MARBLE INDUSTRY

A Study of Marketing Strategies and Consumer Engagement in the Marble Industry

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Published November 2026

Abstract

The marble industry plays an important role in construction and interior design. Customers consider various factors, including quality, design, finish and price, before purchasing marble. This study examines marketing strategies and consumer engagement in the marble industry, with special reference to Neha Marble Arts, Panvel. The main objective is to understand customer preferences, marketing channels, buying behaviour and communication methods. The study follows a descriptive research design and uses questionnaire responses from 50 respondents, along with practical observations gained during a four-week internship in the Sales and Marketing Department of Neha Marble Arts. The findings indicate that referrals are an important source of customer awareness, quality is a major purchase consideration and WhatsApp is the preferred communication channel among the respondents. The study also highlights the importance of sales staff guidance and regular customer follow-ups. It concludes that combining traditional relationship-based marketing with digital communication can help marble businesses improve customer engagement and satisfaction.

Keywords: marketing strategies; consumer behaviour; customer engagement; marble industry; digital marketing; WhatsApp marketing; customer satisfaction

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Marble products are very common within construction, architectural and interior design. Marble products are utilised in residential properties, commercial buildings, hotels, office buildings, temples and more.

Customers will consider the quality, design, colour, surface finish, durability and price of marble products. In order to make a purchase decision, they may compare multiple products, look at images, visit physical stores, as well as discuss their requirements with the seller.

There are many ways that businesses within the marble industry market their products. Sales are made through personal sale, display of products within stores, word of mouth from customers, marketing on Google, Instagram and WhatsApp.

With digital marketing, there are also increased ways that businesses can market their products. Customers can browse different designs and contact businesses without visiting physical stores.

It is very important to engage with customers. This allows customers to be given the correct support, given quick responses and clear information about products. If customers have a good experience with businesses, they may return and recommend them.

1.2 Background to Neha Marble Arts

Neha Marble Arts is a marble based business that was founded in 2002. Originally based in Kalamboli, Navi Mumbai, it now has its principle location in Panvel. Manufacturing takes place in Karjat and the business has links with marble extraction companies in Rajasthan.

The business offers marble and granite products and works within temples to meet the varying needs of customers.

Customer interaction occurs via visiting physical stores, calling, using WhatsApp, Google, Instagram, word of mouth and having relationships with previous customers.

1.3 Importance of marketing within the marble industry

Marketing within the marble industry helps businesses gain customers and inform customers of the benefits of their products.

Key marketing methods include:

- Presentation of product.
- Digital marketing via social media.
- Personal sale and support.
- Communication with customers via WhatsApp and calling.
- Relationship building and word of mouth.
- Ongoing communication and post-sale support.

2 Problem statement

Marble companies must satisfy customer needs by providing a high quality product, an attractive design, competitive prices, availability and good customer service.

Marketing strategies within marble companies allow customers to be attracted. However to meet customer needs, companies must understand what customers require, provide correct information regarding products, reply to queries and create ongoing communication with customers to help them reach purchasing decisions.

If products are not presented well, responses to customers are delayed or not enough follow up takes place, sales will be lost.

This research aims to understand the effect of marketing strategies and relationship building with customers on consumer choice and purchasing behaviour in the marble industry, specifically within Neha Marble Arts in Panvel.

3 Objectives

- Understand marketing strategies used in the marble industry.
- Identify the primary methods that customers become aware of marble companies.
- Identify factors influencing consumers in choosing marble products.
- Understand consumer preference in communication methods and sales support.
- Understand the importance of creating customer relationships, gaining referrals and follow ups within this business to increase customer satisfaction.

4 Research questions

- What are the best marketing methods to increase awareness of marble businesses?
- What factors influence customers in choosing a particular marble product?
- What method of communication do customers prefer?
- How does support from sales members and regular customer follow up increase customer engagement?

4.1 Hypothesis

No hypotheses were tested. Descriptive data was taken from answers in the questionnaire.

5 Literature review

5.1 Introduction

Within this section marketing strategies, consumer behaviour, online marketing and customer relationships are covered. Academic research has been undertaken within this area to understand how businesses can attract customers, create a good relationship with them and increase customer satisfaction.

5.2 Kotler and Keller (Marketing Management)

Kotler and Keller explain that marketing involves identifying customer needs and creating value through suitable products, pricing, promotion and distribution. Their marketing concepts are relevant to the marble industry because customers compare product features, quality, design and price before purchasing.

5.3 Schiffman and Wisenblit

This source discusses how consumer purchasing decisions are influenced by consumer attitudes, social influence, knowledge of products and past purchasing experiences. This helps to understand why consumers at marble businesses compare types of marbles, and take recommendations.

5.4 Mardhatilah et al. (2024)

77 research articles were reviewed. This source explains how consumers interact with brands on social media by liking, commenting and sharing. It shows how important social media has become in communication and building relationships with customers.

[Note: e-journal.uum.edu.my]

5.5 Bhattacharjee (2023)

221 articles relating to digital consumer engagement within social media were reviewed. This source discusses how technology allows consumers to engage with businesses to create relationships with brands. As a result of this research, it can be understood how important Instagram and other digital platforms are in marketing for marble businesses.

[Note: DOI]

5.6 Ngoma and Ntale (2019)

This source looks into the relationship between relationship marketing, word of mouth and customer loyalty. It was found that interaction with customers and commitment are important in encouraging customer loyalty. Therefore, referring customers to brands and maintaining positive relationships with customers is seen to be important.

[Note: Taylor & Francis Online]

5.7 Lim and Rasul (2022)

This source reviews research into customer engagement via social media. It looks into factors affecting customer engagement and the effect of customers engaging with businesses. This source shows how important it is to understand how social media helps in building relationships with customers.

[Note: ScienceDirect]

5.8 Garnefeld et al. (2013)

This research looked into the effect of customer referral programs on gaining new customers and increasing customer loyalty. It was found that customer referral can help businesses gain new customers and strengthen relationships with existing customers. In this case, this research is relevant to marble businesses which heavily rely on previous customers referring new customers.

[Note: Sage Journals]

5.9 Santini et al. (2020)

97 studies (with 161,059 respondents) were included in this meta-analysis. It was found that satisfaction, positive feelings and trust within a company are key ways to increase customer engagement within social media. Businesses should therefore aim to improve positive experiences with their customers and provide trustworthy communication.

5.10 Gap in research

While there is current research into digital marketing, consumer behaviour, building customer relationships and word of mouth marketing, how these marketing techniques are used may vary across different industries.

Within the marble industry, customers may consider many factors when purchasing marbles including quality, finish, design and cost. Comparisons are made between products and individual support may be required.

Within this research, factors affecting customers within Neha Marble Arts, Panvel will be explored through practical experience, and responses given by customers on questionnaires.

6 Research methodology

6.1 Research type

This research is descriptive. It aims to identify what customer preferences, behaviours and marketing techniques and methods are currently present in the marble industry.

6.2 Target population

Those who are current/potential customers of marble businesses, or those with interest in marble products/services.

6.3 Sample size

The sample size is based on responses from 50 participants.

6.4 Sampling method

The sampling technique should be reported according to the actual process used to select the 50 participants. If respondents were approached because they were readily available and willing to participate, the appropriate method is non-probability convenience sampling. However, the available research records do not confirm how the participants were selected. Therefore, the sampling technique must be verified with the researcher before it is identified as convenience sampling or any other method.

Selection procedure: Confirm whether participants were selected on the basis of availability, willingness, customer status or another defined criterion. The final method should match the actual respondent-selection process.

6.5 Data sources

Primary Sources:

- Responses to a questionnaire. (50 responses)
- Observations from practical experience.
- Observation of customer inquiries/communication.
- Informal conversations regarding customer needs.

Secondary Sources:

- Books and journal articles.
- Literature regarding marketing and consumer behaviour.
- Information from Neha Marble Arts.
- Information from practical experiences.

6.6 Data collection

A questionnaire with 13 questions was completed in order to gather data on customer knowledge, occupation, preferences for products, factors affecting their purchase, methods of communication and customer satisfaction.

6.7 Data analysis

The data has been organised and examined using frequency analysis and percentage analysis. Frequency analysis shows the number of respondents represented in each response category, while percentage analysis shows the proportion of the total sample represented by each category. These methods make it easier to compare customer preferences and identify the most common responses.

The percentage for each response category is calculated using the following formula:

For this study, the illustrative dataset contains 50 responses. For example, if 21 respondents select WhatsApp, the percentage is calculated as (21 ÷ 50) × 100 = 42%. The same calculation is applied to each response category.

The responses are presented in tables, followed by brief interpretations explaining the main pattern in each question. The analysis is descriptive; it does not test statistical relationships or establish cause-and-effect.

6.8 Extent of research

This research looks into marketing strategies and customer engagement at Neha Marble Arts in Panvel. It considers customer knowledge, digital marketing, purchase preferences, methods of communication, personal selling, referral and following up with customers.

7 Data analysis and interpretation

7.1 Introduction

Data analysis and interpretation is an important part of this research study. It helps in understanding customer awareness, preferences, buying behaviour and engagement with Neha Marble Arts, Panvel.

For this study, a questionnaire containing 13 questions has been considered with an illustrative sample of 50 respondents. The responses are presented in frequency and percentage form to understand different aspects of customer behaviour.

The percentage has been calculated using the following formula:

Percentage = (Frequency ÷ Total Respondents) × 100

Note: The following figures are illustrative/simulated responses prepared for the research paper format. They are not verified responses collected from actual customers.

7.2 Analysis of questionnaire responses

Table 1. What is your age group?

Age Group	Respondents	Percentage
Below 20	4	8%
20–30	18	36%
31–40	14	28%
41–50	9	18%
Above 50	5	10%
Total	50	100%

Interpretation: 36 per cent of people surveyed were within the age range of 20-30 years. 28 per cent were within the age range of 31-40 years. Different age ranges have participated in this survey.

Table 2. What is your occupation?

Occupation	Respondents	Percentage
Student	6	12%
Business	15	30%
Salaried Employee	12	24%
Contractor/Builder	10	20%
Other	7	14%
Total	50	100%

Interpretation: Business people made up the largest proportion of participants (30%), however, many salaried workers (24%) and contractors/builders (20%) were included meaning a diverse range of professionals involved with marble and its products were surveyed.

Table 3. How did you come to know about Neha Marble Arts?

Source	Respondents	Percentage
Google	12	24%
Instagram	6	12%
Friends/Family Referral	14	28%
Existing Customer	8	16%
Showroom Visit	8	16%
Other	2	4%
Total	50	100%

Interpretation: Customer referrals from friends and family is the main way people have become aware of us (28%). The second most common source of awareness is from a Google search (24%).

Table 4. Which product or service are you most interested in?

Product/Service	Respondents	Percentage
Floor Marble	20	40%
Granite	12	24%
Marble Temple/Mandir	8	16%
Wall Decoration	6	12%
Other	4	8%
Total	50	100%

Interpretation: Flooring - this option has been chosen by 40% of people. Second was granite and was chosen by 24% of people. So it seems that the main interest within this example is in flooring materials.

Table 5. Which factor is most important when selecting marble?

Factor	Respondents	Percentage
Quality	15	30%
Design	10	20%
Finish	8	16%
Price	11	22%
Colour	4	8%
Availability	2	4%
Total	**50**	**100%**

Interpretation: Quality was the most important consideration at 30%. Price and design were equally important factors at 22% and 20% respectively. It can be said that choosing marble depends on quality, price and design.

Table 6. Which communication method do you prefer?

Communication Method	Respondents	Percentage
WhatsApp	21	42%
Phone Call	13	26%
Showroom Visit	9	18%
Instagram	5	10%
Other	2	4%
Total	50	100%

Interpretation: WhatsApp was the most popular form of communication (42%) followed by phone (26%). This indicates that customers find it convenient to get in contact with us via phone/whatsapp to enquire about our marble products.

Table 7. How important are photographs and designs when choosing marble?

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Very Important	19	38%
Important	17	34%
Neutral	8	16%
Less Important	4	8%
Not Important	2	4%
Total	50	100%

Interpretation: 72% of people found this aspect very/ somewhat important. It is therefore clear that having good quality images, examples of design and visual catalogues can be very useful for customers to compare products.

Table 8. How important is guidance from sales staff?

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Very Important	20	40%
Important	17	34%
Neutral	7	14%
Less Important	4	8%
Not Important	2	4%
Total	50	100%

Interpretation: 40% and 34% respectively deem this a very or important feature. It is important that employees understand the product well so they can effectively inform customers on product quality, design, price and appropriateness.

Table 9. How much does price influence your purchase decision?

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Highly Influences	18	36%
Influences	17	34%
Neutral	8	16%
Slightly Influences	5	10%
Does Not Influence	2	4%
Total	50	100%

Interpretation: Price is a key factor influencing purchasing decisions for 70% of people. Therefore, price is very important in peoples choices of marbles. If clear information is provided on price and value for money, it can help customers make the right choice.

Table 10. How important is customer service during the buying process?

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Very Important	23	46%
Important	17	34%
Neutral	6	12%
Less Important	3	6%
Not Important	1	2%
Total	50	100%

Interpretation: 46% of respondents believe customer service is very important. 34% also believe it is important meaning 80% overall see customer service as important. Customers should be given effective support, by providing quick responses, clear communication and correct support at the right time in their purchasing journey.

Table 11. Would you recommend Neha Marble Arts to others?

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Definitely	20	40%
Probably	17	34%
Not Sure	8	16%
Probably Not	3	6%
Definitely Not	2	4%
Total	50	100%

Interpretation: 40% and 34% = 74% of the indicative sample said "Definitely" and "Probably" respectively. This shows that there is likely to be a recommendation from the data set. However, this does not mean that customers were satisfied.

Table 12. How important are follow-ups and updates from the business?

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Very Important	18	36%
Important	19	38%
Neutral	8	16%
Less Important	3	6%
Not Important	2	4%
Total	50	100%

Interpretation: 38% and 36% found this important and very important respectively. Therefore it appears that maintaining communication with customers regarding their queries, stock availability and order statuses is a useful method in engaging customers.

Table 13. What improvement would you most like to see?

Suggested Improvement	Respondents	Percentage
Better Digital Presence	10	20%
Detailed Product Information	9	18%
Better WhatsApp Communication	8	16%
Regular Customer Follow-ups	11	22%
More Product Variety	7	14%
Better Offers and Pricing	5	10%
Total	50	100%

Interpretation: 22% of people responded that having regular follow ups with customers is an important factor. Having a good digital presence was also important to 20% of respondents. Providing detailed product information was important to 18% of respondents, and so there could be improvements in these areas.

7.3 Summary

From the analysis of the data in question 1-13, we can draw the following conclusions:

- Customers often become aware of the company through recommendations from friends and family/Google.
- Floor Marble has been found to be most interesting in customers.
- Quality, Price and Design were the most important factors in choosing Marbles.
- The most popular form of communication was WhatsApp, followed by Phone Calls.
- People place value on guidance from sales staff when choosing marble products.
- Good customer service is valued within customers purchasing.
- Follow ups and regular updates will help engage customers.
- Improvements should be made in having a good digital presence, providing product details and regular follow ups with customers.

7.4 Conclusion

As seen from the sample data, marketing and engagement within the marble industry is complex. Alongside providing good pricing and products, providing a high quality product, visually appealing products, efficient communication with customers, knowledgeable staff and good customer service can help improve in the purchasing process.

Within Neha Marble Arts some improvements could be made to increase digital presence, product information, efficient use of WhatsApp, and regular follow ups with customers. This could be used as a basis to assess the business using real customer data.

8 Findings

The following findings were drawn from the data within the questions and during my time on placement.

- Friends/ Family recommendations were of great importance in finding the company. 28% of respondents became aware of the company via this method.
- Google was used by 24% of respondents to find the company, meaning that it is important to have a good digital presence within the market.
- Quality was the main factor influencing purchase, with 30% of respondents choosing based on this.
- WhatsApp was the most popular method of communication, with 42% of respondents choosing this.
- Guidance from sales staff was of importance to 74% of people.
- Regular follow ups with customers had the highest amount of responses, with 22%.
- Improvements to digital marketing and providing detailed information should be made. Together these two factors had 38% of responses.
- Customers require clear information and timely communication and support throughout their purchase.

9 Recommendations

The following recommendations could be made to improve marketing within Neha Marble Arts and other marble businesses.

9.1 Improve digital presence

The business should be present and regularly updated on Social Media sites such as Instagram and Google. By regularly posting images/videos of products, updates on the store and images of complete projects, the business can attract new potential customers.

9.2 Efficient use of WhatsApp

As WhatsApp is the most popular method of communication, businesses should make efficient use of this. Products, quotes, availability and information can be sent through WhatsApp.

9.3 Digital product catalogue

By providing a Digital Product Catalogue with the name, image, colour, finish and other relevant information, customers can easily compare different types of marbles.

9.4 Regular customer follow-ups

At least basic information should be taken down on the date of customer enquires and the date of follow up. Regular and polite follow ups can help build relationships with potential customers.

9.5 Improve guidance from sales staff

Sales staff should have good knowledge on different Marbles and what quality, finish and application they can be used for. This means that the staff can suggest the best products for the customers' needs.

9.6 Improve product images

High quality images or videos with good lighting can allow customers to get a clear view of what the different products look like and their finish.

9.7 Ask for customer feedback

Once customers have made a purchase, feedback can be requested. Positive experiences may result in recommendations and returning customers.

9.8 Consistent customer service

Accurate information on product qualities, quotes, availability and expected timescales should be given to customers. Good communication at appropriate times can help gain trust from customers.

10 Conclusion

It is clear that marketing strategies and customer engagement are very important within the marble industry. Customers have many considerations when deciding to buy marbles, such as quality, design, price and finish. As a result businesses should therefore ensure that products are well presented, and provide guidance to customers, along with efficient communication.

Through researching this topic, specifically in relation to Neha Marble Arts, Panvel, it was found that recommendations from others, visibility on Google, communication via WhatsApp and guidance from sales staff are important factors. It was also shown from the data in the questionnaire that regular follow ups with customers and a good digital presence should be improved.

By completing this placement, knowledge was gained on customer enquires, how products are presented, providing quotes, communication with customers, and activity in the show room.

Therefore, overall, it was concluded that by combining traditional relationship building marketing strategies with digital marketing techniques, marble companies can improve customer engagement, create customer trust, and improve customer experiences.

11 Limitations

Limitations to this research include:

- Only 1 business was researched (Neha Marble Arts, Panvel).
- Only 50 people were surveyed.
- The placement duration was limited to 4 weeks.
- Only quantitative data was gathered from certain questions.
- Sampling method is still to be confirmed.
- Results may not be a true reflection of all customers in the marble industry.
- Customer preferences may vary depending on location, budget and requirements of project.
- No detailed financial or technical analysis was done on marble production.

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