

**CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND BUYING  
DECISION INFLUENCING COMPETITIVE  
ADVANTAGE IN CEMENT PAPER  
BAGS INDUSTRY**

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**ASIA e UNIVERSITY  
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CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND BUYING DECISION INFLUENCING  
COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN CEMENT PAPER  
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## ABSTRACT

The history of cement paper bags industry culture diversity and evolutionary had greatly affected by its market demand changed domestically and internationally. Current issues on demand of cement paper bags may due to changing of major paper bags customer sales strategy to focus more on the tanker sales from bagged cement can furtherly reduce the yearly demand on paper bags consumption even though the country infrastructures projects are still carry on. The paper bags cost is one the major costs elements in their packing activity however the customers are trying to reduce it down to the lowest possible. This is due to the yearly demand paper bags by some of these key cement producers is more than ten million bags. The paper bags producers are to be alerted by this issues what is their counter measures. The new entry into this paper bags market from other nearby countries is unpredictable in the coming future when market demand of paper bags is back to normal level by referring to the Portland cement demand report. The strategic sales plans to build the barrier of entry to defend must be prepared as early as possible by the paper bags producers and to examine the factors could influence customer satisfaction, supplier selection, industrial buying decision, customer detention and loyalty and competitive advantageous, anti-competition policy to reduce fiercer competition from expanding further inside the domestic market and ESG compliance to enhance sales need to study in order to place them on strong competition position inside the supply market. The cement paper bags industry is considered not a very capital intensive industry. Hope this is also a research gap for this particular type of industry. Paper bags costs and paper bags performance could be the very sensitive issues to this types of industry buyers. This is because when customer benefit is being affected. Conducting an annual customer satisfaction survey is deemed necessary for the continuous development of the suppliers' supply chain management. In so many years backward they were many researchers interested to focus on factors might affect buyer satisfaction before drawing up their buying decision dedicated to any single factor or two to publish in their articles for other new researcher to refer or to conduct further research. Their analysis is mainly concentrated on market orientation measurement but is not that specific to this type of paper bags industry. Therefore, the empirical results revealed by this research study from N=70 and N=20 were duly analyzed. The data demonstrated that main conclusions which led the researcher the autonomous factors and ward factor exerts directly on the degree of paper bags customers satisfaction with their suppliers reliability. Besides this, the outcome results of the data and thematic analyses also drive the researcher to propose the implication for future research areas relative to paper bags industry on customer satisfaction, supplier selection and making of buying decision in order to enhance the customer relationships with their own customers. The methodologies to be applied in this research paper are the two main versions of mixed methods of quantitative by data analysis and qualitative by thematic analysis. Hope this research paper will provide some constructive results and new ideas for upcoming research study to base on current situation and future prospects of the cement paper bags industry development. The main role to play is the industrial demand which is depended on the volume of sales from the paper bags customers.

**Keywords:** Customer Satisfaction/Industrial Buying Decision Survey and Supply Chain Management.

## APPROVAL

This is to certify that this thesis conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in quality and scope, for the fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

The student has been supervised by: **Professor Dr. Juhary Ali**

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Professor Dr. Siow Heng Loke  
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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the thesis submitted in fulfilment of the PhD degree is my own work and that all contributions from any other persons or sources are properly and duly cited. I further declare that the material has not been submitted either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university. In making this declaration, I understand and acknowledge any breaches in this declaration constitute academic misconduct, which may result in my expulsion from the programme and/or exclusion from the award of the degree.

**Name: Fua Jin Hoe**

**Signature of Candidate:**

**Date: 26 June 2023**



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All started in the 29th August 2014 after appointment of my supervisor to begin my study.

Guidance and advice were shared down by the supervisor to give me a fruitful discussion in an intensive way. Seminars sessions conducted by University gave an excellence foundation for my research study and most of all it is a very supportive and motivating-study environment for a novice researcher like me just started off in his study.

Of course, I am not joking when saying that my research supervisor Professor Dr. Juhary Ali has provided his inspiration how to prepare my research paper to focusing on theoretical background to write in the literature with more value added.

The customer buying decision is mainly based on how they satisfied with their suppliers (the paper bags manufacturers) performance. Customer buying decision and satisfaction turned out to be a research topic that didn't have commonly agreed definitions and ready to use model in the data analysis both quantitatively and qualitatively in the result analysis.

During my research on-going process the literature reviews have changed according to changing needs but what have been rewarding is that all of the respondents who have been participating the research have taken co-operation seriously and added value to the conclusion and discussion parts on this research paper and result.

I hope that all the participants from both paper bags customers and manufacturers all recognize themselves were helpful and feel the same way.

One of the study highlights during the research phase way on my data collection periods facing a lot of hardship due to many participants were not so keen to provide

their views on research questionnaires. Thankful to paper bags customers who were willing to help.

This research study wanted to extent it thankful to the cement paper bags manufacturers cordially to share their views in the current problematic issues and future prospects of the cement paper bags industry. Together we pushed each other onwards in this research study.



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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATION**

ESG	Environmental, Social and Governance
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
ISO 9001	International Organization for Standardization
ISO 14001	International Organization for Standardization
OPC	Ordinary Portland cement
PCC	Portland Composite Cement
PLC	Public Limited Company
SCSB	Swedish Customer Satisfaction Barometer
ACSI	American Customer Satisfaction Index
ECSI	European Customer Satisfaction Index
MCSI	Malaysian Customer Satisfaction Index

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The determinants and implications of customer satisfaction and industrial buying decision have an equal role in providing solutions to the current problems faced by cement paper bags supplier in offering prospects for the industry. The industrial buyer behavior in the cement paper bags industry is much different from other normal market consumers buying behavior. The industrial buyers usually depend on the demand, much like in the case of key Portland cement producers and other industries from the same commodity buyers, where the yearly demand can reach up to ten million paper bags. The buying decision process mainly involves the evaluation of cement paper bag producers' reliabilities, the combination of factors within the criteria of supplier selection, and the influencing satisfaction which culminates in buying decisions. Any paper bag producer should be able to meet the basic requirements within the factors of the decision-making process. The product price to these large quantities buyers has become a sensitive issue. It could overshadow other influencing factors affecting the industrial buyers' satisfaction and buying decision process, due to the yearly consumption and demand. The cement paper bag producers should be innovative enough to structure their bags to reduce the cost, which will then place them in strong competition with others. Industrial buying behavior is called the process of making a buying decision (Stenberg & Gyokeres, 2005).

This research aims to examine the factors suitable to monitor these issues with regard to the cement paper bags' customer satisfaction and buying decision.

According to the Global Cement Report, Malaysia's current Portland cement sales have been on the decline since a few years ago. The demand for paper bags has greatly affected the supply and this can be illustrated by the cement demand graph on

page 18). This research has identified this as one of the research gaps in this study.

The cement paper bag industry should focus more on export marketing instead of depending heavily on domestic supply. The effect of an overabundance of supply is becoming the focus of many cement paper bag producers. However, to open up more export market sales, paper bag producers should consider various other criteria to expand and develop the export market. The prime factors that influence paper bag customer satisfaction in buying decisions depend on the feedback given by all the paper bag suppliers in the coming future. Customer mobility is considerably high in this type of industry. The factors that cause customers to switch from one provider to another can create a long-term effect on the demand and loyalty of customers, and this problem is faced by all paper bag suppliers. Another issue is the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) compliance, and how the paper bag suppliers are able to support customers' requests in their supply chain management. The issue of a surplus in domestic supply could further increase the competition in the domestic market and the anti-competition policy and competition will become the norm to these paper bag suppliers in the industry in the future.

The pre-distinguished factors to be analyzed in this research area are pricing, quality, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and suppliers' capabilities. These factors are expected to have a direct impact on influencing customer satisfaction and buying decision, which are the focus of this research. It is prudent to note here that the topic of this research is not by any means new and has been investigated in many past research papers. However, there is a need to further conduct more research on this particular industry, due to the situation of the supply of paper bags is more than its demand, as well as the need to identify the paper bag buying criteria. There is also the possibility of uncovering other problematic issues faced by current cement paper bag



suppliers or producers which can be unearthed by this research (Wen, 2009).

Among the more prominent issues in this industry are the ignorance and neglect of customer satisfaction and the paper bag suppliers' performance falling short of meeting customers' expectations. This is due to the weakness in the decision-making aspect of paper bag suppliers in the industry. Existing marketing and sales strategy may not be suitable in the current market situation. There are more and more aspects of customer satisfaction and buying decisions that paper bag suppliers should pay attention to. Customer loyalty is a fickle thing, and the switch from one supplier to another can happen very quickly and easily. That is why more studies are needed in this particular area; so that this gap can be addressed (Seto'-Pamiies, 2012).

Initially, the concern of any cement bag supplier is to reach their company's objectives and goals using their capability, market strategy and relevant influential factors to also improve market demand. Thus, it is logical that the next step for the paper bag industry is to upgrade and maintain sustainable standards of product quality. Further, paper bag suppliers need to find ways to reduce manufacturing expenses and intensify buyer satisfaction and buying decisions, along with product modification and innovation to compete with other suppliers. This is fundamental in creating a positive change, driving purchases and having a competitive advantage. Once these criteria have been adoptable, cost savings, market share gains, and profitability improvements can hardly be far behind the paper bag suppliers (Cătoiu et al., 2010).

The main research gap for this study are factors influencing customer satisfaction and supplier selection, and industrial buying decisions. The rationale and hypotheses will also be addressed. The issues of how to mitigate the tension of fiercer competition in the domestic market, paper bag suppliers' anti-competition policy, and ESG compliance are also considered in the main discussions within this study. The main

keywords in this study are "influential factors on supplier selection and customer satisfaction and industrial buying decision (Sachdev, 2018).

The objective of this research is to support the cement paper bags industry by examining customer evaluations and assessments in terms of the factors that influence satisfaction, supplier selection, and the buying decision process. Specifically, the study focuses on the suppliers' product price offers and quality to determine if they meet specified standards of requirements. Additionally, the research investigates the effectiveness of CRM services and identifies the most optimal ways for suppliers to demonstrate their competency and reliability in providing technical support, maintaining production capacity, and establishing a strong network with their paper bag suppliers.

## **1.1 Background of the Study**

The cement paper bag industry, belonging to the Malaysian paper bag industry, is characterized by its specific business nature. The cement paper bags industry is the only producer of multi-wall paper bags which makes up several plies of different grams (measurement of paperweight) of natural pulp papers. It not only has the ordinary Portland cement producers as its major customers, but also other types of industries using the same commodity.

The background of this research endeavors to establish the context of the study. This section will explain why this particular research paper's proposed topic is significant and essential to understanding the main aspects of the study. Further, the background will form the primary part of the thesis to justify the need for the research and to summarize what the study aims to achieve. However, the initial research topic of this study, "Factors Influencing Customer Satisfaction and Buying Decision", was

aimed at looking into ways to strengthen the cement paper bag suppliers' competitive advantages and long-term continuity of the industry, in terms of factors influencing customer satisfaction and buying decision and supplier selection criteria.

The pre-distinguish factors to be examined are product pricing, product quality, customer relationship management, and supplier capability. This is to be strictly and comprehensively discussed under literature review and, why and how these factors can attribute and influence buyer's satisfaction and buying decision. These factors are not particularly new research area to be explored.

Other major research areas to explore, such as the current problematic issues and prospects of the industry, are to be part of the research questions under the Discussion, Recommendation, and Conclusion sections of this study.

Another major challenge is how to mitigate the effects of paper bags customers' negative ideology on their decision making and supplier selection. Suppliers must add value what they are offering. This will add a niche to their products and overcome competition. Competition based solely on price will not be sustainable and should be avoided at all costs. Innovation, product enhancement, and improvement are the ways forward to ensure a company's longevity. Customers claimed that cement paper bag is not a special item in their requirements, and they could easily find suppliers to accommodate their needs. Only well-known and reputable brands have the ability to increase their prices since customers are willing to pay what it takes to acquire the products from a brand they trust and have confidence in.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

The primary focus of this study is to collect and analyze data in order to investigate several key aspects. Firstly, it aims to understand the reasons behind the current

challenges faced by paper bag suppliers, as perceived by their customers. Additionally, the study seeks to explore the weak customer loyalty towards re-purchase intentions and the high frequency of customer switching within the industry. Furthermore, the research aims to uncover any other underlying factors that may have an impact on customer satisfaction and buying decisions. By addressing these research questions, this study will shed light on the various factors influencing customer behavior in the paper bags industry, providing valuable insights for further examination.

Further, this research seeks to address a number of critical issues that currently impact the cement paper bags industry. These include challenges such as production overcapacity, the shift in sales strategy by key buyers from bagged cement to bulk cement via tankers, fluctuating purchasing costs due to revisions by overseas suppliers, inadequate import shipment quantities from overseas paper mills, the transition to high porosity paper by domestic cement paper bags suppliers in European paper mills, anti-competition policies affecting paper roll costs, intensified domestic market competition amidst declining demand for cement paper bags, difficulties faced by some suppliers in exploring export markets, compliance with Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) policies, managing extreme demand and supply scenarios that may compromise customer satisfaction and buying decisions, and the ongoing need for cement paper bags suppliers to prioritize and enhance customer satisfaction and buying decisions. This study aims to explore and investigate these research gaps, seeking insights from both cement paper bag customers and suppliers to uncover valuable outcomes.

Ultimately, this study will stress product quality, price and servicing are the primary drivers influencing customer satisfaction and buying decisions. However, currently, product quality is constantly overshadowed by product price in determining

customer satisfaction and buying decisions in the paper bags industry. Not only that, customer satisfaction is the key to running a successful business and cement paper bags suppliers are in a constant battle to achieve this.

The current direction may put the cement paper bag suppliers in tougher and more challenging positions to fulfill customers' requirements. Some companies might have to change their operations to a smaller scale or run at poor market demand and supply. This increase in buyer satisfaction and product standard in the cement paper bag industry fills the research gap regarding the relationship between product quality and other influencing factors affecting paper bag customer satisfaction and buying decisions (Elaho & Ejechi, 2019).

This critical issue has prevailed for many years in the cement paper bag industry. As such, product price and quality must have priority attention and action from the cement paper bag manufacturers' management. This is especially true since product price still shapes the dynamics of the business in this industry. When demands drop, a price war is inevitable as competitors strive to narrow the supply gap, which leads to an escalation in fierce competition.

Overall, customer satisfaction is a key issue for every cement paper bag supplier hoping to increase the value of customer assets and a better business performance. The ways to solve customer satisfaction should be measured and managed. The buying decision is a point of view buyers will stick to during the procurement procedure and checking purchasing motivation may be difficult to determine when they are considering multiple suppliers. Several previous empirical studies already pointed out the causes of buyer satisfaction and buying decisions. Based on the above problem statement, the following research questions will be discussed and addressed.

### 1.3 Research questions

Research questions are developed to assist the researcher to learn and to get a better insight to the cement paper bags companies' customers' preferences and needs. The questions also help the researcher to understand the problems and factors influencing customers in supplier selection and satisfaction before making any buying decision in the cement paper bags industry. The current customers' demand, anticipation, challenges and opportunities in the market of supply and demand are the concerns the cement paper bags industry suppliers are experiencing. As mentioned, the research questions serve as a guide in designing the research study and help the researcher to determine specific objectives in the study. Outlines of research findings will include research questions, hypothesis and research methods.

Further, the main purpose is to introduce the research study findings related to some of the current problematic issues to extract paper bag customers' views and knowledge in achieving the fundamental objectives of the research study and to boost the suppliers' competitive advantages.

The research findings are the key point outcomes and results of the investigation which include facts, observations as well as experimental data resulting from the research study run by the researcher.

Refer to Appendix E, (i), (ii) & (iii) – Questionnaires form for the research questions for one to four. Similarly, the following are the questions:

- 1) **Question one:** Does the product price, product quality, customer relationship management and supplier's capability influence customer satisfaction and buying decision?

**Appendix E (i) Research Question One Refers:**

**Table 1.1: Quantitative Research**

Ref..No.	Variables and References
QP1.	Product Price Factor (Noble & Gruce 1999).
1a.	Is the paper bags price quoted competitive?
1b.	Is this factor influencing customer satisfaction?
1c.	Is this factor influencing customer buying decision?
QP2.	Product Quality Factor (Bessant et al., 1994).
2a.	Is the paper bags quality meeting a specified standard requirement?
2b.	Is this factor influencing customer satisfaction?
2c.	Is this factor influencing customer buying decision?
QP3.	Customer Relationship Management Factor (Landeros et al. 1989).
3a.	Is the customer relationship management serving in the best possible way?
3b.	Is this factor influencing customer satisfaction?
3c.	Is this factor influencing customer buying decision?
QP4.	Supplier's Capability Factor (Vanpoucke et al., 2014)
4a.	Is the supplier's capability meeting competency and reliability on (Production capacity/technology/networks?)
4b.	Is this factor influencing customer satisfaction?
4c.	Is this factor influencing customer buying decision?

**Appendix E (ii):**

**Table 1.2: Research Questions Two – Four Refers**

Name of Cement Paper bags Suppliers: -	
Date:	
Nature of Business:	
Purpose: Planned Survey Interview – PhD Research Interview from Asia e-University (AeU) of Malaysia.	
<b>Ref: No.</b>	<b>Research Questions</b>
<b>Ref. No. QS 2:</b>	What are the current problematic issues between the cement paper bags suppliers and customers with regards to customers' satisfaction and buying decisions and future prospects of the industry?
Cement Paper Bags Supplier's Comment:	
<b>Ref. No. QS 3:</b>	What will be the other major issues and reasons to alert the cement paper bags supplier why they must continue to upgrade and enhance customer satisfaction, buying decisions and loyalty in their future forecast?
Cement Paper Bags Supplier's Comment:	
<b>Ref. No. QS 4:</b>	What will be the positive and negative effects to have anti-competition policy and ESG compliance to influence customer satisfaction and buying decisions to boost paper bag customers' long-term support?
Cement Paper Bags Supplier's Comment:	

**Appendix E (iii):**

**Table 1.3: Qualitative Research Question Refers**

<b>Ref. No. QQ 1</b> – Criteria on supplier selection of making of buying decision?
Cement Paper Bags Customer's Comment: -