

proposal

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DissertationProposal

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Proposal research Title:

To examine The Role of Brand Equity
in Creating Competitive Advantage
in the Cement Industry in Nigeria:
A Case Study of Dangote Cement Plc

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Introduction

Brand equity is a significant theory in marketing and strategic management since it elucidates the role of brand in shaping the feeling of customers, their buying behaviour, and performance of organisations. It is the value a brand offers on top of the functional qualities of a product that is usually named by the dimensions like brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand loyalty (Keller, 1993). Although a significant part of the current literature on brand equity is dedicated to consumer markets, researchers are becoming more aware of its application in business-to-business situations where the reliability and credibility of suppliers, as well as their long-term performance, affect the purchase decision (Allen, 2024).

A good example of exploring this concept is the cement industry since cement forms a core part of the infrastructure development and urbanisation process. The scale of the cement industry and its economic significance can be shown by the fact that global cement consumption is estimated to be about 4.2 billion tonnes in 2024

(Gabelli Research, 2025). Cement is thus an indispensable part of the modern constructions and infrastructure building across the globe (Skinner and Vision, 2024).

Although the cement industry has been strategic, operational efficiency, production capacity, and supply chain performance have been the standard competition determinants among the manufacturers. Companies spend copious amounts of money on scale of production and logistics to stay at competitive prices and receive large infrastructure contracts. It is also possible, though, that branding can affect the contractors and construction companies in the feeling of supplier reliability and product quality in long-term procurement relationships.

This study discusses how brand equity can be relevant in defining competitive advantage in cement industry using Dangote cement plc as a case study. The study aims at finding how market positioning could be enhanced by brand awareness, perceived quality, and customer loyalty in a capital-intensive industrial sector and how it can complement the operational strength.

Research Aim

This study will focus on the role of brand equity in bringing competitive advantage in the cement industry using the case of Dangote Cement Plc.

Research Objectives

- To investigate the concept of brand equity in business-to-business markets.
- To examine the relationship between brand awareness, perceived quality and brand loyalty and competitive positioning in cement industry.
- To estimate the complementary nature of branding to the efficiency of operations in capital-intensive industries.

Research Question

What role does brand equity play in the cement industry in terms of competitive advantage?

Literature Review

Brand equity explains how brands create value to the organisations based on the customer beliefs, loyalty and buying behaviour, and recent reviews write down its increased significance in the present marketing research (Dropulić et al., 2022; Rojas-Lamorena et al., 2022).

One way of defining brand equity is based on the dimensions of brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty that affect attitudes and buying behaviour in customers (Aaker, 1991; Kapferer, 2012). Positive brand experiences, engagement and continuous communication with the customers may also strengthen brand equity and organisational value (Sohaib et al., 2022; Allen, 2024). Despite the abundance of research on brand equity in a consumer context, branding is also becoming popular in business-to-business markets where the reliability, reputation, and influence supplier selection (Mudambi, 2002; Allen, 2024).

An example of an industry where the strategic position of brand equity in the industry can be explored using the cement industry is also relevant. Cement is a

critical material used in infrastructure development, housing construction, and industrial expansion worldwide. The amount of cement consumers globally has reached a record high of more than four billion tonnes over the last few years, which shows the incredible size and financial significance of the industry in the construction markets of the world (Statista, 2025). The cement demand is also on the rise since governments and individual investors are expanding transportation systems, urban residential housing, and energy infrastructure. The analysis of the industry shows that long-term demand of cement and other construction materials is likely to remain high in most regions due to the rapid urbanisation and investment in infrastructure (Statista, 2024). These advances increase the competition in the cement manufacturers in search of significant infrastructure projects and long-term purchase contracts.

Although the cement industry is strategically important, majority of the studies done on the sector have focused more on efficiency, capacity of production, supply chain management, and environmental sustainability. Competition in the cement industry has traditionally focused on production capacity, organisation efficiency, and cost reduction. This has made branding strategies to be under-emphasised as compared to operational performance. Still, branding can also make a difference when it comes to procurement in industrial markets when buyers need dependable suppliers that can provide cheap uninterrupted product quality in the long term. It can also be seen that brand reputation will help cement producers in gaining customer confidence within markets where product quality is homogenised and brand recognition can have a positive impact on firm performance within business markets (Homburg et al., 2010).

In addition to the pressure of competition, the cement industry is subject to a lot of structural change due to the sustainability issues and technological advancement. The cement manufacturing process is very energy-intensive and adds a significant amount of carbon emissions to the global emissions, which brought more focus on energy efficiency and environmental performance in the industry (IEA, 2023). Consequently, firms are investing in low-carbon technologies and new construction materials to minimise the environmental impact and ensure productivity. Companies that are effective in communicating innovation, sustainability and reliability of their products by their strong brand positioning could so enjoy strategic benefits in the ever-competitive international markets. This is a sign that brand equity could be more important in deciding competitive advantage in industrial sectors than it was known before.

Despite the extensive theoretical literature on brand equity, much literature has not been done to explore the effects of branding strategies in driving competitive advantage in capital intensive industries like cement manufacturing. The majority of the existing research is dedicated to consumer markets and the gap in the comprehension of brand equity roles is observed in industrial procurement setting where purchasing decision-making requires many stakeholders and is based on long-term contracts. The paper aims to fill this gap by discussing the importance of brand equity in deciding competitive advantage in the cement industry using a case study

of Dangote Cement Plc. The study will examine major dimensions of brand equity, which are brand awareness, customer loyalty and the perceived quality of the brand; by doing so, the research hopes to make a contribution to the existing literature on how the branding strategies are contributing to competitive positioning of industrial markets that are in large scale.

Methodology

This study will use a qualitative research design in exploring how brand equity contributes to the realisation of a competitive advantage in the cement industry. The qualitative design is suitable as the research aims to investigate strategic and organisational concepts, i.e. brand reputation, perceived quality, and competitive positioning instead of quantifying numerical relationships between variables. Qualitative research allows understanding organisational strategies and industry dynamics better, which is why it is especially proper to investigate the complex business phenomena in real-life situations (Creswell and Crewel, 2023). The method enables the study to have a comprehensive insight on the role of branding strategies on competitive advantage in industrial markets.

The research strategy adopted is the case study research strategy, with Dangote Cement Plc being the primary unit of analysis. Case study research is extensively used in business and management research studies since it enables the researcher to examine modern organisational practices in their real-life contexts. Yin (2018) also notes that case studies are especially effective in answering research questions that explore the impact or cause and effect of organisational strategies. Dangote Cement Plc is a proper company to be included in this study because of its strong market share and dominance in the cement sector worldwide. The analysis of this company will enable the research study to examine the role of brand equity in competitive positioning in a large capital-intensive industrial industry.

The study depends on the secondary data collection. Secondary data includes published sources such as academic articles, corporate reports, and industry analyses (Saunders et al., 2023). The use of secondary data in management research is popular as it helps the researcher to analyse organisational strategies and trends in the market without having to access internal information of company or a large sample size of participants (Saunders et al., 2023). The secondary data used in this study will be obtained through several reputable sources such as annual reports of these companies, industry reports, academic journal articles, and market analysis publication. Company sources will be used to obtain information about the corporate strategy of Dangote Cement, the branding efforts as well as the performance in the market. The reports on industries and market research publications will give an insight into the world cement market, the competitive forces in the market, and the trends in the development of infrastructure.

Thematic analysis allows researchers to find patterns and themes within qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2022). It entails a systematic review of documents and an

organisation of the recurrent ideas into meaningful themes concerning the goals of the research. Thematic analysis is one of the most common qualitative research methods as it enables a researcher to categorise the complex information and construct the insights using the extensive text data (Braun and Clarke, 2022). Thematic analysis in this study will be aimed at finding an important number of themes involved in brand awareness, perceived quality, brand reputation, and competitive advantage in the cement industry. These themes are then going to be construed concerning the available brand equity theory to decide the role of branding in competitive positioning in industrial markets.

Ethics are also relevant in the sense that the research should be conducted using academic standards as well. Given that this research will use only publicly available secondary data, there are low risks of confidentiality or informed consent risks associated with the research participants. Nevertheless, ethical practice of research does not avoid proper representation of the source and clear positive recognition of all mentioned materials. Anything that will be used in the study shall thus be cited and referenced accordingly as dictated by the Harvard referencing guidelines. Proper referencing ensures academic integrity and research credibility (Clark et al., 2021). In general, the selected methodology stands for a workable and scholarly suitable technique to cover the research aims in the limitations of the MBA dissertation project. The qualitative case study design can enable the research to investigate the strategic position of brand equity in industrial markets based on available secondary sources of data. Through the review of academic literature, industry reports and company information that pertains to Dangote Cement Plc, the research paper will elicit momentous results that can be used to understand the contribution made by branding strategies to the competitive advantage in the cement industry.

Expected Findings

The study is likely to reveal that brand equity has a positive impact on competitive advantage in the cement industry as predicted by the existing literature and preliminary industry analysis. Operational efficiency, production capacity, and supply chain performance continue to be important competitive aspects in the construction materials markets, but branding strategies can also be in play in terms of buyer perception of reliability of the supplier and the quality of the product. A robust brand equity is thus likely to boost organisational credibility and build long term relationships with business-to-business market customers (Aaker, 1991).

The study will most likely indicate that brand awareness and brand reputation are factors that affect procurement decisions in industrial markets where buyers are interested in having good suppliers who can provide them with consistent quality of products. Infrastructure projects typically involve long-term contracts and significant financial investment. In this situation, the buyers will tend to prefer suppliers who have a strong brand credibility since brand reputation can help decrease the uncertainty and perceived risk in the procurement decisions (Allen, 2024).

The other expected result is that the perceived quality and organisational reputation lead to a continued market dominance in the highly competitive industrial markets. Business firms with successful track records of supplying dependable products and with good brand reputations might be at a better position to win huge infrastructural contracts and long-term supply contracts. High brand equity can thus be a strategic asset that supplements operational capabilities and competitive positioning that is strong in the industry (Aaker, 1991).

Overall, the expected results show that brand equity can have a stronger strategic aspect in industrial markets than it has been traditionally recognised to do. It is thus assumed that the research will offer values on the extent to which branding strategies will lead to the achievement of competitive advantage within the cement industry and how companies can enhance their market positioning by effectively managing their brands.

Limitations

Even though this study has the potential of delivering significant conclusions on the importance of brand equity in creating competitive advantage in the cement industry, a number of limitations could influence the scope and interpretation of the results. The identification of these limitations can be used to set realistic expectations of contributions of the research and transparency in the study process.

Among the major constraints of this paper is associated with the collection of secondary data instead of the primary data. The work is based on the publicly available materials, including the company reports, industry publications, and academic literature to examine the branding strategy and competitive positioning. Though the secondary data will enable the researcher to get a broad scope of information, it might not be able to provide the exact views of the managers, customers or the procurement decision-makers directly involved in the cement industry. Consequently, the research will not give a clear insight into the inner managerial decision-making process on the management of the brand.

The other limitation is related to the method of the case study of the research. The paper is an individual case study of one single organisation, Dangote Cement Plc. Even though this firm should be considered an influential participant in the cement market and the insights on competitive positioning can be really valuable, the results of the single case might not be ultimate results that could be applied to all the firms working in the sphere of the global cement. Depending on the market conditions, geographical coverage and organisational capabilities, different companies can use different branding strategies.

Time is also a constraint of the MBA dissertation project, which hinders the scope of analysis which can be done within the research period. The study does not consider every variable of branding that can happen; it dwells on selected aspects of brand equity, such as brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand loyalty because of the limited time.

Regardless of these constraints, it is believed that the study will offer meaningful information on the role of brand equity in creating competitive advantage in industrial markets as well as offer an effective base in future studies in this field.

Timeframes

The dissertation will be done in several steps which will involve literature review, secondary data collection, analysis, and final writing. The intended plan of action is shown below:

Phase	Research Activity	Time Period
Phase 1	Topic selection and research proposal preparation	Weeks 1–2
Phase 2	Literature review and theoretical framework development	Weeks 3–6
Phase 3	Secondary data collection from company and industry sources	Weeks 7–9
Phase 4	Data analysis and interpretation	Weeks 10–12
Phase 5	Authoring dissertation chapters	Weeks 13–15
Phase	Editing, proofreading, and final submission preparation	Weeks 16

This timeline provides a realistic and structured plan for completing the dissertation while allowing flexibility for revisions and supervisor feedback.

Conclusion

This dissertation proposal summarises a research paper that looks to find out how brand equity contributes to the attainment of competitive advantage in the cement industry. The proposal shows the increasing significance of branding as a strategic asset in modern business settings, where companies can also compete based on the efficiency of their operations but reputation, credibility, and perceived quality. Even though brand equity has had extensive studies in the consumer markets, truly little study has been done on the use of brand equity in capital-intensive industrial markets like the cement manufacturing industry. This paper thus aims at filling this gap by examining the role of brand equity in competitive positioning in the construction materials sector.

Dangote Cement Plc is a case study in the research to analyse the role played by the brand awareness, perceived quality, and customer loyalty on the organisational performance and market leadership. It is suggested to conduct qualitative case study research, which will rely on the analysis of secondary sources with the aim to explore the role of branding strategies in relation to the competitive advantage in industrial markets. Based on the analysis of theoretical and practical literature, industry reports, and company information, the study will offer both theoretical and practical insights. The results are supposed to add to brand equity literature on industrial markets besides providing recommendation to managers who would adopt the need

to enhance brand positioning and long-term competitiveness within the cement industry.

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