2012 http://epw.in/user/viewabstract.jsp

CEMENT INDUSTRY: SCOPE FOR DIFFERENTIATION

ANIL KUMAR PILLAI
RESEARCH SCHOLAR
DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT
SRM UNIVERSITY
CHENNAI

DR. SHANTHI VENKATESH
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
LOYOLA INSTITUTE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
CHENNAI

ABSTRACT

Indian Cement Industry is the second largest in the world after China. The industry transformed from a seller's market to buyers market in view of the liberalisation in the industry . Cement is generally considered to be a commodity but the number of brands in the Indian Cement industry have increased after total decontrol in 1989 . There has been an attempt by various firms to differentiate the brands on various factors.. This article through literature review in Marketing and industry reports from the Cement Industry illustrate the various factors for differentiating cement..

KEYWORDS

Indian Cement industry , sellers market , buyers market , differentiate , brands.

INTRODUCTION

The Indian Cement Industry is considered to be the second largest in the world after China. The total capacity of the industry is 360 million tonnes per annum with 81 companies and 200 plants. The Cement industry occupies an important place in the economy and all other sectors like construction , transportation, power, coal and financial markets are linked to the cement industry. The transformation in the Indian Cement industry from an era of price controls to total decontrol has led to an entry of number of companies and numerous brands in the Indian Cement industry . Brand development in the Indian cement industry is gaining prominence and manufacturers are trying to get a pricing premium on account of branding or enhanced value proposition . ICRA (formerly Investment Information and Credit Rating Agency of India Limited) views favourably sustained efforts by manufacturers towards brand development, as it expects brand strength to allow market acceptance in the long term.To change from a commodity to brand there is need to differentiate cement on various factors.

OBJECTIVES

Cement is a perishable commodity and cannot be stored for long time as there is a risk that it may absorb moisture and hence may be unfit for construction . Hence more importance is given on sales leading to a price war in the market . However in the recent times many companies in the Indian Cement industry are attempting to brand cement for getting a price premium . To brand cement and to maintain a premium price , differentiation plays a vital role . This study therefore identifies various factors in cement that could be used as differentiators to gain customer loyalty .

METHODOLOGY ADOPTED

The data & information for the article is through Literature review of Marketing and reports and articles from the cement industry .
Literature in the area of Marketing and Cement Industry will explore the possibility of differentiation in cement and identify the areas in which differentiation is possible for cement companies in the industry.

LIMITATION

The present study is based on secondary sources through an exhaustive literature survey . No primary data sources have been used for the study.

INDIAN CEMENT INDUSTRY

Cement Industry in India has evolved over the years from being an importer during 1920 to being the second largest producer in the world. The origin of Indian Cement Industry can be traced to over 100 years. Industry was in the hands of the government who controlled production and pricing. Capacity addition was at a slow pace and fewer entrepreneurs were coming forward to set up cement plants. It was only after the end of price controls that production slowly started stepping up. After the total decontrol there was a quantum jump in capacity addition . Number of companies entered the cement industry and there were number of brands available in the market. The buying behaviour also changed from a seller's market to a buyer's market. There was a time when there was scarcity of cement and buyers did not have a choice . But with number of brands and companies increasing in the Indian Cement Industry, customers had number of options to choose from amongst the available brands.
Cement which used to be considered as a commodity began to be branded. Supply demand in a particular region is one of the major factor in determining price. With supply exceeding demand capacity utilisation of cement plants started coming down . It was at this juncture that many companies in the Indian cement industry started giving more importance to marketing rather than just selling

TABLE 1: EVOLUTION OF INDIAN CEMENT INDUSTRY

ERA	YEAR	REMARKS ABOUT CAPACITY , GROWTH , CONSUMPTION
Era of Dominant Imports	1914- 1924	Cement consumption was around 2 million tones during this period of 10 years ; 50 % was through imports . Production in the year 1914 was 10, 000 tonnes and in 1924 production was around 0.26 million tones a year against capacity of half a million tonne.
Era of Struggle and Survival	1924- 1941	Indigenous production went from 3.66 lakh tones in 1925 to 18.30 lakh tonne in 1941. Imports contributed to less than 7% of total cement consumption during 1924-1942
Era of Price Controls	1942-1951	Production stepped up from 1.8 million tones in 1942 to 3.2 million tones in 1951 . Imports dwindled to less than 2 -1/2 % of total consumption
Era of Planning and Controls	1951-1982	Growth in cement capacity but not at requisite pace. Capacity was 29 Mn t in 1981-82
Era of Partial Decontrol	1982-88	Quantum jump in capacity and production during 1982-88 . Cement became surplus from 1987 onwards.
Era of Total Decontrol	March 1989 onwards	During the end of FY 2009 capacity rose to 219 Mn tonnes

Source: Website of Cement Manufacturers Association www.cmaindia.org

As shown in Table 1, the industry structure changed over the years .During the year 1914- 24 most of the requirement was met through imports before indigenous production started .Subsequently Government played a major role in Planning & Control. After the industry was decontrolled the capacity grew manifold. The selling strategy of firms and the buying behavior of customers also saw a major change. Cement from being a pure commodity dependent on price alone is being recognized as a product whose pricing and demand could be varied through various Marketing promotions. Brands started emerging after total decontrol in the year 1989 and certain brands started commanding premium due to quality perceptions. Therefore positioning of cement brands in the customers minds play a vital role .

The one type of cement that was available before 1990's was the OPC (Ordinary Portland Cement) – 33 grade. Subsequently other grades of OPC like OPC 43, OPC 53 were introduced. The number 33, 43 or 53 indicated the compressive strength of cement mortar after 28 days tested as per BIS procedures. Subsequently other types of cement like Portland Pozzolana Cement & Portland Slag cement were introduced. Other special types of cement for specific applications were launched as per the requirements of the construction Industry.

TABLE 2: TYPES OF CEMENT : PRODUCTION PERCENTAGE WISE

Type of Cement	Percentage to total production
Ordinary Portland Cement (OPC)	32.26%
Portland Pozzolona Cement (PPC)	60.79%
Portland Blast Furnace Slag Cement (PBFS)	6.60%
Sulphate Resistant Cement (SRC)	0.07%
IRS T40	0.24%

Source: CMA Executive Summary Cement Industry April 2011, (Page 50)

The type of cement that is manufactured in huge quantity as on April 2011 is the PPC (Portland Pozzolona Cement) which accounts for about 61% of the total cement manufactured

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature in Marketing highlights the importance of differentiation. A commodity is sold purely based on price and it is considered that all brands in a category like cement are similar and there is no distinction. However according to Levitt (1980) there is no such thing as a commodity. The normal perception that branding can only be done in certain product categories was not accepted by Levitt(1980) and his firm view was that any product or service can be differentiated, even the commodity that seems to differ from competitors' offerings only in price. As per Levitt (1980) Even produce and deal in primary metals, grains, chemicals, plastics, and money can be differentiated according to the author .

Levitt (1983) in his book Marketing Imagination has highlighted the importance of understanding the customers , their problems and the means to capture their attention . By emphasising that people don't buy things but buy solutions to problems , the author has indicated the importance of good data about customers. This according to him has the power to improve strategic decisions in the right directions. Cement is not used in isolation but it is usually mixed with other ingredients like aggregates and water to get a mixture called concrete . Therefore the construction professionals at site face number of problems in making concrete. Hence a construction professional is not just buying cement but also looking for solutions to make a good concrete that is durable.

Verdoorn (1956) mentions the role of five groups of instruments which a firm can use it to formulate its marketing policy . The instruments are the price , the quality of the product , promotional effort , distribution channels and the firms product line. Verdoorn (1956) has highlighted the feature of substitution amongst these instruments and the term " marketing mix" is given for a given combination of these instruments. Even in case of cement it is not only the product quality but the capability of the firm to make the availability of cement at site plays a vital role.

Borden (1984) tells of the evolution of the marketing mix concept and mentions that the elements of the Marketing Mix of Manufacturers relates to Product Planning , Pricing , Branding, Channels of Distribution , Personal Selling , Advertising , Promotions, Packaging , Display , Servicing , Physical Handling , Fact Finding and analysis .

Borden (1984) has outlined the market forces bearing on the marketing mix as that of Consumers Buying behaviour , traders behaviour Competitors position and behaviour and the Government behaviour . Cement is subject to influence by the behaviour of consumers especially the construction professionals , behaviour of traders or dealers , the behaviour of competitors and government policy in setting of cement plants and introduction of taxes .

Donohue Brian C , Miles Marshall F (1995**)** gives importance to the voice of the customer and emphasizes on the responsibility of Marketing & sales which is to collect and analyze the customer needs. Cements traditionally was being used as a commodity , sales maximization being the topmost priority . However firms have began to listen to the voice of customer Basso Joe (2007) stresses the need for creating dialogue with customers in a competitive marketplace which allows organization to customise the marketing approach

Aaker A David identifies three major sustainable competitive advantage for long term performance which relates to quality reputation , customer orientation and the ability to recognize name which indirectly refers to the awareness of the brand.

According to Basso Joe , Randy Hines (2007) the challenge, therefore, is for companies to be responsive to consumer demands by being proactive in their business approaches rather than reactive. Satisfying consumer needs and clearly communicating organizational policies will go a long way in forging long-lasting relationships with consumers(Basso Joe , Randy Hines)

The demand-supply condition frequently exists for manufactured products in developing countries, those countries with relatively low levels of per capita income that are taking steps to move from a lower to a higher stage of economic development with some degree of success (e.g. Bolivia, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Thailand) (cf. Baker and Al-Haddad, 1985; Douglas, 1971; Negandhi, 1972).Cement is also affected more by such demand supply conditions. Whenever demand goes up price takes an upward trajectory and whenever supply exceeds price goes down.

While purchasing a product the first encounter is with the visual design of the product and thus plays a frontline role in the success of a product (Kotler and Rath 1984). Cement is packed in 50 kg bags and stored in the dealers shops where retail or trade sales takes place . There are end customers who look at the attractiveness of the bag to decide on the brand to be purchased.
The study by Pires, Ricardo (2008) concluded that consumers are faced with quality and product performance uncertainty and hence rely on extrinsic attributes like brand , price , package and warranty as signals of perceived quality . This is equally applicable in case of cement and hence there for investment on brand development in the cement industry is on the rise as is evident from the advertising or wall painting of cement brands that is seen in many Indian cities.
Perceived quality was evaluated and decided by consumers. Perceived quality is another valuation of brand to push the customer to buy products (Wonglorsaichon & Sathainrapabayut , 2008) . In case of cement construction professionals do not get an opportunity to purchase cement after testing by them . However manufacturers give a test certificate for every batch of cement manufactured by them . Hence selection of brand is more on the basis of perceived quality than objective quality .The power of brand lies in the minds of existing or potential customers and what they have experienced directly and indirectly about the brand(Wonglorsaichon & Sathainrapabayut , 2008) .The marketing program has effect to improve the perceive quality of brand for different customers (Wonglorsaichon & Sathainrapabayut , 2008) The premise of customer-based brand equity models is that the power of brand lies in what customers have responded, seen, read, heard, learned, thought and felt about the brand over time(Wonglorsaichon & Sathainrapabayut , 2008) .
Brands which have been there for more than 50 years in the Indian cement industry has an advantage over the new entrants . This is because older brands have been engaged in activities which connect them to the customers.
Keller (2000) is of the view that building and properly managing brand equity has become a priority for companies of all sizes in all types of industries , in all types of markets. This is more pertinent , as according to the author , customer loyalty and profits flows from strong brand equity . Due to increasing competition in the Indian cement industry there is a need to develop customer loyalty .
Perceived quality can be defined as the consumer's judgment about a product's overall excellence or superiority (Zeithaml, 1988). As used in the literature, objective quality refers to measurable and verifiable superiority on some predetermined ideal standard or standards.
Customers perceived quality in cement will depend on various factors like price , attractiveness of the bags , quality of advertisements and customer service .
According to Richard and Deborah consumers perception of product characteristics help them in discriminating between products and attributes that signal quality have been dichotomized into intrinsic and extrinsic cues. Intrinsic cues involve the physical composition of the product whereas Extrinsic cues are product-related but not part of the physical product itself and are by definition, outside the product (Richard and Deborah) . Price, brand name, and level of advertising are examples of extrinsic cues to quality.
Chang & Dibb (2012) points that Customer-perceived value is of concern for consumers , practitioners and researchers . Consumers wishes to make sound purchase choices, practitioners are keen to improve their customers' perceptions of value, and researchers seek to clarify the conceptual underpinnings of customer-perceived value and its relationship with other marketing variables (Chang & Dibb, 2012) . The paper by Chang & Dibb (2012) synthesises the literature from marketing, economics, axiology and psychology to provide a holistic review of the customer-perceived value concept.
According to Garvin (1984) Product Quality is rapidly becoming an important competitive issue and each discipline has wrestled with the question of whether quality is objective or subjective. The objective quality of cement can be gauged in a cement testing laboratory whereas teh subjective quality is indirectly evaluated based on the quality of concrete produced at site.
Market Research helps in identifying characteristics that connote quality, these characteristics are then translated into identifiable product attributes, manufacturing process should be organized to ensure that the products are manufactured as per specification (Garvin – 1984).
Garvin (1987) remarks that Quality means pleasing consumers , not just protecting them from annoyances and he proposes eight dimensions of quality that can serve as a framework for strategic analysis : performance, features, reliability , conformance , durability , serviceability , aesthetics, perceived quality.
A product or service can rank high on one dimension of quality and low on another – indeed an improvement in one may be achieved only at the expense of another (Garvin – 1987) .Cement with higher early compressive strength may rank low on durability aspects.
According to Norman .L.Barnett people differentiate among the various brands in a market according to their perception of the brands' real or imagined characteristics; they choose brands whose characteristics they prefer. This is reported to be more effective than segregating consumers based on their characteristics (Norman .L.Barnett) .Customers need to be segmented based on the application whether cement is used for concreting or plastering and the type of work whether its a bridge work or residential work .
Inferences drawn by Mark Vandenbosch , Niraj Dawar (2002) were as follows : a) Offering great products , technologies or services is an entry stake into the competitive arena. b) Most spoke on the need to maintain an edge on ways Companies interact with customers .c) Cost-oriented factors like convenience, ease of doing business and product support, as well as risk-oriented factors like trust, confidence and the strength of relationships were given importance . d) Suppliers become the link between customers and sellers of complimentary products and services thereby reducing buyers search and acquisition costs. The supplier increases the number of customer "touch points" and thus its claims on customer loyalty.
Customer value models are based on assessments of the costs and benefits of a given market offering in a particular customer application (Anderson , Narus – 1998).
Zeitmal (1988) has distinguished perceived Quality from objective or actual quality , a higher level of abstraction rather than a specific attribute of a product , a judgement usually made within a consumers evoked set. ; perceived quality may not exist because all quality is perceived by some one be it consumers or managers or researchers at Consumer reports.
Jacoby and Olson (1977) distinguished between objective price (the actual price of the product) and perceived price (the price as encoded by the consumer)
Wagner suggests that Customer service should be given more importance to firms that are seeking greater sales for current products in current markets through market penetration and also mentions that servicing customers is vital for market development and product development .
Growing competition and more demanding customers is making it difficult to achieve and maintain a commanding position in a wide variety of industries according to Parasuraman (2000) NA
Manufacturing Companies in searching for new approaches to retain customers are increasingly using service as a differentiator and as a means of integrating themselves into the customers supply chain systems (Liz Lee Kelley et. al, 2002).
A study of the UK Steel industry has revealed that higher the level of perceived quality of service , the higher the expressed intended loyalty and for steel managers this research has highlighted the importance of establishing a relationship strategy through service enhancement to foster customer loyalty (Liz Lee Kelley et.al , 2002).
Gronroos (1990) advises that in the service society, manufacturing needs to adapt to the new order of demands to achieve and maintain competitive advantage.
Hallowell (1996) defines customer loyalty as the relationship a customer maintains with the seller after the first interaction.
Bachelor (1998) in arguing that customer loyalty is not appropriate for commodity products where selling price seems to be a major role in the purchase decision asks the question "
Is there such thing, any more , as customer loyalty ". Service Management literature shows increasing interests in relationship strategies where the focus is on building customer satisfaction and loyalty.
Whiteley (1991) differentiates products and services quality by defining the former as " what you get "and the latter as " How you get it" This is in agreement with Gronroos (1990) two dimensional aspects of service quality:
Technical quality : the quality of what is delivered
Functional quality : The quality of how the service is delivered

One study conducted by the US office of Consumers affairs indicated that one dissatisfied customer could be expected to tell nine other people about the experiences that resulted in dissatisfaction. (Knauer , 1992) This raise the question of whether dissatisfied customers do actually voice their complaints or they simply do not buy from the same supplier again.
Consistent with the overall desire to manage relationships, CRM is generally defined as the "management of mutually beneficial relationship(s) from the seller's perspective" (LaPlaca, 2004, p. 463)
Richards Keith , Eli Jones (2008) describes Customer equity (CE) as
a. Identifying the value of a customer to the selling firm.
b. The margins beyond product costs and selling costs of these products can be evaluated by measuring Customer equity .
c. Focus of customer equity , according to the authors are customer relationships and financial accountability .
Following the earlier work by Rust, Zeithaml, and Lemon (2000), three types of equity have been described as antecedents to customer equity: value equity, brand equity, and relationship equity. Value equity is the customer's appraisal of the brand based on its utility. Brand equity is a more subjective appraisal of the brand and is more concerned with image and meaning than the rational evaluation of price, quality and convenience (Lemon, Rust, & Zeithaml, 2001; Rust et al., 2000).
Customer-centric marketing, a term used by Sheth, Sisodia, and Sharma (2000), describes this shift toward customizing marketing efforts for each individual customer.
Kohli & Leuthesser (1993) defines Product positioning in relation to competitors and stresses that it's the act of designing the image of firms offering in such a way that target customers understand and appreciate what the product stands for.
According to Kevin , positioning is the message a company wants to imprint in the minds of customers and prospects about its product or service or its brand and how it differs from and offers something better than competitors.
Onkvisit and Shaw (1988) is of the view that branding when properly executed can be a viable solution to the problem of cut throat competition since brand names can enhance the customer perception of the value of the product.

DISCUSSIONS

Literature review suggests differentiation can be done and for cement it could be any of the activities in the chain leading to delivery of cement. According to Levitt (1980) the fundamental rudimentary thing needed to play the game of market participation is termed as generic product ; the offered product makes the difference in getting customers , the expected product representing the customers minimal purchase conditions like Delivery , Terms of purchase , support efforts and giving new ideas. The observations by Levitt (1980) can be applied in case of cement as follows:

1. **Delivery of cement** : Location of cement Plants and the time of delivery of cement so that it minimizes inventory costs for the buyer . The nearer the cement plant is to the customers site the lesser would be the inventory cost for him . Customers could be given preferential treatment whenever there is a general shortage in the industry . Customers expect flexibility and proper quantity to be delivered to him .
2. **Terms***:* In major projects builder sor contractors prefer to have a rate contract preferably till the completion of the project .Other terms like discounts for prompt payment may be expected by the customer.
3. **Support efforts***:* Cement being one of the ingredients in concrete is dependent on many factors like quality control at site , skill of the mason and the awareness of the construction professionals. The client or the customer therefore expect special advice and support for projects or residential project.
4. **New ideas***:* Customers use cement in concrete . Any new idea which optimises or economises the quantity of cement without compromising on the quality of concrete would be appreciated by the customer.

Bonoma (1982) has identified six buying roles like Initiator , Gatekeeper , Influencer and Decider and briefly outlines the roles they play as follows:
Initiator : recognizes that some company problem can be solved or avoided by acquiring a product or service
Gatekeepers : are involved in the purchase process . They usually act as problem or product experts.
Influencers : are those who have a say in whether a purchase is made and about what is bought .
Deciders are those who say yes or no to the contemplated purchases
Cement buying in projects also involve similar dynamics and it is very difficult in some cases to categorise the roles . Therefore understanding consumer behaviour during cement purchase is critical as decision to buy may not be taken by a single department or personnel .
Eight dimensions of quality are distinguished by Garvin (1987) as follows:
Performance : Products primary operating characteristics . Brands can usually be ranked objectively on individual aspects of performance but sometimes performance standards are based on subjective preference.
Features: Characteristics that supplement basic functioning involves objective and measurable attributes .
Reliability: This dimension reflects the probability of a product failing within a specified time period**.**
Conformance: The degree to which a products design and operating characteristics meet established standards.
Durability : The amount of use one gets from a product before it deteriorates.
Serviceability : The speed, courtesy , competence and ease of repair is serviceability .
Aesthetics: The subjective dimension of quality that involves personal judgment and reflection of individual preference that has more to do with as to how a product looks, feels , sounds, tastes or smells.
Perceived Quality : Complete information about attributes of a product or service is not available to the consumers ; indirect measure may be the only basis for comparing brands. Images , advertisements , brand names gives inferences about quality . Reputation affects perceived quality .
In case of cement performance is evaluated on the basis of testing thereby defining features of cement . Reliability an durability are critical as cement is used for durable concrete structures which customers expect to last a life time . Cement fulfils the minimum requirement as laid down in the relevant BIS codes. After sales service for making good quality concrete after cement is supplied to customers have become important . Cement cannot be evaluated through a quick test and also since there is a scarcity of cement testing laboratories Perceived quality plays a vital role in determining the brand of cement used.
Das Narayan Das (2005) suggests that its useful for executives to think about a products value by grouping its benefits into four categories
Tangible financial benefits : Values that sellers can communicate and buyers can verify.
Non tangible financial benefits : Those values that sellers can convey bit buyers cannot easily validate.
Tangible non financial benefits : Values that cannot be easily quantified by teh sellers but buyers perceive it such as corporate reputations, global scale and innovation capabilities take time and money to create but in commodity market they influence firms choices.
Non tangible non financial benefits : value that both sellers and buyers are unable to quantify especially in monetary terms .
Jamali , Atafar , Sanayei (2011) have analysed , ranked , positioned top four cement brands of Isfahan by perceptual mapping . The questions that were used to draw the perceptual map were related to quality of product , package quality ,product accessibility , product variety , product price and data sheet accuracy . Respondents ranged from cement distributors/wholesalers , university professors and civil Engineers
Rensburg , Niekerk (2010) conducted a study that proposes approaches followed that could be used to differentiate value propositions offered by cement producers based on customers perceptions.The results of the research suggest that customers indeed attach different levels of importance to different value attributes which indicate that value differentiation could be used as a viable marketing strategy in the cement industry . It is also indicated in the study that customer value perceptions could be enhanced by the introduction of new or enhanced value attributes.The key drivers of the current value proposition as indicated by regression weight are in order of importance : Product offering (18.3%) Ordering (15.7%) Administration (13.6%) ,Image(13.6%) Distribution (11.5%).The research findings also suggest that different groups of customers attach different levels of importance to different value attributes associated with

producers core offerings , sourcing process and customer operations inspite of the contradictory view that cement is a generic product utilising similar pricing strategies

Heaoron Henry , Mazur Glenn (2002) stresses on the importance of Technical Services Department to assist customer with field problems.The study emphasises on listening to the Voice of Customer which could influence buying decisions in more profitable ways .

Varghese Toms and Massey conducted this study to find the perception of cement buyers in two cities namely Varanasi and Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh . The study focussed on the knowledge level of consumer about various parameters of cement like setting time , colour , price , curing required and compressive strength. The major findings of the study were that customers prefers grey coloured OPC cement whereas in Varanasi they prefer dark or Portland Pozzolona Cement.

Shahida P , Nargundkar Rajendra & Hiremath Gaurav (2008) On finding out the relative importance of various attributes of cement considered while purchasing branded cement strength of cement was considered the most important attribute , price the second most important attribute and then availability was considered the third important parameter.

Jacques.M. Francois(2007) notes that relationship plays a key role in cement and in his own words " salesmen whose pitches were aimed at making friends rather than demonstrating that their products were better than the competitions. The critical aspect in cement business was the challenge to deliver tangible results and the way prices were negotiated as according to the author In a commodity business like cement a 1% gain in price has twice the impact on NPV of a 1% increase in volume or a 1% reduction in cost and four times the impact of a 1% savings in investment.

Onkvisit and Shaw (1988) broadly lists the prerequisites before a commodity is transformed into a product a. quality and quantity consistency b.Possibility of a product differentiation c.degree of importance consumers place on the product attributes to be differentiated.

FINDINGS

Based on the above Literature review and Cement industry reports it is evident that price premium and brand equity in case of cement are important and relevant. The following areas could be used for differentiation of cement:

- Product quality and types: Certain parameters of cement can be enhanced to increase value proposition for a specific customer segment. Manufacturing different types of cement suitable for a particular application.
- Solutions to problems, New ideas and support to construction professional : Construction professionals use concrete or plaster at site and hence rendering advice to construction professionals can help . Technical Services in Cement Marketing can be a differentiator if customers are offered solution to concreting problems.
- Flexibility in delivery of cement to various projects : Delivery flexibility in terms of bagged or bulk cement based on the site requirement
- Understanding Perceived quality for effective communication : Customer surveys at periodic intervals can help in understanding customers perception on various quality dimensions. The results obtained during these surveys could be useful in designing Integrated Marketing Communication to various customer segments
- Ordering & Distribution of cement : Availability of cement at site on time is considered to be important for certain project sites
- Commercial terms & Conditions: Customised commercial terms and conditions to each customer segment
- Niche Segment: Enhancing value proposition for a niche segment leading to price premium.

Thus it is inferred that a generic product like cement can be differentiated on various factors and the offered product could be used to enhance value proposition to the customer**.**

CONCLUSIONS

Number of works on branding and differentiation is already done in other product categories. Findings from such product categories could be used in marketing cement which will enable the firms to increase market share or maintain premium pricing. Results of studies done in other cement industries across the globe can be applied in Indian Cement industry. Few of the differentiators are extracted from the literature and summarised in the article

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Empirical studies can be done in major Indian Cities to evaluate the behaviour of customer segments on the above differentiators that could be effectively used in the cement industry. Primary sources through surveys on target segments like Engineers, Contractors, Dealers and Masons will further help cement marketers to implement them in the Indian Cement markets

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