

Brick Market Exploration – France

In-depth interview guide

Business objective

A leading manufacturer in the construction materials sector is assessing its presence in the French market. The company is experiencing a slowdown in performance across two of its main business units and is seeking to regain momentum. The objective is to better understand market expectations, key drivers, and opportunities in the French brick market in order to inform commercial strategy and reinforce competitive positioning.

Research objective

To understand the dynamics of the French brick market and its supply chain, including customer profiles, usage preferences, service expectations, procurement behavior, and supplier landscape.

Target group(s)

12 Interviews will be conducted in France with:

- Masonry contractors
- Building material distributors
- General construction companies
- Architects and engineering firms

Respondents must be familiar with the brick market, their application in construction projects, and the purchasing journey.

Structure of the interview guide

This interview guide consists of the following parts:

- Introduction and company profiling
- Market overview
- Customer needs and product preferences
- Procurement journey and supply chain
- Supplier landscape and preferences
- Awareness and interest in alternative business models
- Interview closure

The interviews will take approximately 60 minutes.

Reading guide for this interview guide

- **Bold questions** = main open-ended questions
- *Indented questions* = probing or follow-up
- (Text in parentheses) = moderator notes or sample responses

1. Introduction and company profiling [00:00 – 00:05]

First of all, thank you very much for your willingness to participate in this interview. Over the next hour, we will discuss the brick market in France, its usage areas, and the decision-making journey regarding bricks to understand the French market dynamics and customer needs.

Before we begin, may I ask for your permission to record this conversation? The recording will be used solely for research purposes.

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask them now, during or after the interview.

Let's start with a short introduction. Could you tell me a little bit about yourself and the company you work for?

- Can you briefly introduce yourself, your role, and your experience in the brick industry?
 - How many years of experience do you have in the construction/brick industry?
 - What is your position within the company? Could you tell us about your function and responsibilities?
 - On what level are you working with bricks in your company?
 - What is your role in deciding on brick materials within projects? And what is your role in the decision-making process for selecting suppliers or service providers for bricks?
 - ✓ End-decision maker, Co-decision maker, Advisor, Part of the team
- Could you tell us more about the company you work at?
 - How is it organized? Location? How many full-time employees?
 - What are the main activities that your company performs?
 - How would you characterize your company?
 - ✓ masonry contractor
 - ✓ General Contractors
 - ✓ distributor
 - ✓ architects
 - ✓ Engineering Company
 - In which industries is your company active? In other words, which industries does your company mainly supply its products and services?
 - ✓ residential
 - ✓ infrastructure
 - ✓ renovation
 - ✓ commercial buildings

2. View on the brick market in France [00:05 – 00:15]

Objective: Understand current state, past developments, and future expectations, including sustainability, innovation, and technology.

- How would you characterize the current state of the brick market in France?
 - What are the most significant needs or pain points in the market today?
 - Which sectors currently drive brick demand?
- What is your estimation of the annual usage of bricks in tonnes in the French market?
- How has the brick market changed over the past 3-5 years?
 - What factors have driven these changes? (economic conditions, regulations, competition)
 - Have you observed any shifts in market share among suppliers during this period?
- What are your expectations for the brick market in France over the next 3-5 years?
- Which market trends and industry factors do you see growing or declining?

For Moderator: Please mark answers received spontaneously in the table below; if not given spontaneously, please ask about it

Market Factor	Declining	Stable	Growing	Rapidly growing
Overall demand for brick				
Sustainability focus/demand for sustainable materials				
Shorter project timelines				
Digitalization				
Local sourcing preference				
Other ...				

3. Customer needs and preferences [00:15 – 00:27]

Objective: Understand company usage of brick, preferences on product types, processing needs, and service levels.

- Could you please tell us about the brick usage in your projects?
 - For what purpose, in what forms and areas/line of business/industries, is brick used in your projects?
- On average, in what share of your projects are bricks used annually?
- What is your estimation of the annual usage of bricks in tonnes within your company?
- What types of brick products does your company typically require?

For Moderator: Quickly mark relevant responses in this table; for standard commercial products, mark specific products as well

Product type	Currently use	Interested in	Not relevant
Red bricks			
White bricks			
Yellow bricks			
Black bricks			

- How have your product requirements evolved over the past few years?
- What level of processing do you typically require from suppliers?
 - ✓ Preparing bricks, cutting bricks to size, painting bricks,
- Did you consider internalizing pre-processings?
- Did you notice a change in the offer of pre-processing from you supplier? (wider offer, technological advancements...)
- What service model best fits your company's needs
 - ✓ Full-service (planning, designing, delivery)
 - ✓ Basic processing with delivery
 - ✓ Supply only
 - ✓ Depends on project (please explain)
- What delivery timeframes are acceptable for your operations?
- How important and which kind of technical support is needed during projects?
 - ✓ Design assistance
 - ✓ Structural calculations
 - ✓ Computer modeling
 - ✓ Custom engineering solutions
 - ✓ On-site technical support
 - ✓ Other, specify
- What quality certifications or standards do you require from suppliers?
- How do you balance price considerations against service quality?

4. Customer journey mapping & supply chain structure [00:27 – 00:40]

Objective: Map the customer journey to understand the purchase process and decision-making flow.

- How do you typically discover or research potential brick suppliers?
 - ✓ Industry referrals
 - ✓ Online search
 - ✓ Trade shows
 - ✓ Professional networks
 - ✓ Direct outreach from suppliers
 - ✓ Industry publications
 - ✓ Other, specify
- What information sources do you consult before making purchasing decisions?
- How important is a supplier's online presence in your research process? Is the information for brick easy to find online?

- Walk me through your typical purchasing process - from needs definition to order.
 - What is your typical decision-making process when selecting suppliers?
 - How are decisions made (centralized vs project-based)?
 - Who are the key stakeholders involved in selecting brick suppliers?
 - What are the most critical factors in your final selection?
 - How long does your typical procurement process take from initial research to final purchase?
 - How important is online ordering or supplier digital presence?
 - Do you use digital tools (e.g., ERP, BIM, procurement portals)?
- How do you prioritize the following when choosing a supplier?

For Moderator: Quickly rate how important are the following factors? (Rate from 1-5, where 1 = Not important at all, 5 = Extremely important)

Supplier selection criteria	Rank
Price competitiveness	
Delivery timeframe and punctuality	
Quality of materials/processes	
Technical support during projects	
Sustainability	
Geographic proximity	
Previous relationship/experience	
Range of processing capabilities	

- What are your key loyalty drivers for long-term supplier relationships?
 - What factors determine whether you maintain a long-term relationship with a supplier?
 - What would cause you to switch from an established supplier?
 - How do you evaluate supplier performance over time?
 - What after-sales services do you value most?

5. Market landscape & supplier preferences [00:40 – 00:52]

Objective: Understand the competitive landscape and evaluate leading suppliers

- What suppliers of brick are you familiar with?
 - How did you become familiar with these?
 - How do the suppliers differ in what they offer?
- How big are the price differences between the suppliers?
- What companies would you say are currently key suppliers for brick in France? Why?
- How would you describe the current supply chain for brick in France?
 - What challenges exist in the current supply chain structure?
 - How has the supply chain evolved in recent years?
 - Through which channels do you typically purchase brick?
 - ✓ Direct from the manufacturer
 - ✓ Through wholesalers

- ✓ Service centres
 - ✓ Online platforms
 - ✓ Project-based tenders
- Who are your leading suppliers of brick in France today?
 - What makes them your preferred partner?
 - What do they do best, and where do they fall short?
- What experience do you have with international brick suppliers?
 - What challenges have you encountered when working with suppliers from outside France?
 - ✓ Language barriers
 - ✓ Delivery delays
 - ✓ Quality inconsistencies
 - ✓ Higher transportation costs
 - ✓ Customs/regulatory issues
 - ✓ Other, specify:
 - How important is local presence for suppliers from your perspective?
 - What advantages or disadvantages do you see with domestic versus international suppliers? And what are the deciding factors that make you lean more toward one or the other?
 - What factors would make an international supplier more attractive to your business?
- Are there any needs in the market that your current suppliers are not meeting?
 - Is there an interest in low-carbon or sustainable steel solutions?
 - Would you pay a premium for low-carbon steel? If yes, how much more? In %
 - How important is supplier innovation or the use of advanced technology?

6. Our company – awareness, experience, interest in potential cooperation [00:52 – 00:58]

Objective: Evaluate brand awareness and test interest in both business models.

- Are you familiar with our company ? Have you heard about it?
 - If yes, what is your impression of their offerings? In terms of products as well as services provided.
- Have you had any previous experience working with our company?
 - If yes, do you know about their two divisions?
 - Based on your knowledge, which model better fits your needs?

For Moderator: If the respondent not familiar with the company or their two business models, please explain shortly

I'll briefly explain the two business models:

Service Center Model: description ...

X Model: description ...

- What would be the key benefits of each model?
- Under what conditions would you switch between the two models?
- What would be the key advantages of each model for your operations?
- Are there any aspects of either model that you find particularly appealing or concerning?
- Which of these models better aligns with your company's needs? Why?

7. Closure of the interview [00:58 – 01:00]

Objective: Thank the participant, gather final feedback, and evaluate openness to cooperation.

- What advice would you give to a new or returning supplier entering the French brick market?
- Are there any topics related to the brick market that we haven't covered that you'd like to discuss?
- Would you be open to continuing the conversation with our company if you are interested in further information about our company's offerings?

Thank you for your time and insights.