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**RURAL MARKETS-A NEW FORCE FOR MODERN INDIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

Research firms have started conducting surveys, academicians published papers and business had made inroad on the area called rural market. The word on everybody lips are - "The real India lives in the village". Rural Marketing is not an uncommon psychology anymore. There has been a radical change in the way marketers are framing their strategies for rural parts of India. It is startle-ting to point out here that Rural Marketing has witnessed unprecedented growth with increasing purchasing power of the people living in rural India. Consumers hailing from these parts are unquestionably growing "fashionable" in their taste. The present research paper consists of the study understanding emerging trends in Rural Marketing in Indian context. India being a developing economy has opened-up flood gates for ample opportunities for producers and marketers to tape and explore potential consumers living in rural India. For understanding the different trends surfacing in the area of rural marketing, I have heavily relied on secondary data comprising of articles from the pages of newspaper, magazines and periodicals. Different business websites have been good source of information for drawing clear-cut picture of rural marketing. In Present paper researcher has focused on the changing face of rural India from the eyes of marketer's perspectives as the Indian Rural Market is extremely fragmented, having small number of players on the seller's side and large number of player on the buyer side.

**KEYWORDS**

fashionable, opportunities, psychology, surveys.

**INDIAN RURAL MARKETS: BRIEF OVERVIEW**

Rural India accounts for almost 70 per cent of the population as the recent Census 2011 indicates that of the 1.21 billion population, 833 million live in rural India. The clan has been exposed to new communication technologies and a plethora of services which has strengthened its aspirations to become an urbanised society. According to a recent Technopak report, rural Indian economy is highly supported by increasing disposable income, Government initiatives and schemes and favourable demographics. As a result, the rural segment of the Indian economy is growing at a pace of 8-10 per cent per annum and is anticipated to add new consumption of US\$ 90 billion-100 billion over 2012-2017 to the current base of US\$ 240 billion-250 billion. Moreover, the growth of rural India is largely attributed by increasing awareness about need of education. According to the ASER (2012) report, private school enrolment in rural India has enhanced by 5.5 per cent points over past six years. The literacy rate has also gone up by 68.91 per cent in rural India. From the strict marketing point of view, the market structure in India is dichotomous having rural and urban markets. But many do not occur with this needs, aspirations, beliefs and attitudes will also be the same. The fact, however, separate marketing strategies to be distinctively developed to suit the rural and urban market behavior. Conditions existing in urban market at present can also be analyzed in this context. First, the urban markets have almost reached a saturation level that further tapping them with a high profit margin has become difficult. Secondly, competition is becoming tough in urban markets compelling many firms to incur heavy costs in promotional expenditure. Thirdly, the awareness level of urban consumers is high and hence product features have to be changed often. Needless to say this process needs a huge investment which will have a negative impact on profitability. Thus, except perhaps for easy reach the urban markets have become as oasis.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF RURAL MARKETS**

The rural markets are estimated to be growing fastly compared to the urban markets. The potentiality of rural markets is said to be like a „woken up sleeping giant“. These facts are sustained in a study of market growth conducted by various researches. In recent years, rural markets have acquired significance in countries like China and India, as the overall growth of the economy has resulted into substantial increase in the purchasing power of the rural communities. On account of the green revolution in India, the rural areas are consuming a large quantity of industrial and urban manufactured products. In this context, a special marketing strategy, namely, rural marketing has taken shape. Sometimes, rural marketing is confused with agricultural marketing – the later denotes marketing of produce of the rural areas to the urban consumers or industrial consumers, whereas rural marketing involves delivering manufactured or processed inputs or service to rural producers or consumers.

A number of factors have been organized as responsible for the rural market boom to come into existence:

1. Increase in population and hence increase in demand.
2. A marked increase in the rural income due to agrarian prosperity.
3. Standard of living is also increasing in rural areas.
4. Large inflow of investment for rural development programmer from government and other sources.
5. Increased contact of rural people with their urban counterparts due to development of transport and wide communication network.
6. Increase in literacy and educational level and resultant inclination to sophisticated lives by the rural folks.
7. Inflow of foreign remittances and foreign made goods into rural areas.
8. Change in the land tenure systems causing a structural change in the ownership patterns and consequent changes in the buying behavior.
9. Rural markets are laggards in picking up new products. This will help the companies to phase their marketing efforts. This will also help to sell inventories of products out dated in urban markets.

**WHAT MAKES RURAL MARKETS ATTRACTIVE?**

Rural markets has following arrived and the following facts substantiate this:

- 742 million people
- Estimated annual size of the rural market - FMCG Rs. 65,000 Crores - Durables Rs. 5,000 Crores - Agri-inputs (incl. tractors) Rs. 45,000 Crores - 2/4 Wheelers Rs. 8,000 Crores
- In 2001-02, LIC sold 55% of its policies in rural India.
- Of two million BSNL mobile connections, 50% in small towns/villages.
- Of the six lakh villages, 5.22 lakh have a Village Public Telephone (VPT)
- 41 million Kisan Credit Cards issued (against 22 million credit-plus-debit cards in urban) with cumulative credit of Rs. 977 billion resulting in tremendous liquidity.
- Of 20 million Rediff mail groups, 60% are from the small towns. 50% transactions from these towns on Rediff online shopping site.

## CHANGING RURAL CONSUMER

Rural market differs by geography, occupation, social and cultural factors. This in turn influence of product design, promotion, pricing and use of channels. There is need to develop positioning and product variant according to geography and social grouping.

The product offering in rural market need to reflect the product use-situation. The changing behavior of a segment of rural market suggests an initial entry strategy of mimicking the urban marketing programme. The product and packaging are to be creatively used for developing and delivering value. The product attribute and feature should reflect the environment of that consumer.

## STRATEGIES

Dynamics of rural markets differ from other market types, and similarly rural marketing strategies are also significantly different from the marketing strategies aimed at an urban or industrial consumer. Rural markets and rural marketing involve a number of strategies, which include:

- 5.1. Client and Location specific Promotion: It involves a strategy designed to be suitable to the location and the client.
- 5.2. Joint or Co-operative Promotion strategy: It involves participation between the marketing agencies and the client.
- 5.3. 'Building of Inputs': It denotes a marketing strategy, in which several related items are sold to the target client, including arrangements of credit, after sale service, and so on. Management of demand involves continuous market research of buyer's needs and problems at various levels so that continuous improvements and innovations can be undertaken for a sustainable market performance.
- 5.4. Developmental marketing: It refers to taking up marketing programmes keeping the developmental objective in mind and using various managerial and other inputs of marketing to achieve these objectives.
- 5.5. Media, both traditional as well as the modern media: It is used as a marketing strategy.
- 5.6. Unique Selling Promotion (USP): It involves presenting a theme with the product to attract the client to buy that particular product. For examples, some of famous Indian Farm equipment manufacturers have coined catchy themes, which they display along with products, to attract the target client that is the farmers.
- 5.7. Extension Services: It denotes, in short, a system of attending to the missing links and providing the required know-how. Ethics in Business Form, as usual, an important plank for rural markets and rural marketing. Partnership for sustainability involves laying and building a foundation for continuous and long lasting relationship.

## OPPORTUNITIES

1. Infrastructure is improving rapidly - In 50 years only 40% villages connected by road, in next 10 years another 30%.
2. More than 90% villages electrified, though only 44% rural homes have electric connections.
3. Rural telephone density has gone up by 300% in the last 10 years; every 1000+ population is connected by STD.
4. Social Indicators have improved a lot between 1981 and 2001
5. Number of "pucca" houses doubled from 22% and 41% and "Kuccha" houses halved (41% to 23%)
6. Rural literacy level improved from 36% to 59%

## PROBLEMS RELATED TO RURAL MARKETING

1. **BARTER SYSTEM:** In a developing country like India, even today the barter systems i.e. exchange of goods for goods exists. This is a major obstacle in the way of development of rural marketing.
2. **UNDERDEVELOPED PEOPLE & UNDERDEVELOPED MARKETS:** The agricultural technology has tried to develop the people and market in rural areas. Unfortunately, the impact of the technology is not felt uniformly through out the country. Some districts in Punjab, Haryana or western Uttar Pradesh where rural consumer is somewhat comparable to his urban counterpart, there are large areas and groups of people who have remained beyond the technological breakthrough. In addition, the farmers with small agricultural land holdings have also been unable to take advantage of the new technology.
3. **LACK OF PROPER PHYSICAL COMMUNICATION FACILITIES:** Nearly 50 percent of the villages in the country do not have all weather roads. Physical communication to these villages is highly expensive. Even today, most villages in eastern part of the country are inaccessible during monsoon season.
4. **INADEQUATE MEDIA COVERAGE FOR RURAL COMMUNICATION:** A large number of rural families in own radios and television sets there were also community radio and T.V. sets. These have been used to diffuse agricultural technology to rural areas. However the coverage relating to marketing inadequate.
5. **MANY NLANGUAGES:** The numbers of languages vary from state to state, region to region. This type of distribution of population warrants appropriate strategies to decide the extent of coverage of rural market.
6. **MARKET ORGANISATION & STAFF:** The size of the market organization and staff is very important, to manage market system effective control. However the existing organizational setup particularly at district and block level needs to be strengthened in order make the services on various aspects available to the farmers timely and also easily accessible to them.

## EMERGING TRENDS IN RURAL MARKETS

1. **ONLINE RURAL MARKET:** Rural people can use the two-way communication through on-line service for crop information, purchases of Agri-inputs, consumer durable and sale of rural produce online at reasonable price. Farm information online marketing easily accessible in rural areas because of spread of telecommunication facilities all over India. Agricultural information can get through the internet if each village has small information office.
2. **INFORMATION THROUGH LOCAL AGRICULTURE INPUT DEALERS:** Most of the dealers have direct touch with the local farmers: these farmers need awareness about pests, disease, fertilizers, seeds, technology and recent developments. For this information, farmers mostly depend on local dealers. For development of rural farmers, the government may consider effective channel and keep information at dealers, for farmer education hang notice board and also train the dealer recent changes and developments in agriculture.
3. **COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS:** Cost benefit can be achieved through development of information technology at the doorsteps of villagers: most of the rural farmers need price information of agri-produce and inputs. If the information is available farmers can take quick decision where to sell their produce, if the price matches with local market farmer no need to go near by the city and waste of money and time it means farmers can enrich their financial strength.
4. **NEED BASED PRODUCTION:** Supply plays major role in price of the rural produce, most of the farmers grow crops in particular seasons not through out the year, it causes oversupply in the market and drastic price cut in the agricultural produce. Now the information technology has been improving if the rural people enable to access the rural communication, farmers awareness can be created about crops and forecasting of future demand, market taste. Farmers can equate their produce to demand and supply they can create farmers driven market rather than supply driven market. If the need based production system developed not only prices but also storage. If the need based production system developed not only price but also storage cost can be saved. It is possible now a days the concept of global village.
5. **MARKET DRIVEN EXTENSION:** Agricultural extension is continuously going through renewal process where the focus includes a whole range of dimensions varying from institutional arrangements, privatization, decentralization, partnership, efficiency and participation. The most important change that influences the extension system is market forces. There is a need for the present extension system to think of the market driven approach, which would cater the demands of farmers.
6. **PROCESSING INDUSTRY:** India is the second largest producer of fruits and vegetables in the world with an annual production of more than 110 million tones of fruit and vegetable only 1.3 percent of the output is processed by the organized sector commercially, the reason higher consumption in fresh form. However,



as the packaging transportation and processing capacities increase the market for processed fruits and vegetables is projected to grow at the rate of about 20% per annum. 100% export oriented units (EOU) and joint venture units required improving the processing industry.

**7. RURAL AGRICULTURE-EXPORTS:** Rural products, raw fruits and vegetable, processing goods have the potential market in Asian, Europe and western countries.

### DECISION IMPLICATIONS

Marketers can target consumers according to their unmet needs on price or product features and develop new markets through unique positioning. The product and packaging are to be creatively used for developing and delivering value. The product attributes and features. Marketers can use product and package design to influence perception. The size, shape and color are important cues that a rural marketer can use to communicate effectively and create a favorable attitude. Distinct colors, designs and symbols help the illiterate rural consumer identify the brand. The ability to leverage strengths either in distribution or costs is important to deliver the value offering. Value and not price is important in rural markets. It is relative value that is important and so the launch price of a new product has to take into account the price of substitute products. In the case of nonessential items for which the consumer pays a large sum, demand for quality and preference for a brand name suggests offering a high priced model in addition to offering a stripped down version. In the case of high-priced durables, the market potential can be enlarged through hiring the product. The presence of a large number of consumers has implications for package size of non-durables.

### EXAMPLES

- Godrej recently introduced three brands of Cinthol, fair glow and Godrej in 50-gm packs, priced at Rs 4-5 meant specifically for Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh – the so-called Bimaru states.
- Hindustan Lever, among the first MNCs to realize the potential of India's rural market, has launched a variant of its largest selling soap brand, Lifebuoy at Rs 2 for 50 gm.
- Coca-cola has also introduced Sunfill, a powdered soft-drink concentrate. The instant and ready-to-mix Sunfill is available in a single-serve sachet of 25gm prices at Rs 2 and multi serve sachet of 200 gm prices at Rs. 15.
- LG Electronics defines all cities and towns other than the seven metros cities as rural and semi-urban market. To tap these unexplored country markets, LG has set up 45 area offices and 59 rural/remote area offices.
- ICICI BANK customized their rural ATMs, so they can operate biometric authentication. ICICI rural ATMs are battery operated so that power failure is not an issue. Bank of India introduced Bhumiheen credit cards for providing credit card facilities to landless farmers.
- Nokia developed affordable mobile phones for rural markets with unique features such as local language capabilities, present time/call limits etc.
- Philips developed „free power radio. This radio does not require power and battery also. It runs on simple winding of level provided in the set. The price of this attractive set is Rs.995.

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