

Consumers' Purchasing Behavior and Enhancement of Cement Companies Performance: Mediating role of Purchasing Decision

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Abstract: This Paper focuses on identifying the factors that influence consumer behavior besides understanding the satisfaction level of the customers in the cement market in Egypt. Additionally, the presence of a mediator like purchasing decision is essential to determine its effect on companies' performance in terms of customer satisfaction, growth of sales, market share and profitability. Therefore, enhancing performance between cement companies in Egypt is chosen as the dependent variable. The factors impacting purchasing decision are independent variables that include competitors in cement market, price sensitivity, quality of cement products and new channels for cement marketing. This work emphasizes as well on the product quality, reliability and trust essential for consumers. The research methodology suggested adopts a sequenced mixed method involving qualitative interview followed by a quantitative questionnaire survey to collect and analyze data.

For the quantitative analysis (questionnaires), it is observed that, as the p-value is below 0.05 and all the estimates are above 0.4 and below 1.0, the variables seem to correlate with their respective factors significantly. This validates the measurement model for its validity and means a good fit of the data to the suggested factor structure. Furthermore, the qualitative analysis (interviews) examined the impact of product quality, price fluctuations and marketing strategies on purchasing decisions as well as challenges related to cement distribution.

Keywords: Cement industry, factors, consumer behavior, purchasing decision, corporate, Mediator.

1 Introduction

Understanding buying behavior is the only way to connect with customers and to influence their purchasing decision. The sum of customer's attitudes, preferences, intentions and decisions regarding their behavior in the marketplace when purchasing a product or service is called buying behavior. According to Chukwu et al (2019), it is the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desire.

So, not all types of behavior must be predicted according to attitudes. They are a consequence of some type of interaction between person's temperament, skills and social forces. Based on the statement that some, but not all, behavioral variances in humans are determined in terms of social forces. The consumer's effect, behavior, and cognition all have to do with what they intend to do with attitude object Siwakwi, (2022). [1]

According to Atela & Sitienei (2022). [2], it was stated that a firm following cost leadership and quality strategies will certainly offer products or services with acceptable quality and feature to a broad set of customers at a low price. Firms engaged in cost-leadership and quality strategies undertake a suitable combination of low per-unit profit along with large sales to make a profit. Many cost leaders rely on economies of scale to achieve efficiency. Economies of scale are created when the cost of goods and services decreases as a firm can increase production. Furthermore, the study revealed that a differentiation strategy helps firms to develop product/service.

Siwakwi (2022). [1] reported that instead of focusing more on advertising, the cement industry should give more effort on trade marketing. Free gifts with purchases and answering simple questions to win prizes are more likely to boost brand

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sales rather than using mass promotion. For a cement maker willing to make a big impact and builds a brand, advertising may be appropriate.

2 Literature review

A significant portion of the most recent research has focused on the investigation of various factors impacting purchasing decision of the customers. Nosike & Egbunike (2022) [3] reported that customers who are satisfied have most motive to repurchase a product/service and are less sensitive to price changes. Whereas others, such as Bishnoi and Singh (2021) [4] find that increased emotional (commitment) loyalty would increase the sales of a brand or product. In a recent path analysis study, Fan, Kou, and Liu (2020) [5] showed that customer satisfaction has a positive and relevant effect on both emotional and behavioral loyalty. In another related study conducted by Nasir, Adil, and Dhamija (2021) [6], the authors used the path analysis to establish that customer loyalty had a profound positive effect on customer satisfaction. According to Taha et al. (2017) [7]: i) service quality has a strong positive impact on customer satisfaction as well as on loyalty when mediated by satisfaction and ii) marketing has a significant positive effect on customer loyalty for Tonasa cement customers.

2.1. Effect of Consumer Behavior Factors

Consumer behavior factors are studied in terms of price, quality and distribution channels on companies' performance according to customer satisfaction, market share, profitability and growth of sales.

For price, according to Ramdhan et al (2022) [8]: i) the producer began to market their products to competitors' primary markets, and this resulted in a price war between fellow cement producers, ii) the price follows the price change strategy of the leading producers in a cement market area. Price war as a strategy to seize consumers in Indonesia, namely Semen Baturaja, where its primary market is in the Sumbagsel area, especially in Palembang City, which is continuously penetrated by competitor cement products and iii) the decline in sales performance followed by a decrease in market share is attributed to the price war strategy changes. On a negative side, prices reduce purchasing decisions while positive prices promote brand loyalty to consumers.

The second factor is the distribution channels. According to Kitainge and Beatrice (2020) [9], distribution channels are the best choice for manufacturing firms to make sure that their products reach their intended destination on time. This paper is interested in how the decision by Kenya's cement manufacturing firms use a distribution channel structure significantly influenced their performance.

According to Ko (2019) [10], the effective distribution channels of SCG Cement, Burma were carefully analyzed. Correspondingly, the accessibility has a value of 4.10 denoting that most of the respondents are very satisfied with distribution channels of SCG cement so that more markets can be introduced.

According to Poulaki, & Katson (2020) [11], it was reported that an efficient distribution network is one of the most crucial and critical factors in any manufacturing company or organization.

The third item is the quality of a brand. In an article published by Madah (2023) [12] it is found out that when the primary goal of meeting the needs and expectations of the customer is fulfilled, then the product is now regarded of a high quality apart of the quality of the design specifications. Moreover, Hsrat et al. (2020) [13] reported in a published work that product quality displays a positive effect on customer satisfaction, which in turn has a positive impact on customer loyalty.

2.2. Cement companies' performance

For any enterprise, competitive strategy is a key to determine each organization's decision, activities and policies. Kim and McIntosh (2019) [14] noticed that via advertising, improvement of client and quality of products, firms react to change in business environments. The responses considerably enable the organization to acquire competitive services provided and will influence customers to repurchase these products. Rahman & Sitio (2020) [19] also proved the influence of product quality on purchasing decisions. It makes it clear that better quality or product quality can affect purchasing decisions made by consumers.

Moreover, the effect of distribution channels on purchasing decision is dealt with in the literature. According to Mohsen et al. (2023) [20] distribution channels types and strategies are very important for any company as they have a huge impact on the sales of the company's products. Moreover, they contribute in affecting consumers' buying decision consumers. According to Wong & Lesmono, (2019) advantages against competitors in the sector besides boosting profitability and long-term performance.

2.3. Effect of consumer behavior factors on purchasing decision as a mediator, in terms of quality, price and quality as independent variables.

The purchase decision is a critical part of consumer behavior that involves a process of customer activity, including the search for products, selection, purchase, use, evaluation, and disposal of products to meet their needs Rybaczewska *et al.* (2020) [15].

According to Maia *et al.* (2023) [16]. The purchase decision heavily depends on the quality of products and services.

Regarding the quality effect on purchasing decision and referring to the paper of Maulana *et al.* (2023) [17] the product quality imparts a positive and significant influence on the purchasing decision of Semen Baturaja.

According to Achrol & Kotler (2016) [18], companies must always improve the quality of their products or services because improving product quality can make customers feel satisfied with the products or

[21] distribution channel is a way of communication between the manufacturer and the consumer in a direct or indirect way. According to Zhu (2020) [22], Distribution channels are one of the factors in the marketing mix (4 Ps). It is referred to marketing mix as the product, place, price, and promotion.

2.4. Effect on purchasing decision as a mediator on companies' performance in terms of customer satisfaction, market share, profitability and growth of sales as dependent variables.

The significance of purchasing in [business strategy](#) and performance has been widely discussed in the purchasing literature Fierro *et al.*, (2024)[23]. Research has shown a clear connection between good purchasing performance and overall company performance, leading to higher profits and value ([Arora *et al.*, 2020](#); [Caniato *et al.*, 2014](#)) [24].

There exists a close relationship between purchasing decision and customer satisfaction. According to Badarou (2021) [25], customer satisfaction can be defined as the judgment that a customer gives to a product that he has used and resulting from a comparison between his expectations regarding the product and its perceived performance. Customer satisfaction is an important indicator for businesses. A satisfied customer is loyal, he buys more when there is a new product, and recommends the product to those around him. Purchasing decisions that lead to repeat purchases will create customer satisfaction, Ali (2019) [26].

A relationship between purchasing decision and market share was found out. According to Mauboussin & Callahan (2022) [27], market structure is defined by the number and distribution of firms within an industry. Two aspects of market share, stability and concentration, can provide insight into potential sustainable competitive advantage.

Furthermore, the relationship between purchasing decision and profitability was discussed by some authors. According to Zheng *et al.*, (2020) [28], concluded that in order to understand consumers' purchase behavior, a fundamental starting point would be to examine consumers' valuation for a product, which refers to the worth of a product as perceived by consumers.

As well a relationship between purchasing decision and growth of sales is to be recognized. According to Nosike & Egbunike (2022[29], the Business Dictionary states that sales volume is the quantity or number of goods sold or services rendered in the normal operations of a firm in a specified period. In general, the factors affecting sales performance can be classified into two broad groups, namely internal and external factors.

Regarding the research gap, it is to be noted that the present article overcomes the deficits and lack of in-depth investigations concerning the consumers purchasing behavior in cement market. For this purpose, the following studies were conducted: i) exploring the relationship between consumer behavior factors and cement companies' performance, ii) corporate consumers and industrial buying behavior, iii) mediator (purchasing decision) between dependent and independent variables and iv) distribution channels tactics in the Egyptian cement market.

3 Methodologies

3.1. Research approach

This research adopts applied research approach and methodological choice that are regarded as a sequenced mixed method research directed to identify and estimate the factors affecting purchasing decision of consumers in cement industry in Egypt.

This method involves qualitative interview followed by a quantitative questionnaire survey to collect and analyze data.

The study uses an organized methodology that consists of six primary steps: familiarizing oneself with the data, generating preliminary codes, recognizing, defining and labeling themes and then putting together the report. Duration of interviews varies with the shortest being 14 minutes and the largest 48 minutes, reflecting the depth and the detail of discussions. The variety in job titles and interview durations suggests a robust and diverse set of insights, crucial for a thorough qualitative analysis.

The section for questionnaire quantitative analysis introduces an empirical study with the main findings and results after running the data analysis. To analyze the data gathered, the structure equation modeling was applied by using AMOS 25.

3.2. Variables

These include: i) Independent variables represented as factors affecting purchasing decision, namely price, quality and distribution channels. ii) dependent variables that are responsible for measuring cement companies' performance in Egypt via the following items: customer satisfaction, growth of sales, market share and profitability. iii) Mediator that represents the purchasing decision.

3.3. Conceptual framework

In this conceptual framework, there are four major parts to be recognized:

i) Independent Variables -Consumer behavior factors in terms of price, quality and distribution channel. ii) Dependent Variables in terms of customer satisfaction, growth of sales, market share and profitability. In this study, factors affecting purchasing decision measured with product quality, distribution and price.

Buying behavior of cement products were subjected to evaluation considering the different factors such as customers collection of information or search the advice of friends before buying the product alongside with habits of using and buying cement in the Egyptian market. iii) Mediator which mediates dependent and independent variables. iv) Relationship between independent and dependent variables in the presence of a mediator.

3.4. Hypothesis

H1: There is positive relationship between consumer behavior factors and purchasing decision.

H2: There is positive relationship between purchasing decision and companies' performance.

H3: There is positive relationship between consumer behavior factors and companies' performance

H4: There is positive relationship between consumer behavior factors and companies' performance, in the presence of a mediator "purchasing decision".

3.5. Data collection technique

Data collection technique is treated with a sequential mixed method research to explain and explore the factors affecting consumer behavior in cement industry and competitive performance between corporates. The mixed method involves the initial qualitative semi-structured interview with civil engineers, distributors, contractors and retailers followed by a quantitative questionnaire survey with employees in cement companies.

3.6. Data analysis technique

The conceptual framework of that dissertation is structural relationships between many variables; dependent and independent. Therefore, the structure equation modeling was applied by using AMOS 25, where analysis of the questionnaires and interview questions were conducted as well. Investigation of the samples was performed according to the Saunders equation with a 95% confidence level. Accordingly, a sample size of at least 385 individuals must be set. Therefore, 650 online questionnaires were presented to the customers of cement corporations in Egypt to collect the required data, 490 of which were retrieved, with a response rate of 75.38%. After reviewing all the retrieved questionnaires, only 447 were considered valid for analysis from customers of cement corporations in Egypt, resulting in a final validity rate of 68.77%.

4 Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

In this study, the final research model measurements were evaluated using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) before Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

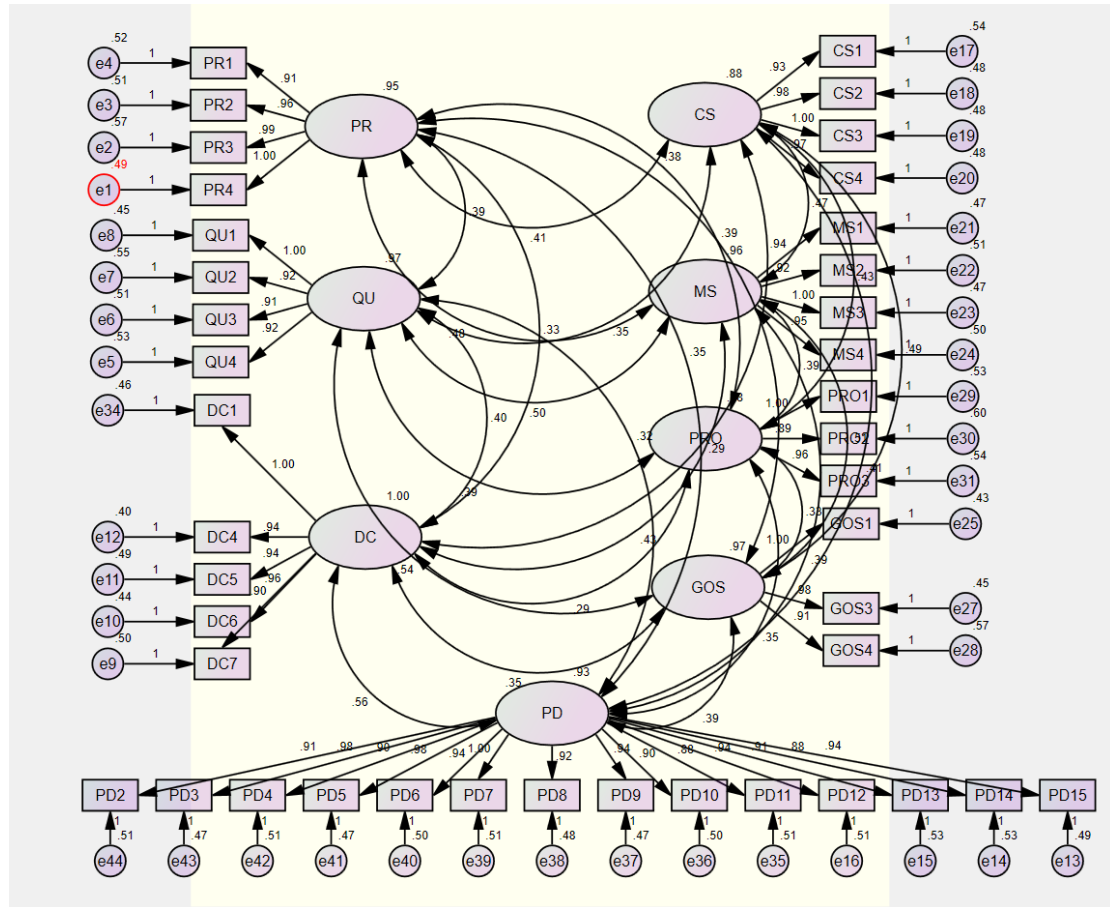
To evaluate the researcher's recovered factor structure as a measuring scale for each dimension, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is required. First, the factor loading of the research variables was examined. It is observed that, as the p-value is below 0.05 and all the estimates are above 0.4 and below 1.0, the variables seem to correlate with their respective factors significantly. This validates the measurement model for its validity and means a good fit of the data to the suggested factor structure.

Moreover, the model was examined to be fit indices to prove that all are within acceptable limits and thresholds as shown in Table 1. The results show that each fall within acceptable bounds and thresholds. With CMIN/DF at 1.126 (< 2.00), GFI at 0.918 (> 0.900), AGFI at 0.906 (> 0.800), CFI at 0.992 (> 0.800), and RMSEA at 0.017 (< 0.080), the model fit indices are within the acceptable level.

Table 1: Fit indices and thresholds for final measurement model

Measure	Results	Threshold
CMIN/DF	1.126	< 2 excellent; < 3 good; < 5 sometimes permissible
GFI	0.918	> 0.900
AGFI	0.906	> 0.800
CFI	0.992	> 0.800
RMSEA	0.017	< 0.080

The confirmatory factor analysis is shown in Figure 1, and the arrows denote good factor loadings (Factor Loadings > 0.4, and <1.0) for the analysis.


Fig. 1: CFA for the measurement model

4.1 Structural Equation Modeling

The SEM analysis reveals the impact of the research variables on the hypotheses as follows:

The first hypothesis is “There is a positive significant relationship between consumer behavior factors and purchasing decision”. This hypothesis consists of three sub-hypotheses as follows:

For the first sub-hypothesis of the first hypothesis, “There is a positive significant relationship between price and purchasing decision”, it is observed that P-value = 0.000, which indicates that the P-value < 0.05, and the estimate > 0 (Estimate = 0.183).

For the second sub-hypothesis of the first hypothesis, “There is a positive significant relationship between quality and purchasing decision”, it is observed that the P-value = 0.213, which indicates that the P-value > 0.05, and the estimate > 0 (Estimate = 0.062). This finding revealed that there is

between distribution channels and purchasing decision”, the findings demonstrated that P-value = 0.000, which indicates that the P-value < 0.05, and the estimate > 0 (Estimate = 0.480). Accordingly, there is a positive significant

The fourth hypothesis “There is a mediation role of purchasing decision in the relationship between consumer behavior

factors and companies' performance". By estimating the findings of the SEM analysis, it could be observed that there is a partially positive significant relationship between consumer behavior factors (price, quality, and distribution channels) and purchasing decision, as the corresponding P-value < 0.05 (0.000, 0.213, and 0.000 respectively), and the no significant relationship Table 2.

For the third sub-hypothesis of the first hypothesis, "There is a positive significant relationship estimate > 0 (Estimate = 0.183, 0.062, and 0.480 respectively). Additionally, it was demonstrated that there is

Accordingly, the fourth hypothesis "There is a mediation role of purchasing decisions in the relationship between consumer behavior factors and companies' performance" is partially supported.

Remarkably, there is a positive significant relationship between consumer behavior factors or distribution channels and companies' performance in terms of price and quality. However, the relationship between distribution channels and customer satisfaction, profitability and growth of sales is unfortunately insignificant signifying no influence of distribution channels on the last three items.

Table 2: SEM analysis for the research variables

			Estimate	P
Purchasing Decision	<---	<i>Price</i>	.183	***
Purchasing Decision	<---	<i>Quality</i>	.062	.213
Purchasing Decision	<---	Distribution Channels	.480	***
Customer Satisfaction	<---	Purchasing Decision	.299	***
Market Share	<---	Purchasing Decision	.126	.025
Profitability	<---	Purchasing Decision	.173	.002
Growth of Sales	<---	Purchasing Decision	.198	***
Customer Satisfaction	<---	<i>Price</i>	.275	***
Market Share	<---	<i>Price</i>	.294	***
Profitability	<---	<i>Price</i>	.208	***
Growth of Sales	<---	<i>Price</i>	.171	.002
Customer Satisfaction	<---	<i>Quality</i>	.195	***
Market Share	<---	<i>Quality</i>	.327	***
Profitability	<---	<i>Quality</i>	.258	***
Growth of Sales	<---	<i>Quality</i>	.426	***
Customer Satisfaction	<---	Distribution Channels	-.043	.446
Market Share	<---	Distribution Channels	.130	.021
Profitability	<---	Distribution Channels	-.016	.769
Growth of Sales	<---	Distribution Channels	.007	.906

4.2 Practical implications

In fact, this study reinforces the importance of focusing on factors which significantly affect the purchasing decision of consumer in cement industry. This will consequently enhance the competition between various corporates in order to create the best challenges for boosting the buying power.

5 Limitations

The limitations in this work may be recognized in the inability to access some documents in detail in certain cement companies or to get an in depth understanding of information in every sector or department of these companies.

6 Conclusion

The present study uncovered through thematic and content analysis of questionnaires and interviews of civil engineers, distributors, contractors, and retailers' valuable perspectives on the factors shaping purchasing decisions, influencing the decision-making process, competitive performance, marketing strategies, and distribution challenges within the industry.

These perspectives significantly contribute to the overarching aim of examining corporate consumers' factors affecting purchasing decision to enhance performance among cement companies in Egypt. Furthermore, the study provides nuanced insights into the intricate dynamics impacting purchasing decisions within the Egyptian cement market.

Conflicts of Interest Statement

The authors certify that they have NO affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest (such as honoraria; educational grants; participation in speakers' bureaus; membership, employment, consultancies, stock ownership, or other equity interest; and expert testimony or patent-licensing arrangements), or non-financial interest (such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge or beliefs) in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript

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