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CONSUMER'S INTERACTION PROFILES: CIVIL CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS VALUED ATTRIBUTES IN BRAZIL AND MEXICO

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This article sought to understand the relationship between the categories of attributes most valued by customersgrouped here as shown in the methodology below and the relationship profiles of Brazilian and Mexican consumers.

Methodology: To understand the relationship between the categories of valued attributes and the interaction and relationship patterns of these Brazilian and Mexican consumers, a content analysis was initially conducted on all attributes identified in the 246 valid interviews obtained in the two countries. Subsequently, the categories developed by the authors along with socioeconomic variables and customer interaction categories were analyzed using statistical testing and multiple correspondence analysis.

Originality: The originality lies in the academic complementarity between relationship marketing theory and marketing strategy theory carried out in these two important Latin American countries (Brazil and Mexico). The results of this research assist marketing managers in defining strategies for this branch of the retail sector of civil construction materials.

Main Results: A close relationship was found between the following factors: country of origin, interaction profile with the company, and the most important attributes consumers consider when purchasing construction materials.

Theoretical Contributions: The initial theoretical contribution of this study was the categorization of the main attributes identified by interviewees as important when selecting a construction materials retailer. These attribute categories were then cross-referenced with interaction profiles and countries. The two theoretical and methodological contributions of this article are relevant and original, complemented by the comparison between Brazilian and Mexican consumers, demonstrating evidence that cultural differences can lead to differences in their desired attributes and showing how this can affect marketing strategies particularly relationship marketing in these two different Latin American countries.

Keywords: Retail marketing strategies. Determining attributes. Construction retail. Interactivity profile.

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PERFIS DE INTERAÇÃO DOS CONSUMIDORES: ATRIBUTOS VALORIZADOS EM MATERIAIS DE CONSTRUÇÃO CIVIL NO BRASIL E NO MÉXICO

RESUMO

Objetivo: Esse artigo buscou entender a relação entre as categorias dos atributos mais valorizados pelos clientes, aqui agrupados conforme mostrado na metodologia abaixo, e o perfil de relacionamento dos consumidores brasileiros e mexicanos.

Metodologia: Para entender essa relação entre as categorias dos atributos valorizados e a forma de interação e de relacionamento desses consumidores brasileiros e mexicanos, optou-se por inicialmente fazer uma análise de conteúdo com todos os atributos indicados nas 246 entrevistas válidas obtidas nesses dois países. Depois disso essas categorias criadas pelos autores desse artigo juntamente com variáveis sócio-econômicas e as categorias de interação com o cliente foram analisadas por meio de testes estatísticos e análise de correspondência múltipla.

Originalidade: A originalidade deste artigo reside na complementaridade acadêmica entre a teoria do marketing de relacionamento e a teoria da estratégia de marketing desenvolvida nesses dois importantes países latino-americanos (Brasil e México). Os resultados desta pesquisa auxiliam os gestores de marketing na definição de estratégias para esse segmento do varejo de materiais de construção civil.

Principais Resultados: Foi encontrada uma estreita relação entre os seguintes fatores: o país de origem, o perfil de interação com a empresa e os atributos mais importantes que os consumidores consideram na compra dos materiais de construção.

Contribuições Teóricas: A contribuição teórica inicial deste estudo foi a categorização dos principais atributos apontados pelos entrevistados como importantes na seleção de um varejista de materiais de construção civil. Depois essas categorias de atributos foram cruzadas com os perfis de interatividade e com os países. As duas contribuições teórico-metodológicas deste artigo são relevantes e originais, sendo complementadas pela comparação entre os consumidores Brasileiros e Mexicanos, mostrando evidências de que diferenças culturais entre eles podem levar a preferencias específicas nos atributos desejados e como isso pode afetar as estratégias de marketing, principalmente de marketing de relacionamento nesses dois diferentes países latino-americanos.

Palavras-chave: Estratégias de marketing de varejo. Atributos determinantes. Varejo de construção. Perfil de interatividade.

INTRODUCTION

Corporate competitiveness depends on the adoption of marketing strategies appropriate to an organisation's strategy for developing consumer loyalty. Yang and Peterson (2004) show that organisations improve their competitive position in the market and increase the effectiveness of their strategies by keeping customers satisfied.

To build a loyal customer base, an organisation must collect information about customers and their interaction profile. Gordon (1998) identifies several profiles of interactivity. The customer composition in each category allows the identification of niche markets that can be conquered or made loyal with appropriate marketing strategies: Transactional Marketing or Relationship Marketing. Brodie et al. (2008) clarify the difference between these two approaches. Transactional Marketing (TM) is based on the 4P strategies (competitive strategies of Product, Price, Promotion, and Point of Sale). Relationship Marketing (RM) centers on efforts to build and maintain relationships with customers, which requires focus on customers and identification of the expectations and attributes they consider when selecting a company over its competitors. This approach contributes to building customer loyalty and considering their interactions with the organisation.

Relationship marketing has long been recognized as a strategic approach for developing long-term customer relationships and fostering customer loyalty. The Commitment–Trust Theory proposed by Morgan and Hunt (1994) established trust and commitment as the fundamental determinants of successful relational exchanges, while Palmatier (2008) demonstrated that relationship marketing strategies generate superior customer outcomes through enhanced satisfaction, trust, and loyalty. Similarly, Payne and Frow (2017) emphasized that value co-creation and customer-centric relationship management are essential for sustaining competitive advantage in increasingly dynamic markets. Although these theoretical foundations have been extensively validated in retail, financial services, hospitality, and other service industries, their application to the construction sector remains limited. Existing studies in construction have primarily focused on project management, service quality, and after-sales assistance rather than examining how relationship marketing dimensions influence consumer loyalty. Moreover, research has largely emphasized business-to-business relationships among contractors, developers, and suppliers, leaving the business-to-consumer perspective insufficiently explored, particularly in emerging economies.

This study addresses this theoretical and empirical gap by investigating the influence of relationship marketing on customer loyalty in the residential construction sector through a comparative analysis of consumers in Brazil and Mexico. Although both countries are among the largest construction markets in Latin America, little is known about whether the relational mechanisms proposed by Morgan and Hunt (1994), Palmatier (2008), and Payne and Frow (2017)—including trust, commitment, relationship quality, communication, and customer value creation—operate similarly across these distinct institutional and cultural contexts. Previous studies have generally examined customer loyalty

within a single country or outside the construction industry, limiting the generalizability of relationship marketing theory to this sector. By comparing Brazil and Mexico, this research extends relationship marketing theory to an under explored context, contributes to the understanding of customer loyalty formation in the construction industry, and provides empirical evidence on how relationship marketing strategies can strengthen consumer retention and long-term competitive advantage in emerging markets.

The present work also aims to identify the different attributes that influence the selection of a civil construction materials retailer by consumers in Brazil and Mexico, considering their profiles of interactivity with an organisation.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The retail trade of civil construction materials in Brazil and Mexico

The demand for retail construction materials is generated by work involving the "construction, demolition, renovation, expansion of buildings or any other improvement added to the soil or subsoil" (Receita Federal, n.d). These retailers serve consumers within a market system that encompasses the extraction of wood and non-metallic materials to the construction materials industry and the trade and services sector, which includes the construction materials retail trade, the focus of this study (ABRAMAT, 2024). All the links of this market system constitute the productive and distributive chain, that is, "the stages covered by the raw materials, in which they are transformed and assembled, with the use of work and technology" (p.1). As the author points out, "behind a ready-made building, there is a complex production process that involves links in the construction industry, materials industry, trade, services and equipment industry" (p.1). Next, we examine the specifics of the commercialisation systems of civil construction products in Brazil and Mexico.

Distribution and retail channels in Mexico

In Mexico's construction industry, self-builders predominate: approximately 60% of national construction material consumption is generated by informal residential builders, including homeowners and small contractors (Connolly, 2020). As a result, most customers purchase materials only occasionally for renovations or personal projects, with a small segment representing continuous, large-scale demand. Developing loyal customers, therefore, depends on educational initiatives, technical support, and relationship-building strategies that encourage repeat use.

Mexico's construction materials sector has shown steady growth for decades (EMR, 2025). In 2024, the market reached USD 19.08 million and is projected to grow to USD 26.34 million by 2033, with a CAGR of 3.65% for 2025–2033; alternative estimates suggest 4.31% (IMARC GROUP, 2025). Growth is driven by infrastructure investment and rising residential and commercial demand associated with rapid urbanisation.

Manufacturers typically serve two segments: the institutional market construction firms, developers, government agencies and the retail market, which is largely oriented towards self-construction (El Economista, 2025a). Distribution remains fragmented due to product specialisation, and nationwide coverage is limited. Construrama, owned by Cemex, is the market leader, operating more than 2,000 points of sale and partnering with over 900 distributors; an estimated one in five cement bags sold nationally passes through this network (Construrama, 2026). Major DIY chains such as Home Depot and Arkio continue to expand, contributing to the rise in digital transactions (El Economista, 2025b).

Regional dynamics further shape distribution. The Central region records the highest sales volume, driven by sustained urban expansion and high-density residential projects. The North benefits from industrial dynamism and proximity to the United States, while the Bajío–West region shows accelerated growth linked to industrial park development and investment in sustainable construction. The South–Southeast holds the smallest market share, though large public projects most notably the Maya Train and the Interoceanic Corridor have stimulated demand. The Mexico City Metropolitan Area constitutes a distinct case in which megacity conditions, stricter environmental regulations, and gentrification processes have intensified demand for vertical development and sustainable building techniques (CEMEX, 2025; IMARC GROUP, 2025; Mobility Foresights, 2025; NMSC, 2025).

Several Mexican cities host clusters of specialised building materials retailers. A limited number of national and medium-sized chains operate across the Northeastern, Central/Mexico City, and Bajío regions, while some manufacturers distribute directly through exclusive networks, notably Cemex, Apasco, and Cruz Azul. DIY chains such as Home Depot, Arkio and Construrama also play a central role. The social housing market prioritises price over quality, whereas a niche for high-quality materials persists in hotels, recreation centres and luxury housing. DIY chains emphasise brand and quality, but high-volume buyers focus on price and delivery reliability (Mordor Intelligence, 2026).

Distribution and retail channels in Brazil

Retail trade is one of the links of the Brazilian construction industry chain, which also involves the materials industry, the services sector, the machinery and equipment industry, and other suppliers (ABRAMAT, 2024).

In Brazil, the construction industry has experienced significant fluctuations in recent years (the sector's GDP fell 5.1% in 2016) (Pizzinatto et al. 2020). These authors argue that this scenario has made consumers more cautious, requiring companies to focus on maintenance and after-sales service. In particular, no construction materials sector invests in training salespeople and building relationships to build customer loyalty (both professionals and end consumers). According to these authors, in line with Gordon's types, Brazilian initiatives target prospects (potential customers) by offering information and special conditions, transforming first-time buyers (trialists) into regular buyers with loyalty programs.

Brazil´s retail construction materials organizations are the final link in the market system of the construction sector, registering an increase of 29% compared to 2019 (IBGE, 2023). These retailers operate within a market system that spans the extraction of wood and non-metallic materials, the construction materials industry, and the trade and services sector, which includes the construction materials retail segment examined in this study (ABRAMAT, 2024). Yet according to ANAMACO (2024), "behind a ready-made building, there is a complex production process that involves links in the construction industry, materials industry, trade, services and equipment industry" (p.1).

The retail sector is composed of 158,981 retail stores for construction materials, segmented into 50 large chains, such as Leroy Merlin and Telhanorte, operating nationally, and smaller local companies. Large retail stores, 105,000 small and medium retailers, and 138,000 stores selling construction materials across the country, especially in the State of São Paulo (ANAMACO, 2025).

Retail Consumer Behavior

The study of this area is focused on the processes through which individuals or groups of individuals choose, buy, or use products, services, ideas, or experiences to meet their needs and/or desires, which are unlimited, but have finite forms to satisfy (Gade, 1980; Solomon, 2011).

The consumption of a product and/or service seeks to meet an unmet need due to several motivations, such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Engel et al., 2000; Kotler & Keller, 2012; Solomon, 2011). Consumer lifestyles and demands have been undergoing changes, especially due to the impact of technology and the influence of the economy, in turn changing the retail scenario in various parts of the world (Ibrahim & Galven, 2007), an area in which the literature reinforces the theme (Ntayi et al., 2010). According to Ruiz-Molina and Gil-Saura (2008), consumers' perceived value influences their attitude, which is important in determining their loyalty. The marketing mix influences the individual's perception of the company/product. Maintaining a portfolio that brings satisfaction and loyalty improves the company's competitiveness and market position, contributing to the efficiency of its strategies and operations, insofar as loyal consumers increase the company's sales volume and reduce the communication costs to attract new clients (Ruiz-Molina & Gil-Saura, 2008).

The offer of a wide range of products that meet the needs of a large group of buyers allows consumers to match individual preferences with product offerings, and a large assortment of products can increase the decision-making difficulty, resulting in the withdrawal of the purchase. One strategy to solve this situation would be to use tools that help consumers choose: in-store displays, increased shelves, point-of-sale (merchandising), informational aids, and vendor assistance (Goodman, 2007).

Perceived quality is highlighted in two types: intrinsic (environmental responsibility, confidence in the product, and others) and extrinsic (price, appearance, size, color, and format), both linked to product attributes and only differing because the second relates to physical attributes and the first to subjective attributes of perceived quality (Grunert et al., 1996).

According to Cunha et al. (2011), the perception of attributes, intrinsic or extrinsic, can significantly influence a consumer's choice. In addition, the analysis of time and quality of consumer interaction with the company led Gordon (1998) to propose different profiles of interactivity and consumer loyalty, as reported below.

Organizational interaction and consumer loyalty profiles

Loyalty refers to "the feeling of attachment to or affection for a company's people, its products, and services" (Jones & Sasser, 1995, p.10). It can be seen as the intention to build a relationship with the service provider and extend it over the long term (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002). There are antecedent factors to the construction of loyalty: a) satisfaction (Dick & Basu, 1994; Oliver, 1999); b) perceived quality (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Dabholkar, 1996); c) confidence (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999); d) perceived value in relational exchanges (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002); and e) the cost to consumers of changing to a new supplier (Burnham et al., 2003).

Bloch et al. (1986) emphasise the relationship between perceived value and consumer attitudes, which is a determinant of consumer loyalty. Perceived value is the consumer's perception of the benefits, less the maintenance costs, of an ongoing relationship with a service provider (Zeithaml, 1998; Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002; Lewis & Soureli, 2006; Ruiz-Molina & Gil-Saura, 2008; Blut et al., 2024).

Satisfaction and trust are also considered key components of building long-term relationships between clients and organisations (Lam et al., 2004). Customer loyalty is built on developing relationships, turning potential customers into users as they interact with the organisation: different levels of trust-based relationships can lead to this loyalty. Gordon (1998), followed in this work, identified customer categories according to consumer interactivity profiles with the organization:

a) Prospects: people with the profile desired by the company;

b) Experimenters: prospects who show interest in the company and begin to make experimental purchases;

c) Buyers: experimenters satisfied with purchases and do business with the company, not in a consistent way, but as an alternative source of purchase;

d) Casual customers: at this point, the company still does not have the customer's total confidence, and the customer still buys from alternative sources.

e) Regular customers: they have bought from the company for a long time, have confidence in the company, adopt the company's processes and values, and participate in the company's strategic processes; and

f) Advocate clients: always by the company's side, use the company as a reference, and are committed to the company.

Authors such as Aaker (2007) and Castro (2011) continued the analysis of customer interactivity profiles with organisations, proposed by Gordon (1998). Aaker (2007), based on loyalty, proposed the

categories: Non-Customers, Price Researchers, Passively Loyal, On the Fence, and Committed. Recent studies show that, in both countries, understanding consumer behavior in the materials sector helps tailor strategies to these segments, the literature reinforces the importance of treating each type of customer differently, as proposed by Gordon (1998) in construction materials sales: attracting prospects (potential buyers), supporting trial buyers on their first purchase, encouraging repeat buyers to become loyal, and transforming loyal customers into brand advocates through high-quality customer service and after-sales support (Pizzinatto et al., 2020).

Relationship marketing has been recognized as one of the most influential paradigms for understanding the development and maintenance of long-term customer relationships. Morgan and Hunt (1994) proposed the Commitment–Trust Theory, arguing that trust and commitment are the central determinants of successful relational exchanges and long-term customer loyalty. Building on this perspective, Palmatier (2008) demonstrated that relationship marketing generates value by strengthening customer satisfaction, trust, commitment, and loyalty, while Payne and Frow (2017) emphasized that customer-centric relationship management and value co-creation are fundamental to sustaining competitive advantage. Although these theories have been extensively validated in retail, financial services, and hospitality, their application in the residential construction sector remains limited, where research has traditionally focused on project performance, service quality, and operational efficiency rather than on the relational mechanisms that influence consumer loyalty.

The rapid digital transformation of businesses has further expanded the scope of relationship marketing by fundamentally changing how firms interact with consumers throughout the customer journey. Recent systematic reviews indicate that digital technologies including artificial intelligence, customer relationship management (CRM) systems, data analytics, mobile applications, and digital platforms have transformed consumer expectations by enabling personalized, continuous, and data-driven interactions (Egodawele et al., 2022; Mukherjee, 2024). Rather than replacing relationship marketing, digital transformation enhances firms' ability to build trust, personalize communications, and maintain long-term relationships with customers. However, despite the increasing digitalization of the construction industry, existing research has primarily emphasized technological innovation, Building Information Modeling (BIM), and operational digitalization, with limited attention to how digital transformation influences consumer relationships, loyalty, and retention in residential construction.

Recent marketing literature also recognizes customer experience as a critical mechanism linking relationship marketing to customer loyalty. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) conceptualized customer experience as the cumulative result of interactions across the entire customer journey, while more recent studies argue that digital capabilities allow organizations to deliver seamless and personalized experiences across multiple touchpoints (Leonardo & Avila, 2024). In parallel, omnichannel marketing has emerged as an important extension of relationship marketing by integrating physical and digital channels into a unified customer experience. Mansurali et al. (2024) demonstrate that omnichannel strategies improve customer engagement, perceived value, and loyalty by ensuring consistency across

websites, social media, sales representatives, physical stores, and after-sales services. Nevertheless, empirical studies examining omnichannel relationship management remain concentrated in retail and service industries, with little evidence from the residential construction sector, where consumers increasingly combine digital information search, virtual property tours, in-person visits, and digital post-purchase interactions.

These developments have significant implications for understanding consumer behavior. Recent systematic reviews suggest that contemporary consumer behavior is increasingly shaped by trust, perceived value, digital interaction quality, customer experience, and channel integration rather than by traditional transactional factors alone (Wolf & Steul-Fischer, 2023; Sharma et al., 2024). Consequently, customer loyalty should no longer be viewed solely as the outcome of product quality or price but as the result of integrated relational, digital, and experiential processes. This perspective is particularly relevant in the residential construction industry, where purchasing decisions involve high financial and emotional commitment, extensive information search, long decision cycles, and continuous interactions with developers before, during, and after property acquisition.

Despite these theoretical advances, an important gap remains in the literature. Existing studies generally examine relationship marketing, digital transformation, customer experience, omnichannel strategies, and consumer behavior as separate research streams and predominantly within retail, banking, hospitality, or technology contexts. Moreover, empirical evidence is largely based on single-country studies, with very limited attention to emerging economies and almost no comparative research involving the residential construction sector in Latin America. Although Brazil and Mexico are the two largest construction markets in the region and are experiencing accelerated digital transformation and increasing consumer demand for personalized experiences, little is known about how relationship marketing practices, supported by digital transformation and omnichannel strategies, influence consumer behavior and customer loyalty across these distinct institutional and cultural contexts. By integrating these theoretical perspectives into a comparative study of Brazil and Mexico, this research extends relationship marketing theory beyond traditional service industries, contributes to the emerging literature on digitally enabled customer relationships, and provides new empirical evidence on the antecedents of customer loyalty in the residential construction sector.

METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on the behaviour of end consumers in the process of making purchases in stores of one large retail chains in Brazil and one large retail chains in México and the profiles of their organisational interactivity in the retail trade of construction materials, comparing the realities of these two emerging countries in Latin America, we surveyed 300 interviews with consumers, 150 from each country, in cities with similar socio-demographic profiles.

Prior to data collection, these questionnaires were pilot-tested with 10 consumers from each of the countries studied who matched the average profile of the consumers to be surveyed later. The sampling strategy employed in this study was a non-probability convenience sample, in which consumers at the establishments under study were approached at the entrances and asked if they were interested in participating in a survey regarding their purchasing behavior. All customers who expressed interest were selected to participate in the study. In other words, the questionnaires were collected in person at all the establishments studied.

Since we intend to collect consumer mentions regarding the three most important attributes for this type of purchase and subsequently analyze them using content analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Krippendorff, 2019) that is, creating subcategories based on these mentions and then categories from those subcategories we observe that these variables will be qualitative, and we would like to examine the relationships between them and the socioeconomic profiles of consumers in the two countries which are also categorical variables the statistically recommended approaches to do these analysis are: a) the chi-squared test to two variables relationship each time; and/or b) the Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) to multiple relationships, done all together in just one analysis (Hair et al., 2010).

In other words, Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) is an exploratory multivariate statistical technique used to analyze and visualize relationships among several categorical variables simultaneously. It extends Correspondence Analysis (CA) from two categorical variables to multiple variables by representing categories and observations in a low-dimensional space, where categories that frequently occur together are positioned closer to one another (Greenacre, 2017). MCA is particularly useful for identifying underlying patterns, associations, and clusters in complex categorical datasets without imposing strong distributional assumptions (Abdi & Valentin, 2007). By reducing the dimensionality of categorical data while preserving the principal associations among variables, MCA facilitates the interpretation of complex datasets and the identification of latent structures (Le Roux & Rouanet, 2010). Consequently, it has become a widely adopted technique in fields such as marketing, consumer behavior, social sciences, and agricultural research for exploring survey data and profiling groups of individuals or observations.

RESULTS ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

To conduct the analyses done in this paper, questionnaires with incomplete responses were excluded. Consequently, 19 questionnaires from Brazilian consumers (12.67%) were excluded due to missing data, resulting in a total of 131 valid questionnaires. For Mexico, 35 questionnaires were excluded (23.33%) because they contained missing data; thus, the number of valid questionnaires was 115.

Thus, the 246 respondents were characterized as follows: a) by country of origin: 131 (53.30%) from Brazil and 115 (46.70%) from Mexico; b) by age group: i) 90 (36.60%) aged 29 to 39, ii) 59

(24.00%) aged 39 to 49, iii) 46 (18.70%) aged 18 to 29, iv) 38 (15.40%) aged 49 to 59, and v) 13 (5.30%) over 59; c) by gender: 177 (72.00%) men and 69 (28.00%) women; and d) by purchasing profile: 191 (77.60%) with a personal purchasing profile that is, for their own home and 55 (22.40%) with a professional purchasing profile that is, purchasing to provide services to someone else for the construction and/or renovation of a home.

As an important step in this data analysis process, we used a Content Analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Krippendorff, 2019) to create categories related to the attributes required in the selection of these retail stores. The process of developing these categories framework involved three stages: 1) the first stage involved collecting all statements from interviewees in both countries when asked to name the three attributes they valued most in their purchase (246 valid interviewees × 3 attributes/each = 738 distinct statements about these declared desired attributes); 2) in the second stage, following this open-ended mentions, these 738 different statements were read, sorted, and classified into 45 attributes subcategories, which are presented in the individual cells of Table 1 (e.g., Friendship, Environment, so on); 3) finally, in the third stage, these 45 attributes subcategories were grouped into 9 categories (the column headings shown in Table 1): Brand, Convenience; Price and Price Policy; Product; Promotion; Relationship; Sale point; Service quality; and Services provided.

Table 1 - Categories developed to classify attributes influencing consumers' store choice.

Category created	Attributes mentioned in the interviews
Brand	Brand name.
Convenience	Accessibility; Convenience; Ease of access; Ease of purchase; Practicality; Proximity; Route convenience; Time savings
Price and price policy	Cost; Ease of payment; Price; Price comparison; Savings; Price research
Product	Product completeness; Product exclusivity; Product novelty; Product need; Product variety; Product quality; Product availability
Promotion	Advertising; Promotional offers; Online sales
Relationship	Customer relationship; Friendship; Habit; Length of relationship; Customer loyalty; Referrals; Trust
Point-of-Sale Characteristics	Store atmosphere; Familiarity with the store; Location; Store size
Service Offerings	Delivery; Ease of product exchange.
Service quality	Customer attention; Agility; Empathy; Salesperson service

Note: Summary of categories and attributes relevant to store choice. Authors' research data.

We compared data from the two countries against important variables to construction industry: a) genders (male and female); b) purchase profiles (professional and end consumers); c) the main choice categories found in this research (Product, Price and Convenience; and d) the categories of client interaction found in this research (experimenters, eventual clients and regular clients) (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Distribution of gender, purchase profile, choice category and client interaction by studied country.



Note: Comparison of key consumer variables across countries. Authors' research data.

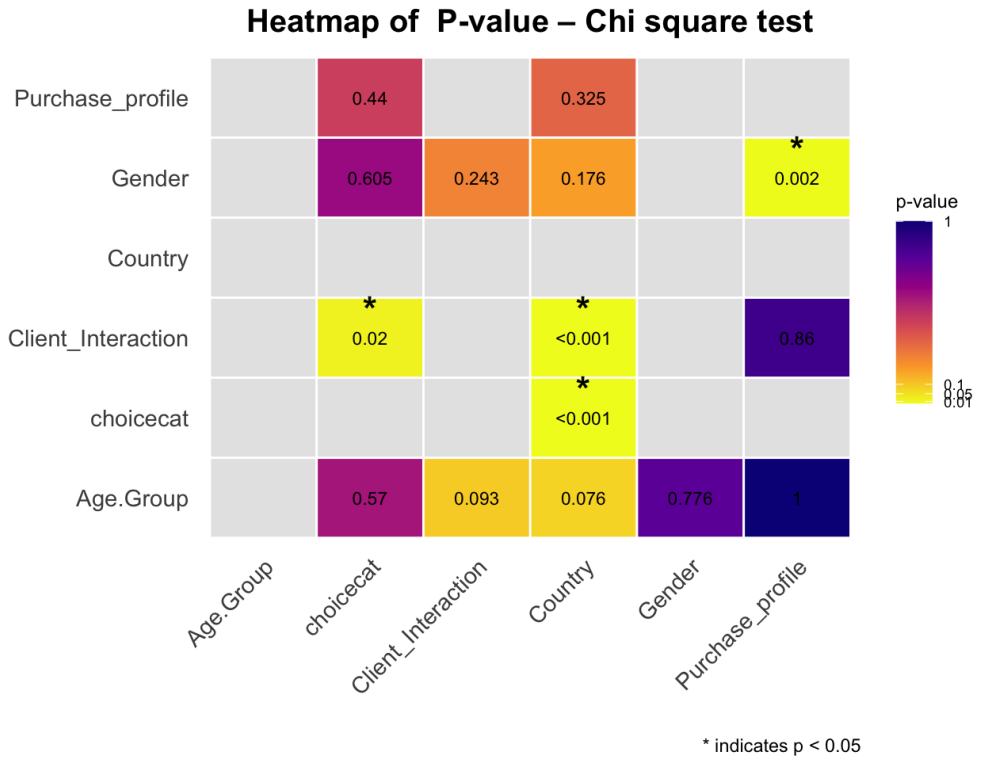
Based on the chi-square test, we tested the interdependence of the probabilities between the analysed characteristics: that is, when rejecting it, we assumed a dependence (positive or negative relation) between variables, increasing or decreasing the joint probability (Hair et al., 2010). This measure was compared with the results of the socio-demographic variables and groups cited in each country. In addition, we performed the multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) between the demographic variables and their groups, and the categories of analysis we created.

This enabled the creation of a perceptual map based on the associations between the variables of this study (Hair et al., 2010), analysing the behaviour of the categories of customers in relation to the reasons for choosing points of sale in the two countries. We analysed the customers' interactivity profiles with the organisations (Gordon, 1998), comparing Brazilian and Mexican consumer behaviour towards the retail construction trade, also in relation to these categories of analysis.

The data were analysed in relation to the genres, the purchasing profiles, the categories of attributes demanded by consumers and the categories of interaction between customers. To better understand how each of these relationships occurred, fifteen (15) chi-square tests were performed to verify the independence between the main variables studied here. The results of these fifteen (15) chi-square tests are presented in Figure 2, in the form of a heat map where stronger colors represent higher P-values, that is, those that do not allow us to reject the hypothesis of this independence, and lighter

colors, more inclined towards yellow, where this rejection is possible. It is also noted that the values with a star mark are values that allow this rejection of the hypothesis of independence between these variables.

Figure 2 The heat-map of the fifteen (15) chi-squared tests done in this research with the relevant variables



Note: Heat map of fifteen chi-square tests showing p-value intensity and significant associations. Authors' research data.

It is possible to see in Figures 1 and 2:

a) Gender: More women are found in the Brazilian store, as it is possible to see in the Figure 1, but this visual difference is not a statistical one, as could be seen in the chi-square test (0.176) in Figure 2, which was not significant at the 10% level. But when considering the frequency of each one in the country, it is observed that we have more males than females in both countries and that this difference is statistically significant at the 1% level, so it is important information to take into account in a marketing segmentation;

b) Purchase profile: Most respondents were personal buyers: in Brazil this type of profile represented 72.59%, and in Mexico, 80,86%, but the country factors and purchasing profile of respondents were considered independent, based on the chi-square test (0.325). Thus, it is possible to say that regardless of the country observed, buyers of civil construction are mostly characterised by individual buyers, that is, those who buy to make their own house, so this characteristic must be taken

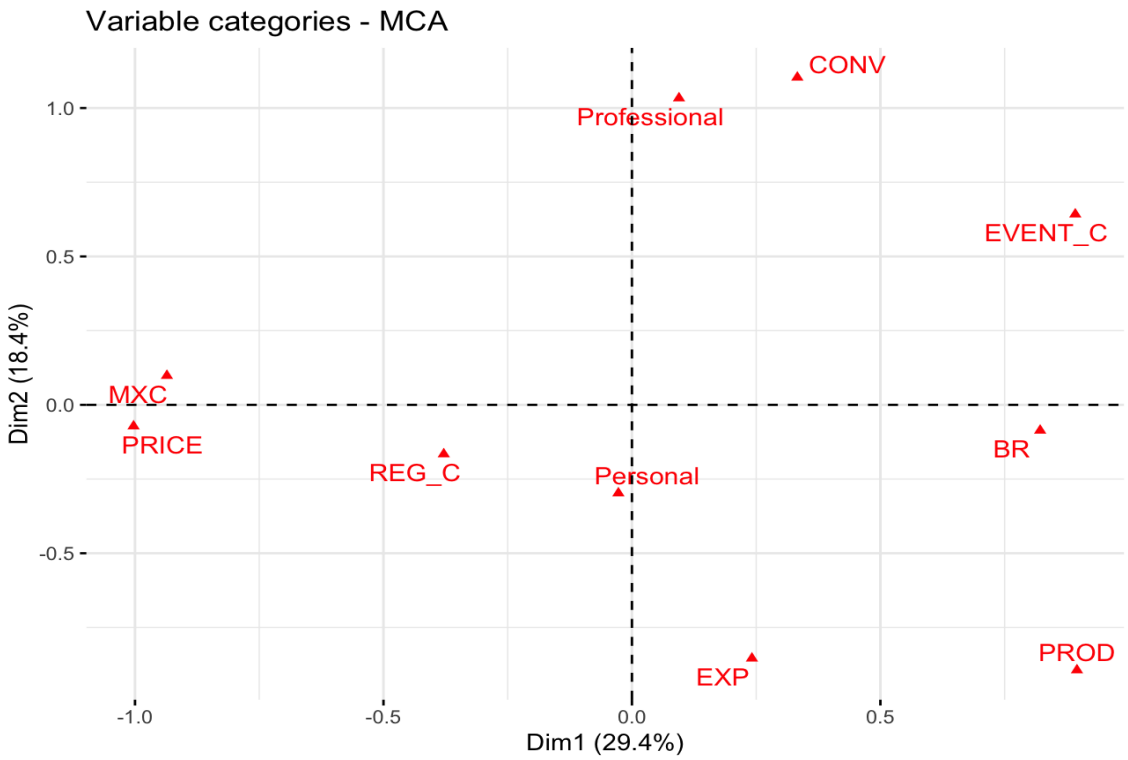
into account when the marketing communication is made. But when considering the frequency of each one in the country, it is observed that we have more personal profiles than professional profiles in both countries and that this difference is statistically significant at the 1% level, so it is important information to take into account in a marketing segmentation;

c) Choice of attributes: With the intention of better performing this influence analysis, all the attributes raised in this research in the two countries (Brazil and Mexico) were grouped into nine categories as shown in Table 1. The three categories of attributes most mentioned by the respondents in the two countries were: Price and Price Policy (PRICE) (31.67%), Product (PROD) (26.67%), and Convenience (CONV) (23.67%), indicating that 82% of the interviewees highly value both monetary and non-monetary attributes. Figure 1 shows this distribution in each country: in Brazil, the most cited category was Product, and in Mexico, the Price category. These differences in the percentages in the two countries were 1% significant in the chi-square test (0.001), showing that these two variables are not independent. So, when considering the frequency of each one in the country, it is observed that we have more Brazilian consumers who value product attributes and more Mexican consumer that values more Price attributes, and that this difference is statistically significant at the 1% level, so it is important information to take into account in marketing segmentation in each country;

d) Client interaction: Regular customers are the largest group in both countries. In Brazil, 51.85% are in this category of interaction, and in Mexico, 81.73%. The first number observed could indicate the possibility of influence of the country in this category of interaction. To observe whether this is true or not, a chi-squared test was done. Based on this test, it is possible to observe that there is a relationship between this classification of customers and country, since the independence of these two variables was rejected with the significance level of 1% (0.001). Since it is observed that both countries have more regular clients, it is possible to observe that relationship marketing gains more importance in this situation, when compared to transactional marketing.

We conducted five (05) multiple correspondence analyses to better observe how these categories fit and are related in a perceptual map with the variables studied. Figure 3 shows the multiple correspondence analysis considering all results of the variables studied (country, client interaction, purchase profile, and categories of attributes desired). It is noted that these correspondence analyses had two dimensions that together explained (47.80%) of the data variance, these being: a) dimension 1, with an explanatory power of 29.4% in which it is observed that it is the distinction between professional buyers (value close to 1 in this dimension) and personal buyers (with a value close to -0.25) in this same dimension; and b) dimension 2, with a power to explain 18.40% of the variance of the data collected, this dimension corresponding to the country of origin of the consumers interviewed, in which Brazil has values slightly higher than 0.80 and Mexico has a value close to -0.90 in this same dimension.

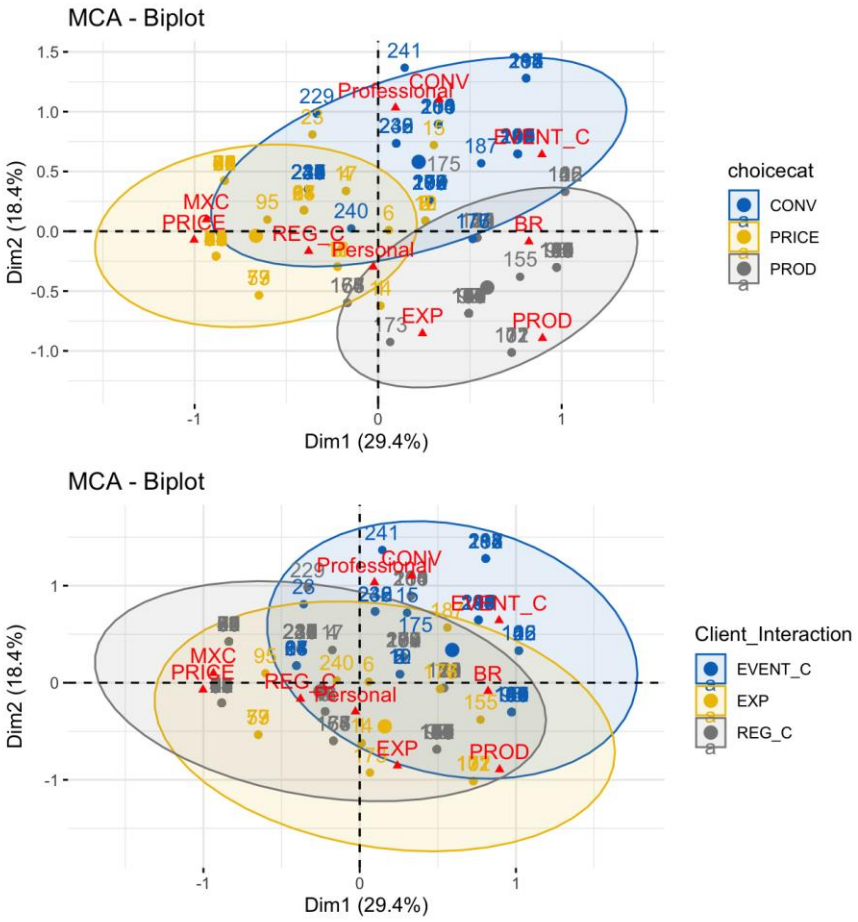
Figure 3 The results observed in the studied variables and their relationship



Note: Multiple correspondence analysis with two dimensions explaining 47.80 percent of variance. Authors' research data.

To understand the best way to separate the groups formed by each of these relationships observed in Figure 3, four (04) other multiple correspondence analyses (MCA) were performed: a) prioritizing the groups formed by the main attribute choice categories (convenience, product and price), represented by the different ellipses (Figure 4, at the top); b) prioritizing the groups formed by the interaction of each client categories found in this research (eventual clients, experimenters and regular clients), represented by the different ellipses (Figure 4, at the bottom); c) prioritizing the groups formed by the different countries studied (Brazil and Mexico), represented by the different ellipses (Figure 5, at the top); and d) prioritizing the groups formed by the two purchasing profiles (personal and professional), represented by the two ellipses (Figure 5, at the bottom).

Figure 4 Groups formed by attribute categories (at the top) and groups formed by interaction categories (at the bottom)



Note: MCA results showing groups by attribute and interaction categories. Authors' research data.

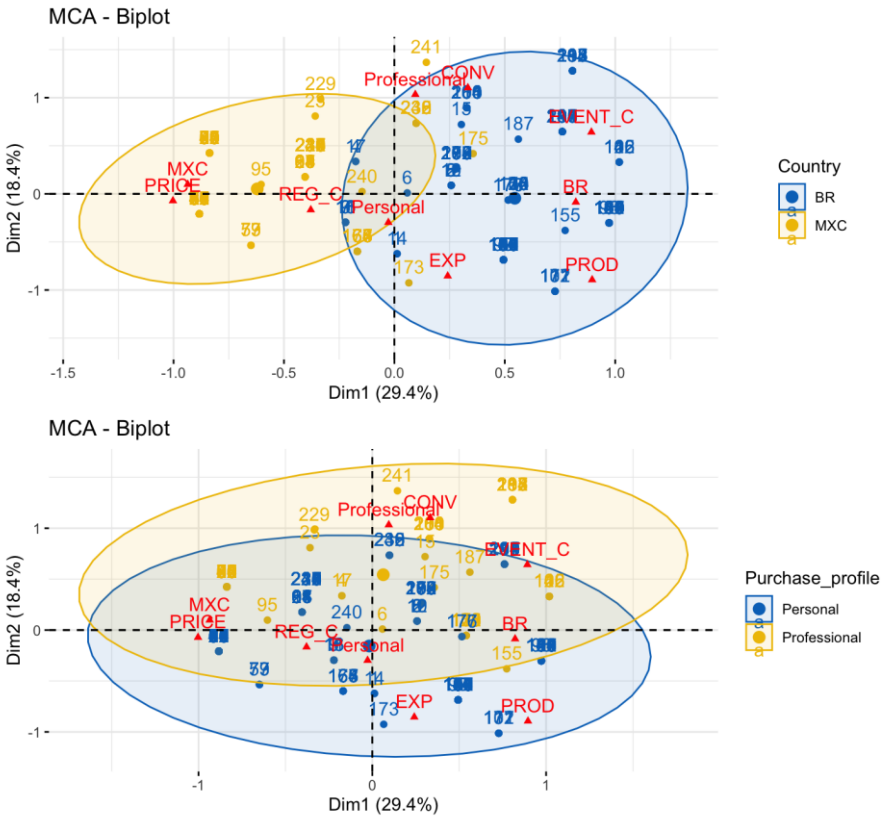
In Figure 4, at the top, we see that the best way to separate these variables and their relationships was using the choice category, where: a) the yellow ellipse groups represents the Mexican consumers, those who prefer the attributes of the price category, those who are regular customers and who are most characterized by personal purchasing profile; b) the gray ellipse groups, that represents the Brazilian consumers, who are more linked to experimenters customers and those who prefer the attributes of the product category; c) the blue ellipse, in which it can be seen that are characterized by eventual clients, who are more like to be a professional customers, who prefer convenience attributes category and this is regardless of the country considered, as this appears in the area of its ellipse that is not in intersection with either of the two previous groups of Mexico (yellow ellipse) and Brazil (gray ellipse).

Considering Figure 5, at the top, the separation by country, it is observed that: a) the yellow ellipse includes Mexican consumers, who preferred the price category attributes and who are regular customers; and b) the blue ellipse includes Brazilian consumers who have a greater connection with the professional profile, who look for more attributes linked to convenience and/or products and who are eventual and/or experimenting customers.

Observing these two best separations mentioned above and considering that one of our main objectives with this article was to understand the influence that the different interaction profiles have on the selected attribute categories, we analyse the form of separation considering the selected attribute categories, shown in Figure 4 in its upper part.

To understand the specific characteristics of these three (03) clusters in Figure 4, only the parts of the ellipses without intersections with the others will be considered. Eventual and professional customers have a greater preference for attributes more closely linked to convenience, which was expected, given that they are the ones who purchase construction materials more frequently and/or in larger volumes (blue ellipse). In the case of the yellow ellipse, both the price attributes category and Mexican consumers have a very strong connection. In this non-intersecting part, there is no interaction between customer interaction categories. This leads us to believe that, regardless of the type of interaction, Mexican consumers are more likely to desire lower prices when compared to Brazilian consumers. In the case of Brazilian consumers, this shows that experimenter consumers have more relationships with product attributes and categories, indicating that the variety of products is a good strategy for this kind of consumer.

Figure 5 Groups formed by different studied countries (at the top) and groups formed by purchase profiles (at the bottom)



Note: Correspondence analyses showing the separation of consumer groups by country and by purchase profile. Authors' research data.

Another observation, according to these collected data and their relationship, is that it was observed that this cultural difference between Brazilian and Mexican consumers is more prominent in the influence of the attribute category chosen by them than in the difference in interaction with customers, something that was not anticipated at the beginning of this research. Therefore, it can be observed that the interaction profile is obviously important for the selection of the attribute category, but the factor that most influenced this, as observed in this research, was the cultural factor, that is, the country of origin of this consumer.

As with any scientific study, this research relies on a convenience sample its primary limitation indicating that the results obtained here should be viewed as having limited generalizability.

FINAL CONSIDERATION

One of the main relevant theoretical contributions of this study was to identify attributes valued by the interactivity profile of the customers of the construction materials retail sector in Brazil and Mexico. This leads to potential relationship and transactional marketing strategies for managers in this sector, as detailed in the analysis of the above results.

The results presented here highlight certain managerial implications: a) Regarding gender, there is a predominance of males in both countries; b) Concerning purchase types, personal purchases predominate over professional ones in both countries. These results indicate a need for employee training tailored to these different segments; for instance, interactions with men and professionals might focus on persuasive arguments, whereas interactions with women could center on providing information and consultation; c) Regarding desired category profiles, the Brazilian consumer focuses more on the product category, while the Mexican consumer focuses more on price category. This suggests a need for training that equips employees to address these specific priorities specifically, emphasizing product quality and variety in Brazil, and the cost-benefit ratio in Mexico.

The results show that there is an intimate relationship between country of origin, level of customer interaction with the company, and the main attribute that customers consider the most important in choosing a retailer of construction materials: Prices are valued by Mexican consumers and products and convenience are valued by Brazilian consumers, who were classified as regular customers (see Figure 4, bottom), which calls for relational marketing strategies in both countries.

This finding that Mexican consumers value the relationship strongly to price as an extrinsic variable is in accordance with Grunert et al. (1996). Experimenters found that Brazilian buyers place more value on attributes related to products is in accordance with Goodman (2007) and Ruiz-Molina and Gil-Saura (2008), who assert that retailers should offer a wide variety of products to enable consumers to match their individual preferences with the supply.

Regarding relationships, the basis of the most recent market management approach, Relationship Marketing (Gummesson, 2011), it is important to emphasise that its development depends

on loyalty. This requires the entrepreneur to have information about customers and the profile of their interactivity with the organisation: whether they are experimenter, casual, regular, or advocate buyers (Gordon, 1998; Rust et al., 2001). The results also show that attributes linked to the Transactional Marketing approach can be used as Relationship Marketing strategies: the reference to convenience as a factor in choosing a store shows that this attribute remains when passing from experimental to casual customer, and then to regular customer, which confirms its importance as a factor to consider when building loyalty programs in Relationship Marketing.

Regarding the study's limitations, in this research, the sample was selected based on convenience and limited to two retail chains in two different countries; while these nations are important market players, the findings reflect only their specific realities. Another point to consider is the cross-sectional nature of the research, as it captured consumer behavior solely at the time of data collection rather than adopting a longitudinal approach to observe behavior over time. Given that the sample was non-probabilistic and restricted to two retail chains, the generalizability of the results—both to this specific segment and to other retail sectors is limited.

Therefore, as suggestions for future research, it is proposed to examine the points highlighted here using a probability sample covering a broader group of countries and, if possible, a diverse range of sectors to determine whether the results obtained here are replicated under these different conditions.

As a suggestion for future studies, this work could be replicated in other sectors of activity, including comparisons of consumer perceived attributes across two countries of origin. In addition, we suggest using a new form of analysis of the primary data, whether a conjoint analysis or structural equation modeling, based on the main indicators for the essential constructs that can influence greater customer loyalty. Besides that, another suggestion for future studies could be to analyse in more detail the main elements of this cultural difference influence, found here in this paper, in this economic sector.

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