

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR OF RURAL MARKETING WITH REFERENCE TO HAIR OILS

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Abstract :

Today, the rural market is blooming, with increase in the disposable incomes of the households. By nature, rural marketing is complex oriented and study of perception of rural consumers is always a difficult task unlike urban consumers. Rural consumers vary not only in their behaviour, practices but also in conviction and belief. Yet, the general tendency has not changed widely between rural and urban consumers as regards to aiming on superior quality products, branded products etc. It is essential that an effective communication is information about products but also educating them regarding the use of products. Though, rural consumers' behaviour remains constant at least for a particular period, it cannot be taken for granted that they will not change when better opportunities are given to them, thus, rural consumers may resort to change and hence their behaviour will not remain inactive in the changing market environment. Therefore it is necessary, that rural consumers have to be thoroughly studied so as to have better knowledge on rural marketing and work out appropriate marketing strategies for the success not only in the short run but also in the long run. The study is undertaken with reference to Koshimbi, a village in Bhiwandi in Thane district. This study is based on 150 sample consumers selected from this rural area by adopting convenience-sampling method. The sample consists of people such as housewives, traders, students and professionals. The study reveals that among factors influencing brand preference of hair oil, fragrance ranks first, followed by attractive packing, small packs & low price. It is further found out that TV advertising had a deep impact in the minds of consumers from the village and most of the people are in a habit of changing their brand frequently.

Keywords: Rural marketing, Hair Oils, FMCG, Consumer behaviour.

INTRODUCTION :

In the competitive world, there are many problems in marketing of goods. Some problems can be solved, but so many problems may not be solved. India is a developing country. So, most of the people are living in rural areas. Rural marketing is an important one to develop a country economy. Manufacturers face many problems to market their product in rural areas because most of the rural consumers earn low income, have low level of literacy, low level of brand awareness, communication and transportation facilities in rural areas.

In the recent past rural India has been witnessing a sea change, particularly in the standard of living and life styles. At present the consumers are more dynamic. Their taste, needs and preferences are changing as per the current scenario. The consumer now looks for product differentiation and the convenience offered. The consumer has certain expectation from branded items in terms of its quality, price and packaging. The increasing money spent on advertisement makes the consumer aware of the latest brands in the market. Conditions in rural markets do not assume an organized functioning pattern. The status of rural marketing needs to be understood in view of social dynamics and various economic and operational gap theories. Thus, appropriate planning for rural market in terms of trade for Channel infrastructure,

technology and behavioral dimensions needs greater emphasis for achieving better economic efficiency.

Every one of us is a consumer. In recent days, consumer India is at the point where there is a multiplicative effect of income growth, aspiration to consume and a changed consumption friendly ideology / social discourse across the income board, especially in rural India. Hence, the buying behaviour of rural consumers has become a hot cake because rural Indian consumer in recent days is consuming everything from shampoo to motor cycles. This is the main reason behind the analysis of rural market. The Indian Market Demographics Report - 1998 (NCAER) had estimated that rural India's market for consumer durables in being worth around Rs. 4500 crores with an average annual growth rate of around 8%. It is growing steadily and the recent estimates reveal that it is bigger than the urban market for the durables (59%).

The annual size of the rural market in value terms is currently estimated at Rs. 50.00 crores for durables. All the FMCG companies' viz. HLL, Pepsi, Coca Cola, Britannia, Colgate Palmolive etc. are concentrating their marketing activities in rural markets. Why? Because the main reason behind it, is the awakening of the rural consumer towards his needs and up gradation of his standard of living. Information technology, Govt. policies, corporate strategies and satellite communication are the factors responsible for development of Rural Marketing. Rural markets are of the highest potential today. Rural consumption share in popular soaps is 48%, toothpastes - 24%, talcum powder -17%, Hair oil- 20%, Batteries -52% etc.

Cosmetics have been the love of every person for thousands of years. These products help in beautifying, promoting attractiveness of men & women. Hair oil is one of the popular cosmetics used by both men & women. There are numerous companies marketing hair oil under different brands. Brand name plays a vital role in determining the success / failure of a product. Hence an attempt has been made to study the brand preference of hair oil consumers. The study is undertaken with reference to Koshimbi, a village in Bhiwandi in Thane district.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY :

The following are the main objectives of the study:

1. To study how rural consumers get information regarding various brands.
2. To study the consumption pattern of hair oils in rural consumers.
3. To analyse the factors influencing the brand choice.
4. To find the brand preferred by the respondents.
4. To ascertain the factors affecting the purchasing decision for using hair oils.
5. To study the brand loyalty of hair oil consumers.

METHODOLOGY:

The study is based upon the primary data. The data was collected through personal interview with the help of a structured interview schedule. To study the brand preference of hair oil, 150 sample consumers were selected in Koshimbi (Bhiwandi) by adopting convenience-sampling method. Since the study is of concern to the rural people; the sample consists of people such as housewives, traders, students, and professionals.

A GENERAL SCENARIO OF RURAL MARKETING IN INDIA :

As a result of the "Green Revolution," there is a socio- economic revolution taking place in Indian villages since last three decades. Increasing knowledge of fertilizers; water resources, pesticides, better quality seeds, modern farm equipments and methods of farming have changed the villages far better. The per capita income of the farmers is on the increase and the manner in which they spend their disposable income has also changed. The rural market is not passive; it is vibrant and growing at a faster pace. It will soon outstrip the urban market if this pace of development continues.

The villages have accepted the modern way of agriculture as a business but have also accepted modern living. Farmer is choosy in his buying. Apart from food and consumable items, he is interested in buying small radios, televisions, two wheelers, mostly bicycles and motorcycles, wrist watches, cooking gas and furniture. Socio-economic changes in villages have led villagers to think of material well being. This change in the attitude of the Indian farmer is sweeping across the countryside. The expanding rural market is important to the growth of economic development of India. With the change in scenario, the marketing focus is also changing towards villages: 'Go Rural' is the slogan of marketing gurus.

Prosperity in rural areas is very much reflected in the buying and consumption habits of rural folks. Their inclination to spend on the modern gadgets has increased as a result of their increase in

purchasing power. This necessitates an appraisal of the rural marketing environment which is an outgrowth of various socio-economic and cultural forces. For evolving an appropriate marketing strategy, understanding the rural environment is quite essential. Recently attempts were made to define the distinct differences between the urban and rural markets on the basis of the various socio-economic factors.

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR:

Many of the scholars in marketing have tried to define the consumer and consumer behaviour. Adam Smith stated that consumption is the sole end and purpose of all production. Consumer behaviour may be defined as behaviour exhibited by people in planning, purchasing and using economic goods and services. Consumer behaviour is an integral part of human behaviour and cannot be separated from it. The term 'Consumer Behaviour' is defined by Leon G. Schieffman and Leslie Lzare Kanuk as the behaviour that consumers display in searching for purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of product and services that they expect will satisfy their needs. The study of consumer behaviour is the study of how individuals make decisions to spend their available resources [money, time, effort] on consumption of related items. It includes the study of what, why, how, when, where they buy and how often they buy any particular product or service. Consumer behaviour is the act of individuals in obtaining and using goods and services which is exhibited through their decision process. Consumer purchases are likely to be influenced by physiological and sociological factors.

RURAL CONSUMERS IN INDIA:

Rural consumers are fundamentally different from their urban counterparts socially, psychologically, physiologically. Rural consumers buy only inexpensive products. There is mass consumption among them regarding a particular product or brand since they are homogeneous of village or regional level. In rural market, since the women have very little contact with the market, the male makes the purchase decision. The community decision-making is quite common in a rural market because of strong caste and social structures and low literacy levels. Rural consumers generally feel inhibited and ill-equipped to buy confidently since they have only lesser exposure to the product quality, service support and company credentials. A rural consumer may be illiterate as per the census definition, but he is not unintelligent. The brand awareness, preference and loyalty among the rural consumers are comparatively less than their urban counterparts. The degree of brand loyalty varies among the rural consumer according to the nature of products. If the rural consumers are loyal to one brand, it is very difficult to change. The rural consumer behaviour is influenced by several aspects namely socio-economic, cultural, psychological and physiological environment. Various aspects are decided by the level of education of consumers. Apart from these, the rural consumer behaviour is moulded by the external environment namely opinion leaders, friends and relatives, resource persons, retailers, reach of media, caste and religion etc. The behaviour of the rural consumer depends upon the product he wants to purchase. The behaviour is highly dynamic even in the consumption of one single product.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:

The study is divided into six parts for the analysis as per the demand of the study and convenience. The study on rural marketing has been focused on the rural consumers, their buying habits, choice & preference of goods, effectiveness of media, product features etc. Analysis is based on the primary information, collected from 150 sample rural buyers. It was observed in the field survey that buying habits differed from consumers to consumer.

1.Sources of Information for Brand Selection by the Sample Respondents:

When asked about how they came to know about the different goods, majority of the respondents said that the advertisements given in T.V, radio, newspapers and other sources gave them the information about the various brands of hair oils. The responses are given in the Table No (1).

Table 1: Sources of Information for Brand Selection By The Sample Respondents

Source	No. of respondents	Percentage
TV	70	47
Radio	18	12
Newspaper	35	23
Friends	9	6
Relatives	12	8
Others	6	4
Total	150	100

Source: Primary Data

Out of 150 respondents 70(47%) had TV as a source of information regarding hair oils. Radio and newspaper were main sources of information 18(12%) and 35(23%) respectively. Friends, relatives, and other sources act as major sources of information for 9(6%), 12(8%), & 6(4%) respondents. It was observed that TV advertising had a deep impact on the minds of the consumers from the village.

2.FREQUENCY OF PURCHASE OF HAIR OILS:

Hair oil is the product, which is purchased frequently by the consumers. In the case under study it was found that the consumers prefer hair oils with fragrance. Table 2 shows the frequency of purchase of hair oils by the sample respondents.

Table 2: Frequency of Purchase of Hair Oils by the Sample Respondents

Period	Use of hair oils	Percentage
Once In a month	34	22.6
Once In 2 months	23	15.1
Once In 3 months	62	41.1
Once in 4 months	14	9.1
Once in 5 months	11	7.1
Once In 6 months	6	4.0
Total	150	100

Source: Primary Data

It is evident from Table (2) that out of 15 respondents 34(22.6%) buy hair oil once in a month, 23(15.1%) buys once in 2 months, 62(41.21%) buys once in 3 months, 14(9.1%) buys once in 4 months, 11(7.1%) buys once in 5 months, 6(4%) buys once in 6 months. It was found that most of the consumers purchase the hair oils once in three months.

3.FACTORS INFLUENCING THE BRAND PREFERENCE OF THE HAIR OILS:

Rural consumers prefer goods having fragrance, attractive packing and color. Having uncertain and lower earnings, majority of rural consumers give more consideration to small packs of hair oils & low price.

Table 3: Preference of the Sample Respondents

Preferences	No. of respondents	Percentage
Quality	23	15
Fragrance	42	28
Attractive Packing	30	20
Small Packs & Low Price	28	19
Brand Image	27	18
Total	150	100

Source: Primary Data

The present study reveals that out of 150 respondents, 42(28%) had preferred hair oils with good fragrance, while 30(20%) respondents had given more consideration to attractive packaging. It was also observed that small packs were popular in the rural markets. Out of the 150 respondents 28(19%) were using small packs of commodities like small bottles of hair oils. Brand image was attracting as a fascinating factor for only 27(18%) respondents.

4.Brand Preference of Hair Oil:

BRAND preference is an important aspect of the purchase decision. At this stage, the buyer has complete idea of all brands and he/she has to select one among them. Main criteria for the choice of hair oils are quality, price, model and the like. Table 4 shows the classification of sample hair oil consumers

according to their brand preference.

Table 4: Brand Preference of Hair Oil

Name of Brand	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Vatika	79	53
Keo Karpln	40	27
Dabur Amla	14	9
Rogan Badam Sheren	12	8
Others	5	3
Total	150	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 4 reveals that Vatika was the first choice of the consumers out of 150 sample respondents 40 (27%) prefer Keo-Karpin as their favourite brand of hair oils followed by Dabur Amla 14 (9%), Rogan Badam Sheren 12 (8%) and others brands 5 (3%).

5.FACTORS AFFECTING THE PURCHASING DECISION:

The respondents were asked about which factor, influenced on their purchasing decision. Of 150 respondents most of them stated that availability of commodities in the village had an influence on their purchasing decision. (Table5) These respondents were of the view that going outside of their native village to purchase goods was wastage of time and labor.

Table 5: Factors Affecting the Purchasing Decision

Factors	Responses	Percentage
Availability of Commodities	30	20
Affordable Price	90	60
Brand Loyalty	30	20
Total	150	100

Source: Primary Dat

Affordable price was the main factor; in case of 90(60%) respondents while brand affection or loyalty was the main factor determining the purchasing of branded hair oils in case of 30 (20%) respondents from Koshimbi village (Bhiwandi). In case of 30 (20%) respondents, availability of commodities was an influencing factor for purchasing decision.

6.BRAND LOYALTY:

Brand image was a fascinating factor for only a few respondents. Most of the consumers were in a habit of changing their brand frequently.

Table 6 reveals the sample respondents' brand loyalty of hair oils.

Table 6: Brand Loyalty of Sample Respondents

Loyalty Status	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Those who are changing their brand frequently	90	60
Those who are not changing their brand frequently	60	40
Total	150	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 6 shows that out of 150 respondents, 90(60%) respondents have been changing their hair oils frequently whereas remaining 60(40%) respondents have not been changing their hair oils frequently. 60(40%) respondents are those people who are fascinated by the brand image. It is well predicted from the table that most of the people are in a habit of changing their brand frequently.

CONCLUSIONS:

Marketing plays a pivotal role in the growth and development of a country irrespective of size, population and the concepts are so interlinked that, in the absence of one, another virtually cannot survive. It is a historical fact that the development of marketing has always kept pace with the Economic growth of the country. Both have experienced evolutionary rather than revolutionary change. The objective of modern marketing is to make profits through satisfying consumer's needs and wants. Hence, the marketers have to understand the real needs, wants, beliefs and attitudes of the consumers towards their products and services. Following observations have been made from the present study:

- 1.It is observed that TV advertising has a deep impact on the minds of consumers from the village.
- 2.It is found that out of 150 respondents, 42 (28%) are using hair oil for fragrance.
- 3.The study reveals that among factors influencing brand preference of hair oil, fragrance ranks first, followed by attractive packing, small packs & low price.
- 4.It is observed in the study affordability of the product has been given the highest importance (60%)by majority of respondents while purchasing hair oil as compared to brand loyalty (20%) or availability of product (20%).
- 5.79(53%) of sample respondents prefer Vatika as their favorite brand of hair oil, followed by Keo Karpin and Dabur Amla.
- 6.Out of 150 respondents 60(40%) have not changed their brand of hair oil where as the remaining 90(60%) have changed their brands.

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