



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE AND MANAGEMENT

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STUDY OF RURAL CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN RELATION WITH WASHING POWDER

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ABSTRACT

Rural markets are always alluring markets for many companies. The huge market size and unexplored nature of the market are the major stunning points for the marketers. Many marketers perceive that the rural markets are the protrusions of the urban slums or poor markets. The truth is that the rural consumer's concept of value is different from the urban consumers. The culture of rural is not of show of the wealth and modality. The rural consumer purchase only when it is extremely needed by them not because of persuasive promotional offers. The rural market in India is quite charming and demanding in spite of all the difficulties existing. The potential is enormous. In case of detergents as a product rural consumer expect much more than offered. This paper is an attempt to understand what exactly rural consumer needs.

KEYWORDS

Consumer behavior, brand wise consumption, selection parameters.

INTRODUCTION

The rural markets are the most tempting markets for many companies; as vast number of studies talk about the huge population and less exploration. The companies who enter the rural markets without understanding the rural consumers and markets can face the problems.

Rural consumer is different than the urban consumers in many ways but specially the socio cultural way. The psyche of rural consumer is not to spend unnecessarily. Do not display the wealth and need base purchase.

To understand the consumers it is needed to understand what consumer behavior is.

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Consumer behavior is the study of human responses to product services marketing of products and services. The term consumer behavior refers to the consumers display in searching for purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of product or services that they expect will satisfy their needs. We define consumer behavior as those actions directly involved in obtaining, consuming, and disposing of products and services, including the decision process and follow action.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The size of the detergent market is estimated to be Rs. 12,000 Cr. Household care segment is characterized by high degree of competition and high level of penetration. With rapid urbanization, emergence of small pack size and sachets, the demand for the household care products is flourishing. The demand for detergents has been growing but the regional and small unorganized players account for a major share of the total volume of the detergent market. In washing powder HUL is the leader with 38 per cent of market share. Other major players are Nirma, Henkel and Procter & Gamble.

Rural India accounts for more than 700 Million consumers, or 70 per cent of the Indian population and accounts for 50 per cent of the total FMCG market. The working rural population is approximately 400 Millions. And an average citizen in rural India has less than half of the purchasing power as compare to his urban counterpart.

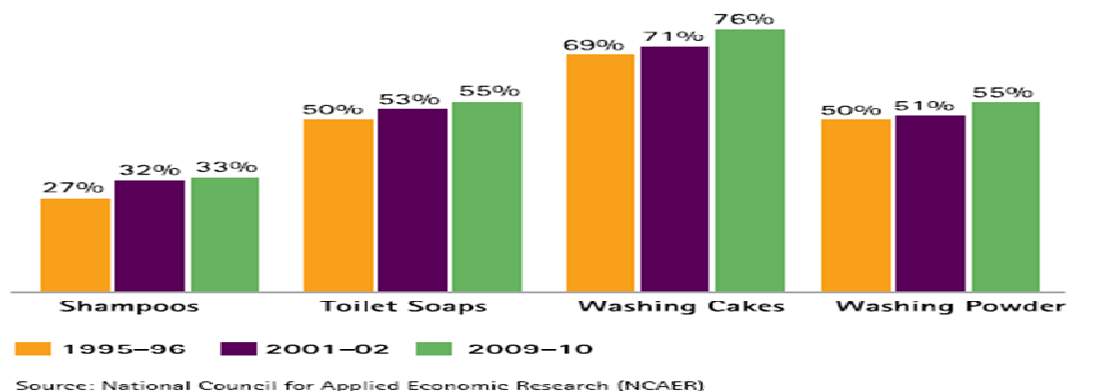
Still there is an untapped market and most of the FMCG Companies are taking different steps to capture rural market share. The market for FMCG products in rural India is estimated 52 per cent and is projected to touch 60 per cent within a year. Hindustan Unilever Ltd is the largest player in the industry and has the widest market coverage.¹

The size of the Indian detergent market is roughly estimated to be 12,000 Cr. Characterized by immense competition and high penetration levels the Indian detergent segment is ruled by players like Hindustan Unilever Limited, Henkel and Procter & Gamble.

As a result of rapid urbanization the demand for better quality household products is constantly on a rise. To cater to this increasing demand of quality washing powders most of the top detergent brands in India are continually introducing better packaged detergents that are offering a host of benefits in a single wash.²

The Indian washing powder markets in 2010 was 3,364 000 tones.³

The Indian rural demand for washing powder has increased by 83 percent in last ten years.⁴



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the present study the exploratory type of research is used. The primary data is collected from 70 different villages from seven different districts of Maharashtra by using structured questionnaire.

OBJECTIVE

To understand the consumer behavior related with detergents.

HYPOTHESIS

The rural consumer purchase detergent for different purposes.

RATIONAL OF THE STUDY

This study is useful for the companies operating in the rural markets of Maharashtra to develop appropriate product as well as marketing mix.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INFERENCE

Detergent got the grip in the washing or laundry products in the last couple of decades. The rural people were using the Nirma as the synonym for the detergent. The Nirma enjoyed the monopoly within the rural markets.

TABLE 1: BRAND WISE CONSUMPTION OF DETERGENT POWDER

| Brands | Aurangabad District | Kolhapur District | Nagpur District | Nanded District | Nashik District | Pune District | Ratnagiri District | Total |
|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------------|-------|
| Nirma | 57 | 66 | 64 | 44 | 74 | 40 | 52 | 397 |
| Wheel | 14 | 24 | 17 | 25 | 9 | 27 | 19 | 135 |
| Surf | 22 | 6 | 18 | 5 | 8 | 8 | 29 | 96 |
| Ariel | 0 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 16 |
| Rin | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 9 | 0 | 14 |
| Other available brands | 6 | 3 | 1 | 7 | 0 | 9 | 2 | 28 |
| Tide | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Not applicable | 10 | 3 | 9 | 1 | 10 | 2 | 3 | 38 |
| Total | 109 | 117 | 109 | 82 | 112 | 95 | 105 | 729 |

Source: Data collected through survey

The brand wise consumption study shows that the Nirma holds the number one position in all the studied districts. It is followed by wheel and surprisingly the premium category brand followed as it is mentioned in table Surf, Ariel and Rin. Surf brand is preferred in Ratnagiri, Nagpur and Aurangabad region. Ariel is preferred in the Nashik region. Rin is preferred in Pune Nashik and Kolhapur region. The premium brand consumption shows that the rural consumers can afford the premium brands if the breaking of the bulk offered properly.

The study of the 67 different village markets of Maharashtra for the consumer behaviour understanding helped researcher to put forward the observations related to the selection parameters in case of the detergent powder. The study of the selection parameters found to be useful to formulate the rural marketing mix for FMCG. The observations are furnish below.

TABLE 2: SELECTION PARAMETER FOR DETERGENT POWDER

| Responses for Detergent powder Features | Aurangabad District | Kolhapur District | Nagpur District | Nanded District | Nashik District | Pune District | Ratnagiri District | Total |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------------|-------|
| Features | 87 | 50 | 80 | 57 | 23 | 61 | 88 | 446 |
| Price | 5 | 34 | 7 | 8 | 60 | 19 | 9 | 142 |
| Availability | 0 | 2 | 10 | 11 | 11 | 5 | 1 | 40 |
| Influence | 1 | 15 | 0 | 7 | 7 | 22 | 2 | 54 |
| Not applicable | 10 | 3 | 9 | 1 | 10 | 2 | 3 | 38 |
| Total | 103 | 104 | 106 | 84 | 111 | 109 | 103 | 720 |

Source: Data collected through survey

Quality of the detergent, generation of lather, cleaning ability are considered by the consumers. It is clear that for different regions the marketing mix need need to be different as it can be cleared through the table. In Aurangabad, Ratnagiri and Nagpur the product features are the most prominent for selection of the product so the marketing mix need to the product centric for these regions.

The Nashik region marketing mix need to be developed keeping price at the centre as the price is the parameter applied by the respondents of Nashik region while purchasing the product. The price and quality equation can be achieved by offering the product in sachet. The price driven consumers can be targeted by the price related promotional strategies.

Availability is the major issue for the Nagpur, Nashik and Nanded regions after the price. Influence plays major role in selection in Kolhapur and Pune region. The marketers need to consider the influence while going in these regions.

The consumer behaviour for detergent is classic examples of need based purchase. The consumers are ready to pay more to get the desired cleaning effect. It was also observed that rural consumers mix premium brand with economy detergents to get the optimum results. This way consumers show innovation in using the products. By innovatively using the product consumers are creating a new segment for rural detergent market.

The statistical tool used for proving the hypothesis is Chi-Square test. Following are the application and calculations of the chi square test.

TABLE 3: DETERGENT POWDER BRANDS -OBSERVED VALUES

| Detergent Powder Brands | Nirma | Wheel | Surf | Arial | Rin | Others | Tide | NA | Total |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|------|-------|-----|--------|------|----|-------|
| Aurangabad | 57 | 14 | 22 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 10 | 109 |
| Kolhapur | 66 | 24 | 6 | 10 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 117 |
| Nagpur | 64 | 17 | 18 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 9 | 109 |
| Nanded | 44 | 25 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 1 | 82 |
| Nashik | 74 | 9 | 8 | 6 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 10 | 112 |
| Pune | 40 | 27 | 8 | 0 | 9 | 9 | 0 | 2 | 95 |
| Ratnagiri | 52 | 19 | 29 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 105 |
| Total | 397 | 135 | 96 | 16 | 14 | 28 | 5 | 38 | 729 |

TABLE 4: DETERGENT POWDER BRANDS -EXPECTED VALUES

| Detergent Powder Brands | Nirma | Wheel | Surf | Arial | Rin | Others | Tide | NA | Total |
|-------------------------|--------|--------|--------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| Aurangabad | 59.359 | 20.185 | 14.354 | 2.392 | 2.093 | 4.187 | 0.748 | 5.682 | 109 |
| Kolhapur | 63.716 | 21.667 | 15.407 | 2.568 | 2.247 | 4.494 | 0.802 | 6.099 | 117 |
| Nagpur | 59.359 | 20.185 | 14.354 | 2.392 | 2.093 | 4.187 | 0.748 | 5.682 | 109 |
| Nanded | 44.656 | 15.185 | 10.798 | 1.800 | 1.575 | 3.150 | 0.562 | 4.274 | 82 |
| Nashik | 60.993 | 20.741 | 14.749 | 2.458 | 2.151 | 4.302 | 0.768 | 5.838 | 112 |
| Pune | 51.735 | 17.593 | 12.510 | 2.085 | 1.824 | 3.649 | 0.652 | 4.952 | 95 |
| Ratnagiri | 57.181 | 19.444 | 13.827 | 2.305 | 2.016 | 4.033 | 0.720 | 5.473 | 105 |
| Total | 397 | 135 | 96 | 16 | 14 | 28 | 5 | 38 | 729 |

$$= (7-1) \times (8-1) = 42$$

At 95% level of confidence Table value of Chi square at n=42 is 58.124.

Chi square value observed here is 187.491498 which is greater than table value.

This proves the hypothesis "The rural consumer purchase detergent for different purposes."

FURTHER JUSTIFICATION OF THE HYPOTHESIS

Researcher on 16th Dec 2009 accessed 'http://www.equitymaster.com/research-it/sector-info/Consprds/consprds-products.html' for international consumption of detergent powder in developing and developed countries to reveal that developing countries like Indonesia, China and Thailand have per capita consumption of detergent powder around 2000gm.

In case of Malaysia if per capita consumption of detergent powder is 3700gms then same for USA is 10,000gms. These are much more than consumption of rural market of Maharashtra.

As per ORG for period 2002-03 per capita consumption of detergent powder for urban area was 2523gms and for rural area it was 872gms. This indicates that even in 2007-08 for consumption of detergent powder in rural Maharashtra, 63 per cent were still behind than per capita consumption of urban counterpart in 2002-03. Not to forget the fact that there are still non users totaling to 6 per cent.

CONCLUSION

There are different brands present in the rural markets indicates the oligopoly. Nirma is first detergent which was introduced in the rural markets. The brand wise consumption shows the No.1 position of Nirma. Nirma is followed by the wheel. Wheel was designed as economy class detergent which is in the similar category as Nirma and priced keeping Nirma in front.

There are premium category detergents present in rural markets like Surf, Rin, Arial etc. The small pack size brought up the revolution in the rural markets. The sachet gives the chance to the rural consumers who are willing to purchase the premium product and unable to produce the bulk. The sachet gives the chance to the rural consumers to experiment and experience. In the rural markets the detergents are more than just a fabric wash.

Detergents are even used for the various purposes by the rural respondents like **Utensil cleaners, Toilet cleaners, and Floor cleaners.** The brand selection of the rural consumers depends on the needs in case of the detergent as consumers use different brands for different types of cloths the school uniforms and office wares need to clean and are needed to be taken care of. For day today clothes and home decors they use the economy type of the detergents.

The marketers need to develop detergents as a multi utility product. All in one is the need of rural consumer.

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