

Cement makers step up brand building drive

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With competition getting intense, cement companies are fine tuning their strategies to differentiate themselves with brand building measures. Cement producers are banking on extensive coverage and celebrity endorsements to build top-of-the-mind recall among users.

Binani Cements Ltd started by signing film personality Amitabh Bachhan as its brand ambassador last year, JK Lakshmi signed on actor Om Puri and now cement multinational Lafarge has signed on cricketer Mahendra Singh Dhoni as the brand ambassador for their brand, Concreto.

Says CS Sadasivan, chief of marketing, JK Lakshmi Cement "Cement is no longer just a commodity, and to ensure long term profitability, every company today has to build its brand."

Moreover, companies say they are witnessing more queries from their customers and an increase in demand owing to such promotional methods. "This has helped us in more sales realisation, especially in the rural markets after we signed Bachhan as our brand ambassador," revealed Vinod Juneja, MD of Binani Cement Ltd.

Similarly, cement manufacturer Lafarge India announced its association with Dhoni recently, in line with its



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strategy to be a leading cement brand in India.

On the other hand, UltraTech, rather than bringing in a celebrity to build its brand, has promoted its phrase, 'UltraTech, the engineers choice' emphasising that its cement is most preferred by engineers in the country.

Declining to reveal any specific numbers on the amount paid to the brand ambassadors or the sales increase as a result of the promotions, these companies see the move as a nation building exercise along with brand building.

"The competition is getting more and tougher and to differentiate ourselves from others, we need to strengthen our brand," said Sadasivan.