

Understanding Rural Buying Behaviour: A Study with Special Reference to FMCG Products

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Abstract

Rural India has become a massive consumer goods market with more than six hundred thousand villages and more than 70% of the population living in villages. In these rural markets, FMCG products have emerged as a major product category. Various researchers have found that rural and urban Indian consumers have different needs and wants. These differences have revealed a huge marketing potential for MNCs and other foreign investors, who try to explore rural regions for marketing opportunities. Thus, understanding rural consumer behaviour is very important for the marketers. This paper focused on the important factors that affect the rural purchase behaviour of FMCG products. The findings of this study indicate that price, brand name, quality, availability, packaging, and so forth were the important factors influencing the rural consumers' purchase decisions. The study also focused on the important aspects such as the effective modes of communication, reasons for switching brands, billing patterns, and satisfaction level among the rural consumers.

Keywords: rural consumers, FMCG products, consumer behaviour

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In recent years, rural markets have acquired an important role in the Indian economy. After the green revolution, the overall growth of the economy resulted in substantial increase in purchasing power of the rural communities (Sun & Wu, 2004), and the consumption pattern of rural consumers has changed with time. Now, they are consuming a large quantity of industrial and urban manufactured products. The large size and high rates of growth in emerging market countries such as Russia, Brazil, India, and China has sparked growing interest among the marketers. Due to this, firms are now shifting their attention on opportunities outside the urban markets (Craig & Douglas, 2011). The multinational companies are not only focusing on the urban markets but also on the rural markets of these countries (Wilson & Purushothaman, 2003).

In India, the rural sector, which encompasses about 70% of the national population, has played an important role in the economy (Selvaraj, 2007). Earlier, there was a perception that the rural markets have potential only for the agricultural products, but this is partially correct as there are many opportunities for modern goods and services (Singh, 1992). The saturated urban markets are now facing high market competition and pose high risk for the marketers, but on the other hand, the rural markets are welcoming the big companies on their land (Kalotra, 2013).

With the help of many programs and schemes of the government, the infrastructure in the rural areas has improved. Nowadays, changed demographics and economy, changing lifestyle, technology, and desire for comfort and luxury are the new face of rural markets. The recent decade has witnessed that a large number of companies are giving importance to rural areas and have shifted themselves from the 'global' to the 'local' consumers. They are providing globally standardized products to rural consumers by implementing locally

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adapted marketing programmes (Dawar & Chattopadhyay, 2002). The consumption patterns, tastes, preferences, and needs of the rural consumers are changing (Kubendran & Vanniarajan, 2005 ; Sundaram, 2002) and should be analyzed by marketers at the product planning stage so that they match the needs of the rural people (Gaikwad, 2010). This empirical paper tries to explore the factors, which affected the buying behaviour of rural consumers while going in for FMCG purchases.

Review of Literature

In this globalized world, knowing the consumer is very important. Historically, understanding consumer behaviour has always been a big challenge for the marketers, but those who succeed in it, they are able to sustain themselves for a long time. Study of the consumer behaviour is a complex process (Baumgartner, 2002) and may be defined as mental, emotional, and physical activities that engage people in choosing, buying, using, evaluating, and disposing of products and services, which ultimately fulfil the needs and desires of consumers (Belch & Belch, 2004 ; Kinnear, Bernhardt, & Krentler, 1997). The profound implication of consumer behaviour is not only important for managers, but also for the strategy makers. The modern concept of consumer behaviour is that people mostly buy products not for what they do, but for what they stand for (Rabolt & Solomon, 2004).

The fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) market has emerged as one of the most attractive markets in India (Bijapurkar, 2003 ; Kashyap & Raut, 2006 ; Sarkar & Pareek, 2013). FMCG products are symbols of speed, adaptability, quality and scale, short life, high consumer demand, are consumed quickly (Vyas, 2005), and are relatively low priced. These are substituted within a short period of time while being purchased (Smith, 2010). FMCGs include a vast range of consumer products like soaps, cosmetics, toothpastes, shaving products, toiletries, detergents and cleaning products, as well as other non-durables such as paper products, glassware, bulbs, batteries, and plastic goods. According the CII and Nielsen Report (2012), the rural FMCG market grew by 15% in 2011 and the FMCG market has become an attractive segment for the marketers.

Little attention has been paid to rural consumers' buying behaviour (Home, 2002). Rural consumers are different from the urban consumers (Sun & Wu, 2004 ; Trehan & Singh, 2003). However, the rural consumers are now more brand loyal (Maruthamuthu, Krishnakumar, & Vasan, 2006) and have a good knowledge about the branded products (Chidambaram & Ganeshan, 2004 ; Mani & Srinivasan, 1990 ; Raj & Selvaraj, 2007). They not only give importance to quality, but also to value for money (Halan, 2003), which highly affects their buying behaviour (Anand & Krishna, 2007). The rural consumers have become more rational and clever, and the advertisement gimmicks do not work (Nagaraj, 2004). So, companies have to design new options for the core of low-income consumers, and they must understand that low income customers too have ambitions for a better life (Letelier, Flores, & Spinosa, 2003).

It is very important to understand the factors which influence the rural purchase of FMCGs (Krishnamoorthy, 2008). Through the currently available literature on influencing factors, we found that various factors influence the purchase decisions of customers. Available literature mentions that factors like packaging (Peters-Teixeira & Badrie, 2005 ; Sakkthivel & Mishra, 2005; Sehrawet & Kundu, 2007) brand name (Begum, 2013 ; Bishnoi & Bharti, 2007 ; Krishna, 2011 ; Lokhande, 2004; Pradhan & Misra, 2012; Verma & Munjal, 2003), need (Barwise & Meehan, 2004 ; Cui, 1999 ; Cui & Liu, 2000 ; Hawkins, Best, & Coney, 1988 ; Mittal & Sheth, 2004), quality (Dolekoglu, Albayrak, Kara, & Keskin, 2008 ; Prajapati & Thakor, 2012 ; Prialatha & Mathi, 2011), quantity (Musebe & Kumar, 2002), price (Carneiro, Minim, Deliza, Silva, Carneiro, & Leão, 2005; Kulkarni, 2011; Patnaik & Sahoo, 2012), sales promotions (Kaur & Kaur, 2012), advertisements (Kumar, Gangal, & Singh, 2011 ; Purohit, 2007 ; Sivan, 2000 ; Yuvarani, 2013), location of the store (Prialatha & Mathi, 2011), personality (Hemanth & Shruthi, 2013), and past experience (Rajitha, 2012) influence the buying behaviour of the consumers.

➡ **Rural Market :** Different experts and organizations have different views on the term 'rural'. Wikipedia describes a rural area as a geographic area that is located outside the cities and towns. The National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) defined 'rural' as an area with a population density of up to 400 per square kilometres, villages with clear surveyed boundaries but no municipal board, and a minimum of 75% of male working

Table 1. Concepts of Rural Marketing Proposed by Different Authors

Rural marketing as agriculture marketing	Rural marketing as an extension of the mainstream marketing in rural areas	Rural marketing as a flow of goods between urban and rural areas	Rural marketing as a tool for development
NCA (XII Report)	Bijapurkar (2003)	Jha (1988)	Rao and Tagat (1985)
Rajagopal (1998)	Dogra and Ghuman(2008)	Gopaldaswamy (1997)	Vaswani et al. (2005)
	Kashyap and Raut (2006)	Rajgopal (1998)	
	Krishnamacharyulu and Ramakrishnan (2002)	Sahu (2003)	
	Nabi and Raut (1995)	Taori and Singh (1991)	
	Singh (1992)		
	Velayudhan (2002)		

Source: Adapted from P. Modi (2009). Rural marketing: Its definition and development perspective. *International Journal of Rural Management*, 5(1), 91-104.

population involved in agriculture and affiliated activities (Dhanalaxmi Bank, 2010). Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) defined a rural area as a location with a population up to 10,000 people (NABARD Act, 1981; RBI, 2001). The planning commission defined a rural location as being one with a population of up to 15,000 people (Modi, 2009).

➤ **The Definition of Rural Marketing :** The term rural marketing has been used widely in both academic and corporate literature. According to Modi (2009), rural marketing is any marketing activity whose positive net developmental impact on rural people is positive. Kotler, Keller, Koshy, and Jha (2009) defined rural marketing as any marketing activity in which one dominant participant is from a rural area. Rural marketing consists of marketing of inputs (products or services) to the rural as well as the marketing of outputs from the rural markets to other geographical areas. Velayudhan (2002) explained that rural marketing includes all those activities of assessing, stimulating, and converting the rural purchasing power into an effective demand for specific products with the aim of raising the standard of living. Other authors like Dogra and Ghuman (2008) explained rural marketing as planning and implementation of the marketing function for the rural areas. The concept of 'rural marketing' means different things to different people. This confusion leads to distorted understanding of the problems of rural marketing, poor diagnosis and, more often than not, poor prescriptions (Jha, 1988). The Table 1 shows the different concepts of rural marketing given by different authors.

Objectives of the Research

The objective of the present paper is to understand the buying behaviour of rural consumers and to identify the important factors, which influenced the purchasing behaviour of rural consumers.

Research Methodology

The primary data were collected through a survey with the help of a structured questionnaire during the period from October to December 2013. According to Fisher (2007), a survey approach is suitable when the researcher is trying to obtain a broad and representative overview of a situation. In addition to this, Garrett's ranking technique was used to provide a rank order with respect to the important factors and to identify the most important factor. Secondary survey through literature review was also carried out. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. In the first part, the respondents were asked about their demographic information so as to collect information about their gender, age, profession, and economic status. In the second part, the respondents were asked about the billing pattern, satisfaction level, mode of communication, and so forth; and in the last part, the respondents were asked

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of the Sample Respondents

Demographic Factors of the Respondents								
Age	18-25 Years		25-35 Years	40-50 years		Above 51 Years		Total
No of respondents	36		29	24		18		107
Percentage	34		27	22		17		100
Gender								
	Male			Female			Total	
No of respondents	58			49			107	
Percentage	54			46			100	
Marital Status								
	Single			Married			Total	
No of respondents	55			52			107	
Percentage	51			49			100	
Family Type								
	Joint			Nuclear			Total	
No of respondents	56			51			107	
Percentage	52			48			100	
Educational Qualification								
	Up to 10th		Intermediate	Under Graduate		Post Graduate		Total
No of respondents	40		32	25		10		107
Percentage	37		30	23		10		100
Occupation								
	Unemployed	Govt. Employee	Private employee	Business	Agriculture	Student	Homemaker	Total
No of respondents	9	16	19	11	12	21	19	107
Percentage	8	15	18	10	11	20	18	100
Monthly Income								
	Below ₹ 10,000		₹ 10,000 - ₹ 15,000		₹ 16,000 - ₹ 25,000		Above ₹ 25,000	Total
No of respondents	54		27		20		6	107
Percentage	50		25		19		6	100

about the most influencing factors which affected their buying behaviour.

➤ **Sample Size :** The study was conducted in the rural areas of Dhanbad, which is located in the eastern part of Jharkhand. Dhanbad is popularly known as the coal capital of India. It shares its boundaries with the state of West Bengal in the eastern and southern part, Dumka and Giridih districts in the north and Bokaro district in the west. The sample size of the current study was 107 respondents consisting of the rural population living in the rural areas of Dhanbad. The respondents were both buyers and consumers of FMCG products. The questionnaires were distributed among 150 respondents, but we only received 107 valid responses. Hence, the response rate for the present study was 71%. A pilot study was also conducted to judge the validity of the questionnaire. The Table 2 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Analysis and Results

➤ **Factors Influencing the Rural Consumers for Purchasing FMCG Products :** A number of factors influence the consumers to buy a particular product. These factors may vary from one consumer to another consumer, and also

Table 3. Percentage Positions and Garrett's Table Value

Rank	Percentage Position		Garrett's Table Value
1	$100(1-0.5)/13$	= 3.84	84
2	$100(2-0.5)/13$	= 11.54	73
3	$100(3-0.5)/13$	= 19.23	67
4	$100(4-0.5)/13$	= 26.92	62
5	$100(5-0.5)/13$	= 34.61	58
6	$100(6-0.5)/13$	= 42.30	53
7	$100(7-0.5)/13$	= 50.00	50
8	$100(8-0.5)/13$	= 57.69	46
9	$100(9-0.5)/13$	= 65.38	42
10	$100(10-0.5)/13$	= 65.38	37
11	$100(11-0.5)/13$	= 80.76	32
12	$100(12-0.5)/13$	= 88.46	26
13	$100(13-0.5)/13$	= 96.15	15

vary from one product to another product. This paper tries to explore the factors, which were affecting the buying behaviour of rural consumers while going in for FMCG purchases. The behaviour of one consumer is different from that of another consumer, so the preference given by one consumer is not the same as given by his/her counterparts.

We observed that some of the respondents were satisfied with one attribute, but were dissatisfied with other attributes of FMCG products. It was very difficult to pinpoint a single factor which influenced the buying behaviour of the rural consumers. From the literature review, we found that various factors like price, quality, brand name, packaging, quantity, sales promotion, and availability influenced the purchase behaviour of rural consumers. Garrett's ranking technique was used to find the most significant factors which influenced the buying behaviour (of FMCGs) of rural consumers.

➤ **Garrett's Ranking Technique :** Garrett's ranking technique was used to analyze the factors influencing the preference for the selection of brands of FMCG products. Under the Garrett's ranking technique, the percentage position was calculated by using the following formula:

$$\text{Percentage Position} = \frac{100 (R_{ij} - 0.5)}{N_j}$$

where,

R_{ij} = Rank given for i th variable by the j th respondents.

N_j = Number of factors ranked by the j th respondents.

The respondents were asked to rank the seven factors from 1 to 13. One of the objectives of this research paper was to identify the factors which influenced the preferences of brands of FMCG products. The calculated percentage positions for the ranks from 1 to 13 and their corresponding Garrett's table values are given in the Table 3. The Table 3 shows the percentage positions for the ranks 1 to 13 and their corresponding Garrett's table values. For Rank 1, the calculated percentage position is 3.84, and the table value is 84. This value is given in the Garrett's ranking table for the percentage 3.89, which is very near 3.84. For all the calculated percentage positions, the table values are referred from Garrett's ranking table.

It can be inferred from the Table 4 that price factor received the highest mean score of 61.30. It proves that the price factor was considered as the most important factor influencing the respondents' decision to purchase an

Table 4. Factors Influencing the Rural Consumers for Purchasing the FMCG products

Rank		Scale and scale value of ranks													Total	Mean	Mean
Factors	Scale	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII	XIII	Score	Score	Rank
	Value (x)	84	73	67	62	58	53	50	46	42	37	32	26	15			
Price	f	44	13	12	3	5	5	8	7	5	5	0	0	0	7307	68.28	1
	fx	3696	949	804	186	290	265	400	322	210	185	0	0	0	107		
Packaging	f	7	7	12	16	14	7	15	6	7	4	6	2	4	5850	54.67	5
	fx	588	511	804	992	812	371	750	276	294	148	192	52	60	107		
Brand Name	f	17	19	20	13	12	9	1	3	4	3	1	5	0	6762	63.19	2
	fx	1427	1387	1340	806	696	477	50	138	168	111	32	130	0	107		
Personality	f	1	0	3	1	1	5	4	6	5	16	19	21	26	3492	32.63	13
	fx	84	0	201	62	58	265	200	276	210	592	608	546	390	107		
Past experience	f	3	14	15	11	10	3	7	13	12	12	2	4	1	5779	54	6
	fx	252	1022	1005	682	580	159	350	598	504	444	64	104	15	107		
Sales	f	1	5	3	14	7	13	15	9	9	10	12	6	3	5140	48.03	7
Promotion	fx	84	365	201	868	406	689	750	414	378	370	384	156	75	107		
Availability	f	15	7	12	6	7	15	12	10	6	10	3	1	3	6027	56.37	4
	fx	1260	511	804	372	406	795	600	460	252	370	96	26	75	107		
Payment method	f	4	4	1	8	2	3	4	14	11	13	11	14	18	4239	39.16	11
	fx	336	292	67	496	116	159	200	644	462	481	352	364	270	107		
Location	f	2	4	3	9	19	23	5	6	10	2	9	3	12	5106	47.71	8
	fx	168	292	201	558	1102	1219	250	276	420	74	288	78	180	107		
Quantity	f	2	7	8	7	12	7	6	15	12	7	10	8	6	5087	47.54	9
	fx	168	511	536	434	696	371	300	690	504	259	320	208	90	107		
Need	f	1	10	6	1	4	4	8	7	9	9	16	23	9	4400	41.12	10
	fx	84	730	402	62	232	212	400	322	378	333	512	598	135	107		
Quality	f	10	17	8	16	8	8	14	6	8	6	6	1	0	6249	58.40	3
	fx	840	1241	536	992	464	424	700	276	336	222	192	26	0	107		
Product	f	0	1	4	2	6	5	8	5	9	10	12	19	26	3724	34.80	12
Feature	fx	0	73	268	124	348	265	400	230	378	370	384	494	390	107		
	Σf	107	107	107	107	107	107	107	107	107	107	107	107	107			
Total																	

Note: x = scale value, f= No. of consumers/ no. of respondents, fx = score value

FMCG product. Brand name got the second rank with a mean score of 57.27, which proves that the rural consumers are brand loyal ; quality of the product got the third rank with a mean score of 58.84. Other most important factors are packaging, sales promotion, quantity, and availability of products.

➡ **Most Effective Mode of Communication** : The Table 5 shows the responses of the respondents for the most effective mode of communication in the rural areas. After analysis of the data, it was found that most of the respondents agreed that electronic media (3.60) is a powerful tool for the marketers. From the Table 5, it can be interpreted that the penetration of media - electronic and print - has increased in the rural areas. The other effective modes of communication are hoardings or wall paintings, campaigns, and direct contact.

Table 5. Most Effective Mode of Communication

Communication Instrument	Rank1	Rank2	Rank3	Rank4	Rank5	Total	WAS	Mean Rank
Print Media	27	22	23	19	16	107	3.23	2
Electronic Media	36	27	21	12	11	107	3.60	1
Campaigns	12	21	21	21	32	107	2.49	4
Hoardings/ Wall Painting	25	24	19	21	18	107	3.15	3
Direct Contact	7	13	23	34	30	107	2.37	5
Total	107	107	107	107	107			

WAS: Weighted Average Score

Table 6. Who Influences you the most to buy a Specific Brand of FMCGs ?

Influencer	Rank1	Rank2	Rank3	Rank4	Rank5	Total	WAS	Mean Rank
Relatives	2	11	29	34	31	107	2.24	5
Family members	27	22	21	20	17	107	3.14	2
Shopkeeper	40	29	20	11	7	107	3.78	1
Neighbours	13	22	19	21	32	107	2.65	4
Friends	25	23	18	21	20	107	3.11	3
Total	107	107	107	107	107			

WAS: Weighted Average Score

Table 7. Reasons for Brand Switching

Reasons	Rank1	Rank2	Rank3	Rank4	Rank5	Rank6	Total	WAS	Mean Rank
Price	27	21	22	18	16	3	107	4.14	2
Trend	6	14	15	23	21	28	107	2.85	5
Loyalty	25	21	19	16	16	10	107	3.93	3
Experience	30	24	20	13	9	11	107	4.18	1
Frequent Change	6	13	16	21	22	29	107	2.81	6
Availability	13	14	15	16	23	26	107	3.06	4
Total	107	107	107	107	107	107			

WAS: Weighted Average Score

Table 8. Billing Patterns of Rural Consumers

Payment Instrument	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Cash	55	51.4	58.5	58.5
Credit	29	27.1	30.9	89.4
Mix (Cash & Credit)	8	7.4	8.5	97.9
Exchange of Goods	2	1.8	2.1	100
Total	94	87.7	100	

➡ **Who Influences you the most to buy a Specific Brand of FMCGs ?** : From the Table 6, it is inferred that shopkeepers (3.78) highly influenced the consumers to buy a particular product. Consumers have faith in the shopkeepers' advice, as generally, the rural areas and rural communities are small and close knit, and they know each other very well. Family members (3.14), who were ranked second, also influenced buyers to buy a specific brand of FMCGs followed by friends and neighbours.

Table 9. Satisfaction Level of Rural Consumers

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	88	82
No	19	18
Total	107	100

➡ **Reasons for Brand Switching :** Brand switching is one of the crucial issues for marketers. The marketers should know the reason behind brand switching so that they can make strategies for the next marketing campaign. From the Table 7, it can be inferred that experience (4.18) of the respondents with a particular brand was the most important reason for the switching behaviour. The other reasons are price (4.14), loyalty (3.93), availability (3.06), trend (2.85), and frequent change (2.81).

➡ **Billing Pattern of Rural Consumers :** The Table 8 depicts the bill payment pattern of rural consumers while purchasing FMCGs. The results show that 58.5% of the consumers were paying their bills in the cash form and 30.9% of the rural consumers used the credit system to purchase the FMCG products; 10% of the rural respondents paid their bills by using both cash and the credit system.

➡ **Satisfaction Level of Rural Consumers :** In response to the above question, it can be inferred from the Table 9 that 82% of the respondents were satisfied with the FMCG brands they were using, whereas only 18% of the respondents were not satisfied with the used brands.

Research Findings

The analysis of data has revealed that the rural consumers are more aware about the brands and products of companies. They make an effort to search for the products of their choice. There are various factors which influence the buying behaviour of rural consumers. The results of the study indicate that price is the most important factor which highly influenced the buying patterns of the rural consumers. So, it is inferred that rural consumers are still price sensitive. Brand name was also a very important factor ranked by the respondents ; so, it is also inferred that rural consumers are more loyal to their brand preferences. The results also showed that quality is an important factor for rural consumers. Rural consumers live in small, close-knit communities, and there are many persons who influence their buying behaviour. The study showed that shopkeepers' recommendation highly influenced the purchase behaviour of the respondents. In this modern world, the consumers' choice is changing, and it is very important for a marketer to know about the factors which change the brand preferences of the consumers.

The marketers should know the reason behind brand switching so that they can make strategies for the next marketing campaign. It is also inferred that loyalty of the consumers towards a particular brand is the most important reason for brand switching. The study also depicted that 82% of the respondents were satisfied with the FMCG brands which they were using, whereas only 18% of the respondents were dissatisfied with the brands being used by them.

Managerial Implications

The findings of the study will help the marketers and manufacturers interested in increasing their customer base in the rural markets. Moreover, this study may also have policy implications as the government bodies related to trade may introduce policies to encourage marketers interested in rural markets as well as provide incentives to set up base in rural areas. The managers will also be benefitted in the sense that they will be able to develop a better understanding of rural consumers and thus, customize their products to suit their requirements. Rural consumers will also be benefitted as their requirements will be known, and accordingly, they would get the products as per

their liking. The study will thus help the managers to understand the buying behaviour of the rural consumers and help the marketers to understand the various factors that may lead the rural consumers to buy or not to buy the products. The findings will help to develop specific strategies for rural markets, thus providing better products and services to rural consumers, thereby enhancing the profit margin of the FMCG companies.

Conclusion

In this competitive world, it is observed that if a company wants to gain a competitive advantage, marketers have to know their customers and as well as be well-acquainted with their needs. Furthermore, understanding consumer behaviour is not an easy task for the marketer as consumer behaviour is distinctive and unpredictable (Hemanth & Shruthi, 2013). As the study has revealed that the consumers are still price sensitive, the marketing managers need to maintain a low price and high quality of the products for the rural consumers. For example, Chick shampoo sachets were a great success in the rural areas, and the strategy was used by big players like HUL, Parle, and so forth in rural areas. Various other examples are small sachets of Surf Excel, small bottles of Dabur Amla hair oil, ₹ 1 and ₹ 2 packets of tiger biscuits - all these novel experiments by FMCG companies were successful in the rural areas.

Rural consumers are more aware about new products, and they are very loyal to their brands. On the other hand, experience plays an important role in the re-buying of a particular brand, which is the main reason for brand switching. Rural consumers are highly affected by the electronic media. It is very important for the marketers to give them the best experience for sustaining them. It is recommended that the marketers should design innovative and low cost promotion activities, which are compatible with the educational background and understanding level of rural consumers. The social and psychological factors of rural consumers must be kept in mind by the companies to capture a good market share in the rural areas. To effectively tap the rural market, brands must associate themselves with the psyche of the rural consumers. The brands must offer their products and services to the rural consumers through meals, and associate themselves with the festivals and local rituals along with the normal retail outlets. For example, LG Sampoorna offers a wide range of electronic products for the rural consumers during the festive season.

Rural consumers are treated as special consumers because they are different from the urban consumers in terms of purchase decisions, purchase behaviour, consumption patterns, and attitude towards the products. There are different products that fall under the category of FMCG products, and which need different and separate strategies for separate products. Still, a large part of the rural market is untapped; a huge marketing potential exists in the market, which is waiting for the 'smart marketer,' who unlearns and relearns the marketing strategies and tactics that will harness the immense rural potential.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Future Research

The research study has a number of limitations, which must be acknowledged. The study was mainly conducted in a small area, with a limited number of respondents. The results were derived on the basis of data which were collected from the respondents, which is subject to the opinion of the respondents, and can change from time to time. The sample size was quite limited due to time constraints, and the study was carried out in the rural areas of Dhanbad city in the state of Jharkhand. The other factors like cultural and socioeconomic factors were not included in the present study.

Future research studies may analyze the buying behaviour of the rural respondents by considering the cultural and socioeconomic factors as well. The studies may include a large number of sample respondents and cover all the major cities of India. The future of rural research is bright in the FMCG sector. The researchers can study the existing model, test the same, and an improvised model can be built and tested with reference to marketing of FMCGs in the rural areas.

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