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## Rural consumers brand awareness

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### Abstract

Rural India constitutes 'the heart of India', generating more than half the national income. India has perhaps the largest potential rural market in the world. A potential of 742 million rural consumers live in 6, 38365 villages across India. Rural markets are gaining importance in the marketing planning exercise of all leading consumer and social marketers. Rural marketing involves more intensive personal selling efforts compared to urban marketing. To effectively tap the rural market a brand must associate it with the same things the rural folks do. This can be done by utilizing the various rural folk media to reach them in their own language and in large numbers so that the brand can be associated with the myriad rituals, celebrations, festivals, "melas" and other activities where they assemble. They are identifying the fact that rural people are now in the better position with disposable income. Rural markets are price sensitive of a consumer in a rural area. An attempt is made to promote the brand image in the rural market.

**Keywords:** Rural market, Brand, Rural Branding.

### Introduction

Today's market is flooded with number of similar products. However, there are only very few products which are able to create a market for themselves. Therefore, it is very important for every organization to create awareness about their product so that the consumers identify their product as they want them to perceive it. This is called branding.

A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, design, or a combination of the above to identify the goods or service of a seller and differentiate it from the rest of the competitors. In simple words, brand refers to the set of emotions, image, or perception which the consumers perceive when they think about the product or organization. It is used to create an identity of the product or the organization in the competitive market. The ultimate aim of all organization is to attract consumers and increase its sales. This is possible only when the common man in the market is aware of the products in the market.

### Research objectives

The research paper consists of the following objectives:

- (i) To describe the characteristic and importance of rural marketing.
- (ii) To know the rural branding and to analyze the present promotion strategy for a few brands in rural market.
- (iii) To ascertain increasing brand awareness.
- (iv) To evaluate the factors that influences the brand awareness.
- (v) To determine the factors which contribute to the success of the rural brand in India?

### Characteristics of rural market

Rural market occupies a larger part of our economy. Rural markets of India have acquired significance importance, as the overall growth of the Indian economy has resulted into substantial increase in the purchasing power of the rural communities and rural markets are becoming important for the reasons of growth in these areas. Products for rural markets have to be simpler, easy to use, visually identifiable, affordable, communicated in an interesting style and available at consumer's doorstep.

The rural consumer shows distinctive characteristics which makes them different from urban buyers. There are certain characteristics of Rural Market, which every marketer should be aware of are as follows:

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Low income influenced by seasonal fluctuations.  
Low literacy  
Resistance to change  
Price sensitive  
Greater brand loyalty  
Influenced by traditional belief  
Quality conscious  
Low risk taking ability  
Lack of Infrastructure facility  
Buying decision is low and delayed  
Difficult to predict demand  
Communication problems  
Problems related to distribution and channel management  
Diverse socio-economic backwardness

### Importance of Rural Market

**Large Population:** Approximately 75% of India's population resides in around 6, 38,365 villages of India spread over 32 lakh square kilometer. 41% of India's middle class resides in rural areas.

**Higher Purchasing Capacity:** Purchasing power of rural people is on rise.

**Market Growth:** Market is growing at a rate of 3-4% per annum.

### Rural Branding

In India, there are vast differences between rural and urban marketers. Not only the cultural landscapes differ but also the factors that influence purchasing decisions differ too. Price and value for money are high for urban marketers. There is a difference in media reach and the education levels in the culture and type of the products they use. There is a vast difference in the life styles of the peoples living in urban and rural. The kind of choice of brand that urban customer enjoys are different from the choices available to rural customer. Rural branding calls for a greater component of local media and less of the mass media. Since these markets have specialized forums of their own like temple festivals, melas, cinema halls etc., can be leveraged to promote brands. Direct Marketing and events like road shows, film shows, melas, and street theatre can also be used to promote brands. The penetration in rural India has been very remarkable for brands like Colgate, Pepsodent, Ponds, Cinthol, Rexona, Hammam, Pears, Close-up, Horlicks, Complian etc., and others including house hold electrical appliances. They are very successful because of their advertisement campaign and strong distribution network in the rural areas.

Branding too needs skillful handling in the rural market. The rural consumers have already graduated from generic product to branded products. Companies that want to foray into rural markets face many challenges. Companies have to overcome the difficulties of availability, affordability, acceptability and awareness.

The first task is to ensure availability of the product. Marketers have to trade-off the distribution cost. HLL has built a strong distribution system which helps its brands to reach the interiors of rural market. To service remote areas, stockists use auto rickshaws, bullock-carts, and even boats.

The second task is to ensure affordability of the product to rural consumers who are on daily wages. Godrej has introduced Cinthol, Fair-glow and Godrej in 50gm packs, priced at Rs 4 to 5.

The third task is to gain acceptability for the product. There is a need to offer products that suit the rural market. Coco-cola provides low-cost ice boxes –a tin box for new outlets and thermocol box for seasonal outlets.

The fourth task for generating awareness, use T.V., cinema, advertising, banners posters and tap all local forms of entertainment. L.G Electronics uses vans and road shows to reach rural consumers.

### Brand Awareness

Brand Awareness essentially means that customers know about the existence of brand, and also recall what categories the brand is in. Awareness of the name acts as an anchor to which everything else about the brand is linked. Building awareness involves making the brand visible to the relevant target audience by various promotional methods such as publicity, sponsorships, events, advertising, instigating word-of-mouth promotion etc. Brand awareness can be regarded as a means through which consumers become acquainted and familiar with a brand and recognize that brand.

Brand awareness includes both brand recognition and brand recall. Brand recognition is the ability of consumer to recognize the brand when they are asked questions about that brand or when they are shown the specific brand, i.e., the consumers can clearly differentiate the brand as having being earlier noticed or heard. While brand recall is the potential of customer to recover a brand from his memory when given the product class/category, needs satisfied by that category or buying scenario as a signal.

Brand awareness has improved to the extent to which brand names selected that are simple and easy to pronounce or spell; known and expressive; and unique as well as distinct. For instance - Coca Cola has come to be known as Coke.

There are two types of brand awareness:

**1. Aided awareness-** This means that on mentioning the product category, the customers recognize the brand from the lists of brands shown.

**2. Top of mind awareness** (Immediate brand recall)- This means that on mentioning the product category, the first brand that customer recalls from his mind is that brand.

To achieve high awareness, Aaker suggests the following communication tasks:

- Be different and impressive
- Use a slogan or jingle
- Expose the brand symbol
- Publicities the brand.
- Sponsor major events
- Extend the brand to other products
- Use cues of either the product class, the brand or both
- Repeat yourself constantly.

It is s very important for organizations to create brand awareness about its product and this helps to know the awareness level of the customers about the product. If the rate of brand awareness is higher there can be an increase in the sales volume and hence the profitability and market share. To create brand awareness, it is important to create reliable brand image, slogans and taglines.

### How to Build the Brand

When looking for steps in building a brand, there are many steps which one can complete to help make the creation of such brand an easier task. These include, knowing the audience, building the brand, finding a great logo and lettering to represent same, targeting the appropriate audience and placing a number of advertisements in as many online and

offline advertising venues one can find. For, after doing so, one may just find that they are selling even more products and services than one had ever dreamed possible. The brand should be in the market quite for a long time. Building brand in rural area is different.

Building Brand is usually a long, tedious and methodical work involving segmentation, marketing mix, and packaging, technical and financial inputs. The following tools have been employed by different organizations, to successfully build their brand in the rural markets:

### **1. Customization**

Rural consumer use different products according to their needs. Depending upon the needs of consumer, can be followed with creating or 're-modifying' a product or service delivery process to make it relevant to the need of rural consumers.

### **2. Relevance**

It should start with the brand name itself and it is important that the brand name or the punch line is in lingo language and is in tune with the culture of the market and the social surroundings of the market in which the product is going to be sold. There should be identification of the products with terms to their name, color, package, quality etc. Customer should be able to remember the products very easily.

### **3. Media**

The media chosen should reach the remote locations. The company should use some other methods to create awareness of their products and quality. The brand building can be done in the Mandis, Melas and other gatherings of the rural areas. Today, television and radio and video are important forms of media. Demonstration vans with audiovisual equipments clearly demonstrate how a given product will solve the existing problems of rural consumers and are likely to have much impact, than the short commercial on TV. Haats can be an effective medium for rural advertising. Rural consumers are in buying mood at the haats and mandis.

### **4. Message**

The message about the products and the company should be clear. Local language should be used to reach rural consumers. The company should give the message in a proper way in such a way it creates emotion in the minds of consumer. Marketers must use the message that try and catch up the pulse of the consumers and thus help to build brand awareness. Message should be practical and narrating the functional benefits of the product.

### **5. Word Of Mouth**

In rural market the word of mouth publicity works. Targeting the right set of opinion leaders with the campaigns which lead to oral publicity in the region is more likely to develop the brand. The rural consumers want more credible information and the stories they hear from others are more believable in the form of hints and tips.

### **6. Image**

Images present should also be consistent in order to increase brand awareness.

It is important that consistent in the use of images so that maximization in recognition and positive impressions can be achieved. Wegmans logo, for example, can be found on its

storefront, on the products it produces itself, on the receipt consumers receive after purchase, on the bags customers carry out of the store, and in many of its distributed informational material.

### **How Brand Can Reach Rural India**

The concept of branding entered in Indian rural markets. A brand is recognized in the rural market with the help of colors, visual effect or any other identification rather than name which facilitates easy brand recall. The following are the tools which show how brand could reach rural India:

#### **➤ By using Technology**

Technologies fill the gap in rural India's supply chain and get big brands even to the smallest of the villages. Technologies must be promoted in the rural areas.

#### **➤ With proper marketing strategies**

Majority of Rural Indians are illiterate. Rural folk should be educated about the merits of the product before launching the product. So that the product shall be made easily available. Effective Pricing and Packaging contribute a lot. Mass media ads can persuade people to try the affordable product. For that product need to be packed as per their convenience and pocket.

#### **➤ Sales on wheels / Mobile service**

A scheduled display and sale items on Wheels, can also enhance the Sales. Moreover, they can organize Demonstration cum Sales Exhibition at frequent Intervals.

#### **➤ Brands Are Already There**

Potential buyer usually uses all brands according to their capacity. But if rural area not holding the potential buyers then "To promote brand is useless".

#### **➤ Who are the customer for the brand**

The brand reaches needs to know the customer base for the particular brands in rural areas. Leveraging of brand reach to rural areas may not be that much difficult in case it is properly well planned to tap the source of customers. All visual Medias like TV channels are very popular in rural areas. Ad campaign will help to promote. Then it is necessary to appoint dealers/retails to keep stocks to distribute. The advantages, applications, and other service back-up have to explain by the marketers. Moreover the rural masses with their hard earned money have been more price sensitive and hence the price benefits to them plays the vital role.

#### **➤ Rural Retailing in India**

The difference in purchase behavior between the rural and urban population is mainly decided by the money power, literacy standard, mind maturity, and life style. The marketers should give what the customer base in rural areas want with a view to penetrate this segment. Then only the repeated purchase can be assured.

#### **➤ Outlet**

The higher income group in rural India is growing at a phenomenal rate, and the concept of brands and quality are very much prevalent. These current consumption trends provide compelling opportunities for marketers to capitalize on the increasing mass market in India for almost all product categories.

➤ **CSR marketing**

CSR marketing is most the significant way for the brand to penetrate in the rural market.

➤ **Simply by sampling methods in the rural areas**

Most successful rural marketing models have demonstrated a strong engagement with the local population to ensure a good "BUY IN".

➤ **CSR marketing and retail**

Before entering into rural market first work is to distinguish characteristics of rural market and hit the rural sentiments.

➤ **Create consumer awareness and quality management**

To create consumerism and awareness of product and its quality. To take control over the quality management is essential while playing in rural market.

➤ **Local folks**

Demo and expose the product with guide of local source.

➤ **Transfer business partnership**

Business partnership could be one of the key factor in reaching out to rural masses.

➤ **By relating products and satisfying rural needs affordably**

It is possible by displaying proper link between company's product, consumer's faith and usability in rural environment.

➤ **Adjusting the 4Ps - Product, Price, Place & Promotion**

To capture the mass rural market, a Company needs to customize its 4Ps - The Product, The Price, The Place & The Promotion in such a way that the entire marketing strategy is conducive to position and establish the brand in targeted rural markets.

The Product must be designed considering the needs of rural markets.

Rural consumers are price sensitive hence price must be set after knowing what they will be willing to pay for the brand.

Third, an effective and efficient distribution channel will be required to penetrate deeply into the mass rural market.

Lastly, Promotion to make them understand the message in a right way using right media of communication.

A right combination of all these Ps will be required to establish a brand in rural markets.

➤ **Distribution plus service in rural markets**

A good distribution model and follow up with regular service can only survive in market whether it is rural or urban market.

➤ **By Identification of the need**

Brands can always provide a good product over the traditional but they need to know what is the need and requirement.

➤ **Reasonably cheap price**

Reasonably cheap price of the product and dealer network makes a brand to reach rural people. Rural Indians only see the cost of the product but not the quality or value. Hence a brand can reach only by cutting its sale price reasonably.

➤ **Road shows or local street theatre**

Identify the brand with popular forms of entertainment amidst the rural greens. These could be sponsoring any of the rural

sports, participating in their street plays or jatra or conducting road shows that take the brand directly to their homes.

➤ **Understand the psyche of rural**

Deliver products that have good quality instead of misleading them.

➤ **By giving education and judging**

The basic is education and judging, when people get education they start using right product and so the other people starts copying. So the brands production starts .

➤ **By using both mentioned ways**

**Conclusion**

Rural marketing needs a close watch as changes are happening in the rural economic landscape. Marketers are required to have in-depth knowledge of their customers' requirements. Consumer marketers use demographic variables like attitudes, preferences, personality, and lifestyle to segment their markets. The growing power of the rural consumer is an opportunity for the companies to flock to the rural markets. Thus there are certain unique characteristic features which call for separate marketing strategies to be distinctively developed to suit the rural and urban market.

Thus the basic objective should be to create an image about the brand which forces them to stick to it. Organizations must also try and find out the unique characteristics of its product and communicate the same to its potential consumers. This helps to create better prospect of the brand in the minds of the potential consumers and thus creates brand awareness. For already existing products, organizations must keep a check on their brand image regularly and must update itself with the help of consumer's feedback maintain its brand image and hence create brand awareness. While launching new products or repositioning of old products it is important for organizations to launch their products at correct time.

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