

Conceptual Study of Rural Marketing in India

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Abstract- The Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry is a cornerstone of India's expanding economy. This industry affects every aspect of human life. FMCG manufacturers have realised that there are several opportunities for them to reach the rural market. Rising salaries and a developing lifestyle are important draws for this industry. In rural regions, there are more middle-income households than in metropolitan ones. As a result, rural marketing has grown steadily over the years and is now larger than the urban market. Internationally, the FMCG industry has been effective in selling items to India's lower and moderate-income segments. Nowadays, more than 70% of sales are made to middle-class homes, with rural India accounting for more than 50% of the middle class. The FMCG business is propelled by a fast-growing rural population with increased earnings and a willingness to spend on items aimed to better their lifestyles. With urban India nearing saturation and fierce competition, many producers and marketers in this industry are being pushed to develop new techniques for reaching out to rural consumers. Nonetheless, rural penetration is poor. This creates a significant potential for branded product makers who can convert prospective customers into buyers of their items. Businesses, both multinational and regional, began creating marketing techniques to target this untapped market. Marketers must treat rural consumers differently from urban consumers when developing strategies since they are economically, socially, and psychologically distinct from one another.

Key Words: Fast Moving Consumer Goods, Rural consumer, Marketing Strategy, Urban consumers, Indian Economy

INTRODUCTION

The rural markets are expected to increase faster than the urban markets. The potentiality of rural marketplaces is described to be like a 'woken up sleeping giant'. These facts are supported by a market growth analysis completed by several researchers. Rural marketplaces have grown in importance in countries such as India in recent years. The Indian rural market is enormous in terms of size and demand. It provides excellent opportunity for marketers. Rural areas are home to around 742 million of the country's customers and create nearly half of the national income.

There are roughly 6, 30,000 villages in India, which may be classified according to various factors such as literacy levels, economic levels, penetration, distances, and so on. The rural market is not uniform. Despite its huge size, the rural market is divided into smaller segments. The rural consumer is rising, and this represents an opportunity for all market participants to increase their market share. Positioning and facts surrounding the potential of each of these market groups differ and are at the heart of developing a rural market strategy.

Rural India is a driving force behind the country's economic progress. It is home to two-thirds of the country's one billion customers and generates nearly half of national GDP. Marketers are focusing on the Indian hinterlands in order to meet revenue objectives by expanding into rural areas. Marketers are seeking for growth prospects in aspirational rural and semi-urban India. Access to hard-to-reach rural areas has been greatly aided by cable and satellite penetration.

Also, advertising budgets for rural areas do not necessitate a large amount of liquidity. Simple methods of marketing products and services, such as village melas (fairs), nukkad natikas (road theatre), boat branding, mobile vans, and wall murals, have shown to be highly efficient and cost-effective. FMCG and car industries are the most prominent advertisers in semi-urban and rural regions. Most FMCG companies follow the concept of developing tiny size packs for consumers living in rural places.

According to Euromonitor International's report, 68% of personal care items were sold in rural India in FY 12, compared to 31% in cities. As a result of greater disposable incomes, rising consumer preferences for quality products, and enhanced infrastructural assistance provided by the government for the development of these areas, markets in rural and semi-urban India are poised to be future growth drivers. Throughout the previous fifty years, the Indian Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) business began to take shape.

The FMCG industry is a cornerstone of the Indian economy. This industry affects every aspect of human life. The Indian FMCG market is split into two segments: organised and unorganised. Unlike the US FMCG business, which is controlled by multinational firms, India's FMCG sector remains extremely fragmented, with unbranded, unpackaged, and home-made items accounting for nearly half of the market. This creates a significant potential for branded product makers and marketers who can persuade people to buy their items. The FMCG business has been successful in marketing items to lower and moderate income groups all over the world, and the same is true for Indian markets. Nowadays, more than 70% of sales are made to middle-class homes, with rural India accounting for more than 50%.

The sector is enthused about a fast growing rural population with rising earnings and a willingness to spend on items aimed to improve living. In addition, with near saturation and cutthroat competition in urban India, many FMCG brands are being pushed to develop new methods for addressing the rural market. MART, a rural marketing and development company, discovered that rural regions account for 53% of FMCG sales and 59% of consumer durable sales.

According to a study conducted by Chennai-based Francis Kanoi Marketing Planning Services Pvt Ltd, the rural market for FMCG is worth Rs.65,000 crore, the rural market for durables is worth Rs.5000 crore, the rural market for tractors and agri-inputs is worth

Rs.45,000 crore, and the rural market for two- and four-wheelers is worth Rs.8000 crore. A massive Rs.123,000 crore in total. This might be quadrupled if corporation understood rural purchasing behaviour and optimised distribution and price.

Review of Literature:

R. Sivanesan (2014) discovered in his research that when purchasing power and disposable income increased. The improvement of the road infrastructure connecting the communities has resulted in a structured product delivery system. Formerly, there was a "trickle down" of inventories to purchasers in the inner communities. Companies now deploy delivery cum advertising trucks that visit 8-10 hats/markets every day as part of direct engagement with locals.

According to **Singh Priyanka (2013)**, the large spectrum of courses to be taken in rural marketing demand extra care and attention with respect to the product, its quality, packaging, brand, price, advertisement, personal selling, and route of distribution.

According to **Verma and Munjal (2003)**, the primary variables in deciding on a brand are quality, price, availability, packaging, and marketing. Brand loyalty is determined by a customer's behavioural and cognitive tendencies. Age and demographic factors have a substantial impact on customer behaviour and cognitive patterns, however other demographic features such as gender and marital status have no significant impact on consumer behaviour and cognitive patterns.

According to **Singh A.K. (2014)**, in order to acquire the rural market, FMCG businesses must manage their channel distribution properly and promptly answer their grievances. Customer happiness leads to the success of the firm when the distribution channel is successful. Customers in the rural market were dissatisfied with the product quality and diversity.

According to **Jain and Rathod (2005)**. Promotional offerings were also never made available to rural consumers, and merchants were seen selling promotional products separately. To avoid product copying, proper marketing techniques are required.

According to **Shinde Rajesh (2007)**, rural India has more than 70% of the population in 6.27 lakh villages, making it a big market for FMCG items. FMCG products are purchased by people of all economic levels, yet their brands differ. The weekly market, which is an excellent route of distribution for FMCG, is the preferred site of purchase for the rural customer.

In his research, **Tripathi Aditya Prakash (2008)** discovered that the Indian rural market has enormous untapped potential. A slight rise in rural income causes an exponential gain in purchasing power.

In their study, **Joghee Shanmugan and Pillai Pradeep Kumar (2013)** discovered that the variables Gender, Educational Qualification, Occupation, Annual Income, Family size, and Frequency of Purchase have a positive correlation with impact on buying FMCG products of selected respondents, while the variable mode of purchase has a negative correlation with impact on buying FMCG products.

Rana Jyoti (2012) discovered that when it comes to premium FMCG brands, just a few customers come from this segment when it comes to rural consumers. She proposes that corporations choose their target market for premium products and contact them. Youth may be of considerable assistance in this regard.

According to **Kumar Pawan and Dangi Neha (2013)** research, brand awareness among rural customers for FMCG is growing. Rural consumers want branded items because their disposable money and literacy level have increased. They also choose branded items because they believe the quality is guaranteed because the makers are from well-known firms.

Kumar Arul and Madhavi (2006). According to their findings, the majority of rural consumers are affected by product quality. As a result, FMCG companies must closely adhere to quality requirements. In most situations, pricing is the second element that drives product acquisition; hence the product should be reasonably priced.

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Krishnamurthy, Narayan (1999). In his paper, he stated that semiotics works well for things that have little - engagement at the moment of purchase and are used frequently. Fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) such as soaps, shampoo, type's products, and tea were the greatest fit. The shelf life of FMCG items was short enough that most people remembered them by their emblems, colours, and names, or a combination of those factors. Due of the low reading percentage in rural areas, the aesthetic appeal draws customers.

According to **Khan Safia and Khan Yasmeen (2012)**, looking at the problems and possibilities that rural markets provide to marketers, the future is quite bright for those who can comprehend the dynamics of rural markets and utilise them to their greatest advantage.

Meaning of Rural Marketing:

Rural marketing is the process of producing, pricing, promoting, and distributing rural-specific goods and services, resulting in exchanges between urban and rural markets that satisfy consumer demand while also achieving organisational goals. Hence, rural marketing is a two-way marketing process that involves the movement of products and services from rural to urban regions, as well as the flow of goods and services from urban to rural areas and within rural areas.

A diverse combination of factors influences the behaviour of rural customers. In rural regions, societal norms, traditions, caste, and social practises have a bigger effect on consumer behaviour than in metropolitan ones. Because landless workers and daily wage

earners receive their pay in installments, their purchasing is limited to modest quantities of things at a time, usually once every two or three days. Buying choice processes and presences exhibit distinct traits that have major ramifications.

Exhibitions and road shows are some of the primary triggers for information seeking behaviour. As information producers and consultants, opinion leaders and persons seen to be informed play a significant role. In rural consumers' purchasing decisions, word of mouth is more important. Rural consumers are more involved in the purchasing process since the perceived risk of purchasing is higher. This results in a more detailed information search behaviour. Before making a purchase, rural customers speak with family members, relatives, and friends. Because electronic media and other forms of mass advertising have a limited reach in rural regions, people rely more on others for information, guidance, and ideas.

Segments of Rural Market:

The process of splitting a diverse market into multiple sub-markets, each of which tends to be homogeneous in major respects, is known as segmenting. The following are some of the most important criteria that need rural market segmentation. Rural market heterogeneity. Regional disparities in socio-culture. Variance in the size and density of the village's population. Variations in infrastructure development levels. Levels of media exposure. Literacy levels might vary. Income levels and income flow patterns differ. Family organisation Rural markets can be split along a variety of dimensions, including geographic, demographic, psychographic, and behavioural factors.

The socio-economic categorization of the principal wage-earner and the type of dwelling in which they live is a helpful segmentation method for the rural market. Segmentation on a common foundation Geographic. East, west, north, and south are the regions. Low, moderate, and high densities Summer is the season. Winter is rainy. Demographic. Life cycle and age. Gender and Family Structure Occupation and education. Religion and Social Status Psychographic. Social standing Lifestyle. Personality Behavioural. User status, Loyalty status, and Purchase location. Advantages requested & Use rate.

Rural Marketing challenges:

A marketer attempting to advertise his or her product or service in rural regions has several problems, the first of which is the geographic spread and low population density in the country's villages. The second difficulty stems from these areas of the country's low purchasing power and limited discretionary money. The third obstacle comes from the rural market's four A's: availability, affordability, awareness, and acceptability. The most difficult problem to encounter when developing strategies for rural markets is ensuring that the product reaches the customers.

Many people agree that distribution channels are the most important component and a hurdle that must be overcome for rural marketing to succeed. Affordability refers to the affordability of items and services. With little discretionary cash, items must be affordable to rural consumers, the majority of whom are daily wage earners. Acceptability would include difficulties that must be addressed in order to increase a product's willingness to be consumed, distributed, or sold. It would also offer suggestions for making the product or service more appealing to rural users. Promotional difficulties in rural locations include raising awareness. The promotional efforts must be tailored to the village setting, with the language and modes of communication employed in the local tongue.

Significance of Rural Market:

The Indian rural market has a large demand base and provides excellent marketing prospects. Rural regions are home to two-thirds of Indian customers and create almost half of national GDP. The reasons for moving to the countryside are very obvious. The urban consumer durable market for items such as colour televisions, washing machines, refrigerators, and air conditioners is rising at a rate of between 7% and 10% each year. The rural market is growing at a rate of roughly 25% each year. "Rural India is currently rising faster than urban India," says Venugopal Dhoot, chairman of Rs 989 billion Videocon Appliances. "Today's urban market is a replacement and upgrade market," says Ravinder Zutshi, director of marketing at Samsung. Most FMCG businesses used to approach rural markets as an extension of their urban strongholds, and rural customers as a homogeneous mass, rather than segmenting them into target markets and placing brands properly.

Instead, the successful strategy is to concentrate on their core competencies, such as technology knowledge, in order to build particular goods for the rural economy. The most notable example in this regard is the introduction of sachets, which have significantly revolutionised the rural market since packing in smaller units and lower-priced packs boosts the product's affordability. Companies that have used this technique, such as HUL and Nestlé, have reaped enormous benefits. Another example is Britannia's Tiger brand of low-cost, easily packed biscuits, which has become a huge success story in rural areas. Businesses must also alter the profile of their brand managers.

Hiring managers from Institutes of Rural Management, for example, may go a long way towards addressing the issue. When releasing items in rural sectors, it is critical to understand the demands and hidden sentiments of rural people, in addition to cultural aspects. Marketers would be wise to first comprehend this before building goods appropriately. Chick shampoo, for example, was debuted in little sachets based on market data that rural people prefer this over more expensive amenities.

Another critical thing to consider is the rise of counterfeit items. The rural majority are ignorant, and they recognise a product based on its packaging (colour, visuals, size etc.). As a result, counterfeit items may easily cut into the market share of well-known brands. The store also makes more money selling counterfeits than real things, therefore he is predisposed towards the fakes. Trademarks such as "Jifeboy," "Bonds Talcum," "Funny & Beautiful," and others that are making their way into rural marketplaces represent a significant challenge to rural marketers. Businesses would also benefit from an effective sales and distribution network.

Companies can gain considerable competitive advantages in terms of sheer reach because the rural market is very fragmented and a brand must be on the shop shelf before it can be sold. Businesses should also ensure that their product prices are not driven up by a channel of middlemen who are not necessary and provide no value to the product.

The rural market is extremely price-sensitive, therefore cutting costs at every level is critical. Certain FMCG behemoths, such as HLL, are working to strengthen their grip over the rural supply chain by establishing a network of rural sub-stockists headquartered only in villages.

Apart from that, in order to gain a competitive advantage in distribution, HLL has launched Project Shakti in collaboration with rural women's Self-Help organisations. But, not all old techniques must succeed, and innovative ideas must be generated. A crucial step towards transformation might be an effort to directly tap into the haats, mandis, melas, and local bazaars, which give a chance to promote the brand in front of a huge gathering of rural customers.

Finally, a successful rural strategy for FMCG firms must incorporate the utilisation of traditional media to raise product awareness in rural areas. The desire for alternative media develops because mainstream media is too flashy, intimate, and untrustworthy for a rural consumer. Traditional media, on the other hand, will aid in the achievement of the objective through its effective reach, powerful input, and individualised communication system.

Apart from that, when the commercial is disguised as entertainment, it is easily accepted by the villagers. Traditional media has the following features that make it an effective marketing communication channel: it is easily accessible, includes more than one sense, has a high interest arousing capability, and has a low cost. There are few firms that have employed conventional media efficiently and profitably. Brooke Bond Lipton India Limited (BBLIL) uses magic acts and skits to promote its rural brands. Reckitt and Coleman employs non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in rural regions to educate clients about product benefits, establishing one-to-one contact channels.

Challenges of Rural Marketing:

- 1. Availability:** One of the most significant issues confronting the company's manufacturing FMCG items is availability. India's 70,000 villages are distributed across 3.2 million square kilometres; while 700 million Indians may reside in rural regions, identifying them is difficult. They are widely spread. Owing to limited infrastructure, it is difficult for enterprises to visit remote areas on a regular basis.
- 2. Affordability:** Rural consumers' per capita income is still half that of metropolitan consumers. FMCG items have poor margins, which has become a difficulty for companies who manufacture FMCG products. With little disposable cash, items must be affordable to rural consumers, the majority of whom are on daily wages. One answer to this challenge is the introduction of smaller unit packs (Sachet). The majority of the shampoos come in sachet form: 1. Fair and charming was released in a tiny package. 2. Coca-Cola introduces a Rs 5 bottle for rural clients.
- 3. Acceptability:** It has been noticed that a product designed for the urban market may or may not meet the needs of rural buyers. The rural environment should be considered in terms of their living conditions as well as how they view and use the product or service. Due to a shortage of energy and refrigerators in remote regions, Coca-Cola distributed low-cost ice boxes. It also gave new outlets a tin box and seasonal outlets a thermocol box.
- 4. Awareness:** Another issue in rural marketing is raising awareness. Traditional advertising media are inaccessible to a big portion of rural India. In rural regions, media penetration is just approximately 57%. One of the difficulties in communicating is a low reading level.

Strategies of rural Marketing:

Given the limitations and opportunities given by rural markets, it is acceptable to infer that the marketing strategies used were insufficient. Businesses must understand the desires and goals of rural consumers in order to capitalise on the enormous potential of rural markets through effective marketing methods. Yet, rural markets are widely separated and diverse; there is limited rural transportation, inefficient communication, and insufficient storage facilities, all of which have inhibited rural company progress. Companies must establish rural market strategy while keeping the following recommendations in mind. When marketing to the rural client, it is vital that the product positioning be linked to the rural consumer's understanding of social status. It delivers psychological fulfilment to clients and encourages them to continue with the same brand.

Marketing through multi-level marketing channels, cat parties, social events, and so on, where individuals within the same rural community might be convinced to make a purchase since the influence of friends and peer group is larger among rural clients. Efforts should be made to extend the distribution network (retail outlets) and bring things to the rural market. Moreover, efforts should be made to reach the rural market's deeper pockets more efficiently. As a result, because rural clients are not brand loyal, product availability is crucial. Promotional strategies in the rural market should be customised to the age group component of purchase choices. As a result, the causes of effect differ between age groups. When they test new things supplied by peers, neighbours, and others, enterprises should consider elements such as lifestyle, purchasing capabilities, and consumer preferences, among others, while designing for the rural market.

CONCLUSION:

Rural customers are fundamentally different from metropolitan ones. Lower levels of literacy, restricted exposure to products and services, and disparities in career alternatives all have a direct influence on income levels and money flows, with a high level of interdependence influencing the dynamics of rural community behaviour. To overcome these problems in rural markets, a well-crafted plan is required. As a result, we may infer that rural markets have their own set of issues, problems, and possibilities. As a result, businesses must adopt marketing methods and approaches to capitalise on the vast rural potential. To be successful in the rural market, the strategy, techniques, and marketing mix must be developed and tested from the perspective of the rural customer. Finally, it is apparent that FMCG businesses will need to make significant inroads into rural areas in order to meet double-digit growth ambitions in the future. There is a lot of money and a lot of promise in rural India, but the sensible thing to do is to balance up the hurdles as carefully as possible. Companies entering the rural market must do so for strategic reasons rather than tactical

benefits, as rural consumers are still a closed book and corporations can only make an impact in the market via persistent dedication. Finally, the winner will be the one who has the necessary resources, such as time and money, as well as the much-needed inventive ideas to tap into rural markets. Given the potential that rural markets provide for marketers, the future seems bright for those who can grasp the characteristics of rural markets and use them to their advantage. Marketers' attitudes about the dynamic and developing rural markets must shift dramatically if they are to effectively impress the millions of rural consumers dispersed over approximately 6,30,000 villages in rural India.

The future looks bright for enterprises that properly grasp the requirements and desires of rural customers and shopkeepers and apply their marketing strategies appropriately. The shopkeeper plays a significant role in the marketing and distribution of FMCG products in rural regions, and based on my study, I believe that sufficient training should be offered to shopkeepers to assist in developing brand value in the minds of customers.

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