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Assessment of Stockist Operations and Distribution Efficiency of Ultra Tech Cement in Chikhli: A Case Study on M/S Savji and Son's

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ABSTRACT: The cement industry serves as a fundamental component of infrastructure development in India, with UltraTech Cement being a market leader known for its high-quality products and extensive distribution network. The effectiveness of UltraTech's regional sales depends heavily on the efficiency of its stockists, who act as crucial intermediaries in the supply chain. Saoji Loh Bhandar, a leading stockist in Chikhli, Maharashtra, plays a significant role in ensuring timely availability of UltraTech Cement to retailers, contractors, and construction firms. However, the stockist's ability to meet customer demand is influenced by factors such as supply chain logistics, transportation costs, inventory management, and competitive pricing strategies. Given the increasing competition from local cement brands and the fluctuating nature of demand in the construction sector, stockists like Saoji Loh Bhandar must continuously refine their business operations to remain profitable and efficient. This research examines the operational framework of Saoji Loh Bhandar, evaluating its approach to inventory management, pricing, supply chain coordination, and customer relations to understand the key challenges and opportunities in cement distribution.

Using a mixed-method research approach, data was collected through interviews with stockist managers, surveys with local retailers and customers, and on-site observations of stock handling procedures. The study reveals that while Saoji Loh Bhandar effectively maintains a steady supply of UltraTech Cement, it faces several challenges, including logistical inefficiencies, high transportation costs, and price fluctuations due to external market conditions. Additionally, demand for cement varies significantly based on seasonal factors, economic activity, and regional construction projects, creating inventory management difficulties. Furthermore, competition from alternative cement brands offering lower prices puts pressure on UltraTech stockists to develop strategic pricing models and better customer engagement initiatives. To improve operations, the study suggests implementing advanced inventory tracking systems, optimizing transportation routes, and adopting flexible pricing policies to better align with market demand.

I. INTRODUCTION

The cement industry plays a crucial role in the infrastructure development of India, contributing significantly to the country's economic growth. Among the leading players, UltraTech Cement stands as a market leader known for its quality, wide distribution network, and operational efficiency. In the competitive cement market, the efficiency of stockist operations and the strength of the distribution network directly influence customer satisfaction, market penetration, and profitability. This research paper focuses on assessing the stockist operations and distribution efficiency of UltraTech Cement in the Chikhli region, with a special case study on its local distributor, M/s Savji and Sons.

Stockists act as critical intermediaries in the supply chain of cement, ensuring timely availability of products to retailers and end users, especially in semi-urban and rural markets. Their operational efficiency impacts not only the overall supply chain performance but also sales volume, customer retention, and brand image. M/s Savji and Sons, a key stockist of



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UltraTech Cement in Chikhli, has been instrumental in bridging the gap between the company and the regional market. However, with the evolving market dynamics, increasing competition, and the rising expectations of retailers and customers, it is imperative to evaluate the performance of stockist operations in terms of logistics, workforce management, inventory handling, order processing, and HR practices.

In recent years, the role of human resource management at the distribution and stockist level has gained attention. Efficient manpower planning, training and development, employee motivation, and performance monitoring are some HRM aspects that directly influence the responsiveness and effectiveness of stockist operations. A well-trained and engaged workforce can significantly reduce delays, minimize handling losses, and improve customer service. Therefore, this study will explore how HRM practices at M/s Savji and Sons contribute to their distribution performance and overall operational efficiency.

The research will also analyze key indicators such as order fulfillment time, stock turnover ratio, retailer feedback, and the role of technology in streamlining operations. By understanding the challenges faced by the stockist in the Chikhli region, the study aims to recommend actionable strategies to UltraTech Cement and similar companies for strengthening their distribution framework. Ultimately, this case study will serve as a valuable reference for improving stockist-level HRM and distribution practices in the cement industry

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Introduction to Stockist Operations in Supply Chain Management Stockists play a vital role in the distribution network of manufacturing companies, especially in sectors like cement, where product availability and timely delivery are critical for business success. According to Chopra and Meindl (2016), a stockist acts as an intermediary between manufacturers and end users, ensuring that products are distributed efficiently and are available close to the point of demand. The efficiency of stockist operations has a direct influence on supply chain responsiveness, inventory turnover, and customer satisfaction.

In the cement industry, stockists help bridge the gap between large manufacturing units and local retail markets. As cement is a bulky and non-perishable product with high logistical costs, a well-organized distribution system supported by capable stockists is essential. A study by Raghuram and Rangaraj (2001) emphasized that distribution efficiency in cement depends on local warehouse management, transportation planning, and information sharing between stockists and the parent company.

2. Distribution Efficiency and Its Determinants

Distribution efficiency is often defined by factors such as speed of order fulfillment, inventory accuracy, cost-effectiveness, service quality, and delivery reliability. According to Kotler and Keller (2012), companies that optimize distribution can achieve a significant competitive advantage. Efficient logistics systems, supported by skilled manpower and digital tools, can drastically reduce delivery delays and enhance customer relationships.

In the context of UltraTech Cement, which operates in a highly competitive market, distribution efficiency not only affects sales but also brand loyalty among retailers and builders. A study by CRISIL (2018) on the Indian cement industry highlighted how poor last-mile delivery and inefficient stockist operations can lead to lost market share. Thus, manufacturers must focus on training their stockist partners, ensuring proper logistics support, and tracking performance metrics.

3. Human Resource Management in Stockist Operations

While stockist operations are often viewed through the lens of logistics and sales, HRM practices at the stockist level play an equally crucial role. Effective human resource management can significantly enhance productivity, reduce errors, and build a motivated workforce. As noted by Armstrong (2020), strategic HRM involves aligning human capital with operational goals, which applies not only to large firms but also to distributors and channel partners. For stockists like M/s Savji and Sons, key HRM areas include workforce planning, training, leadership, employee motivation, job satisfaction, and performance monitoring. According to a study by Boxall & Purcell (2011), small businesses that invest in HR capabilities tend to outperform others in customer service and operational consistency. Therefore, stockist-level HRM practices are central to the overall supply chain effectiveness of large brands like UltraTech.



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4. Technology and Performance Monitoring

Modern supply chains are increasingly adopting technologies such as ERP systems, GPS-enabled logistics, and real-time inventory tracking to monitor performance and reduce inefficiencies. Studies by Deloitte (2021) on digital transformation in distribution networks suggest that stockists adopting digital tools see improvements in order accuracy, reduced turnaround time, and enhanced coordination with manufacturers.

In UltraTech's case, the company has invested in digital portals and apps for its stockists to place orders, track shipments, and access sales data. However, the effectiveness of such tools depends on the digital literacy and training of the stockist's employees. M/s Savji and Sons, being a regional distributor, must adapt to such changes by upgrading workforce capabilities and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

5. Case Studies and Industry Insights

A case study on Ambuja Cement's stockist network (IIM-A Research, 2019) revealed that decentralization of decision-making, regular HR audits, and local leadership development led to more responsive and agile stockist operations. Another research by KPMG (2020) found that successful stockists maintain a strong alignment between logistics planning and human resource efficiency, thereby minimizing delivery delays and maximizing regional market penetration.

In the rural and semi-urban context like Chikhli, factors such as road connectivity, workforce availability, and market demand fluctuations also influence stockist performance. Therefore, a localized assessment of stockist operations, as in the case of M/s Savji and Sons, becomes essential to develop actionable strategies tailored to the ground realities



III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive and case study approach to examine the stockist operations and distribution efficiency of M/s Savji and Sons, a key distributor of UltraTech Cement in Chikhli. The case study design enables an in-depth understanding of logistics, HR practices, and operational challenges at the stockist level.

Objectives of the Study

- To evaluate stockist operations and distribution performance.
- To assess the role of HR practices in stockist efficiency.
- To identify gaps and propose improvements in distribution management.



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Data Collection Methods

Primary Data:

- Structured interviews with stockist manager, staff, and retailers.
- Questionnaire surveys to assess workforce practices and satisfaction.
- Field observations of warehouse and delivery processes.

Secondary Data:

- UltraTech Cement documents, stockist policies, and industry reports.
- Past research studies and published literature on supply chain and HRM.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A purposive sample of 16 respondents was selected, including the stockist owner, 5 employees, and 10 local retailers, to ensure focused and relevant insights.

Data Analysis Techniques

- Quantitative data: Percentage and frequency analysis.
- Qualitative data: Thematic interpretation of interviews and observations.
- SWOT analysis: Used to assess internal strengths and external challenges.

Limitations

- Focused on a single stockist; limited generalizability.
- Some internal business data was confidential and inaccessible.
- Responses may include subjective bias.

Analysis and Discussion

1. Operational Performance Analysis

The field visits and interviews revealed that M/s Savji and Sons has built a stable and trusted network with over 35 local retailers in the Chikhli region. The stockist maintains a consistent flow of cement products from UltraTech's central warehouse to its own storage units. On average, the turnaround time from order placement to delivery was found to be 2–3 working days, which is satisfactory for the construction sector, where urgent demand is common.

The inventory management system is semi-automated, using Excel sheets and physical records. While this is functional, the lack of real-time inventory tracking occasionally results in overstocking or delays in fulfilling large orders. The transportation system includes two delivery trucks, which manage both short-distance and outskirt deliveries. However, during peak season, these vehicles are often overburdened, which can delay fulfillment and reduce customer satisfaction.

A key strength identified is customer relationship management. Retailers expressed high satisfaction with the responsiveness, credit flexibility, and personal connection maintained by the stockist. However, the absence of digital ordering platforms puts

M/s Savji and Sons at a disadvantage compared to more tech-enabled distributors.

2. Human Resource Practices

In terms of HR practices, the stockist employs a small workforce of around 6–8 people, including warehouse staff, drivers, and administrative assistants. The recruitment process is informal, often based on referrals and local hiring. There is no formal induction or structured training for new hires, which affects productivity and role clarity during the initial employment period.

Employee motivation was observed to be based largely on trust and verbal commitments, with limited use of written job roles, performance appraisals, or incentives. While this informal structure allows flexibility, it creates challenges in scaling up operations and maintaining consistency in service quality. Most employees reported learning through



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observation and experience rather than structured guidance, indicating a gap in skill development and professional training.

Despite these limitations, employees displayed loyalty and job satisfaction due to the family-like environment. However, the lack of performance evaluation tools and rewards means there is little data to support decisions on promotion, discipline, or role delegation.

3. SWOT Analysis Summary

Strengths	Weaknesses
Strong relationship with retailers	Lack of HR formalization and structured training
Reliable delivery in local areas	Manual inventory and dispatch systems
Flexible credit and customer support	Limited vehicle fleet and transport delays
Opportunities	Threats
Digitalization of order system	Growing competition from tech-enabled dealers
Workforce skill training programs	Rising fuel and transport costs

4. Discussion

The research shows that M/s Savji and Sons has been able to maintain strong customer relationships and timely deliveries through personalized service and regional familiarity. However, operational bottlenecks like transport limitations, manual processes, and inventory inefficiencies are likely to become more visible as demand increases.

From an HRM perspective, the stockist must move beyond informal management toward professional HR practices, including training modules, formal onboarding, documentation, and performance tracking. Aligning workforce development with operational goals will allow for improved accountability and better service outcomes.

The case also reflects a broader industry trend where traditional stockists must adapt to digital transformation, especially in inventory and order management. Adopting mobile order apps, CRM tools, and basic ERP systems would not only increase efficiency but also align M/s Savji and Sons with UltraTech's long-term supply chain modernization strategy.

IV. CONCLUSION

1. Summary of the Study

This research paper aimed to assess the stockist operations and distribution efficiency of UltraTech Cement in the Chikhli region by focusing on M/s Savji and Sons, a prominent local distributor. Through a combination of interviews, field observations, and questionnaires, the study explored various dimensions of operational performance, logistics efficiency, and human resource management at the stockist level. The findings offer a holistic understanding of how stockist-level operations contribute to the overall distribution strategy of a large company like UltraTech Cement.

The study revealed that M/s Savji and Sons performs well in areas such as customer relationship management, credit flexibility, and local market reach. Their long-standing relationship with local retailers and consistent delivery schedules ensure a strong customer base and repeat business. However, challenges such as manual inventory tracking, limited transportation resources, and informal HR practices have a noticeable impact on efficiency and scalability.

2. HRM and Operational Challenges

One of the key findings of the study was the lack of formal HRM systems within the stockist's operations. There is



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minimal focus on structured recruitment, formal onboarding, performance evaluation, or employee training. While the informal and trust-based

environment helps build a close-knit team, it may not be sustainable as the scale of operations increases. The absence of defined roles, performance metrics, and reward systems could potentially limit employee development and operational consistency in the long run.

Moreover, operational limitations such as outdated manual processes, lack of digital tools, and inadequate transportation infrastructure affect the stockist's ability to handle growing order volumes and fluctuating demand patterns. In an era where companies are embracing digital supply chains, the inability to modernize may eventually hinder the stockist's ability to meet UltraTech's evolving expectations.

3. Strategic Implications

The case study highlights a growing need for professionalization of stockist operations, especially in semi-urban and rural markets. Companies like UltraTech Cement should not only focus on improving their own systems but also invest in upgrading the capabilities of their distribution partners. This could involve providing training to stockist staff, offering software support for inventory and order management, and implementing performance-based incentives to encourage efficiency.

Furthermore, stockists like M/s Savji and Sons can gain significant operational advantages by adopting basic technological tools, such as mobile order apps, digital billing systems, and automated inventory trackers. Aligning both HR and operational strategies with business growth will result in better service to retailers, reduced delivery delays, and enhanced customer loyalty.

4. Conclusion and the Way Forward

In conclusion, the research reinforces the idea that stockist-level performance is a critical link in the cement industry's distribution chain. For UltraTech Cement to maintain its leadership in the market, continuous improvement at the distributor level is essential. M/s Savji and Sons presents a strong foundation built on trust, market experience, and service reliability—but it requires structured intervention in the form of HR formalization and operational modernization to evolve further.

The findings of this study can help guide UltraTech Cement and similar firms in developing supportive frameworks for stockist development, including HR training modules, digital adoption plans, and logistics optimization strategies. With proper attention to human capital and operational systems, stockists can transform from traditional distributors to efficient, growth-oriented business partners—benefiting both the principal company and the end customers.

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