

## EFFECT OF BRANDING IN INDIAN RURAL MARKET

Yogesh Kumar Mehta\* and Ranjan Bhardwaj\*\*

\*College of Law and Legal Studies, Teerthanker Mahaveer University, Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh,

\*\* Birla School of Management, Kolkata, West Bengal.

### Abstract

Modern medium of advertisements have changed the face of rural market. Rural marketing has played a vital and influential role. Yet the most common factor is the lives of more than seventy percent of its population that lives in the rural areas and has similar economic and social circumstances. Rural markets are rapidly growing in India but have often been ignored by marketers. The following statistics shows the relevance of rural markets that 46% of soft drinks are sold in rural markets, 49% of motorcycles and 59% cigarettes are also consumed by rural and small town consumers. Apart from this 53% of FMCGs and 59% of consumer durables have market in the rural belts. LIC sells more than 50% of its policies in rural India. Data show that there has been increases of 217.8 million literates since last census (2001) out of this 131.1 million were in rural areas and 86.6 million in urban areas. Study also found that the total expenditure on consumer goods in rural household is on food articles such as biscuits, tea, coffee and salt and rest on others. Study clearly shows that there is a vast scope for the companies in rural market, because household percentage shows further improvement. Though the commodity products have greater penetration, traditionally urban categories such as skin creams and talcum powder have also made a mark. Many of the households using premium brands also use mass brands. HUL is the leading Company with 88% penetration level. Tata Salt has topped the category with 91% penetration level. Ponds is the leader in the talcum powder category with a penetration of 65%. In the skin care category Fair & Lovely fairness cream, with a penetration of 75%, of which 60% of the skin care market belongs to rural areas. The Chik shampoo sachets sells for 50 paise, Parle-G biscuit packs for Rs 2 and the Coca-Cola 200 ml bottle for Rs 7. Here it may be noted that these successful experiments of rural areas would be implemented to urban areas also. Shampoo in sachets created a new product segment. All shampoo manufacturers today retail in sachets, and demand from urban India for this category is very strong. The sachet is as much a packaging (product) strategy as a pricing strategy.

### Introduction

Rural Marketing mix would traditionally include the strategy which encompasses the four Ps namely Product, Price, Place and Promotion that a company uses to promote and sells its brand or product in markets. Apart from that rural marketing also includes four A as Affordability, Availability, Awareness and Acceptability. The paper further discusses each of these in detail. The present study attempts to make an appraisal of the fast moving consumer goods sector which

plays a major role in transforming the rural society as per the needs of the rural people.

ASSOCHAM study found that in India, FMCG is the fourth largest sector with a total (organized) market size of over US\$ 15 billion classified under the premium and popular segments. The premium segment which constitutes nearly 25% caters mostly to the higher and upper middle class consumers while the mass constitutes nearly 75% belonging to the

semi-urban or rural areas that are not brand conscious. It is pertinent to note that different modes of advertisements have changed the face of rural market. Rural knowledge centre sponsored by NABARD started with a view to provide the assistance to the deep rural areas farmers started in 2005-06. As Paul Mazur defines, "Marketing"s role is delivery of a higher standard of living to people in the society". Former Prime Minister Sri Atal Bihari Vajpayee started Kissan Call Centre on January 21, 2004. In recent past brand awareness in rural areas has played an important role and changed the interest of rural people. The branding is showing increasing tendency in all major parts of areas of highway too. It is pertinent to note that branding has brought major changes at

### **Indian Rural Market**

India constitutes about 17.5% of the world population according to 2011 census survey. Overall population registered an increase of 17.64% during the period 2001-11. Literacy rate in India increased up to 74.04% consisting male literacy rate of 82.14% and female literacy rate at 65.46%. Today, rural markets are critical for every marketer whether it is a branded shampoo or an automobile. Increasing purchasing power and easily available loan facility have also changed the mindset of the people to take risky decisions to fulfil their dreams.

### **Rural Markets Products**

- (a) Maruti Suzuki, India's leading automobile manufacturer today sells 5% of its vehicles in the rural markets. The company expects this number to rise to 15% in the next two years. This is not just our wish, but reflects market demand.
- (b) In insurance sector, a huge market is still untapped. According to industry estimates nearly 97% people are not

grassroots level and thus increased the market share. Study significantly advocates the changing pattern of the rural consumers in India close to 72%. Prof. Devi Singh says that "Rural India comprises all places that are not urban". Urban India constitutes places with a population of more than 5000; a population density above 400 per square kilometre, all statutory towns, that is, all places with a municipal corporation, municipal board, cantonment board, notified area council, etc. and with 75% of the male working population engaged in non-agricultural employment. Rural markets in India constitute a wide and untapped market for many products and services which are being marketed for the urban masses.

insured just because of lack of awareness.

- (c) Mobile device manufacturers are also tailoring their products as per needs of the rural people. Nokia had earlier launched a basic handset with a torch keeping in view that larger part of rural India facing problem of electricity. In the year 2008 company launched Nokia Life Tools which consists a range of agriculture, education and entertainment services designed especially for the consumers of small rural towns. Company committed to providing timely and relevant information customized to the user's location and personal preferences directly on their mobile devices.

According to World Gold Council 60% of India's annual consumption of gold and gold jewellery is from rural and semi-urban areas. Tata had launched a mass-market jewellery brand Gold Plus. Tata uses trained youth to the villages as brand ambassadors. The problem with gold in India is that it is often adulterated. In rural areas, gold jewellery is not for ornamentation but it is used as a safety net

for emergency purposes. It had ethnic touch with its designs and retailing and substantial scope to create products. Chik shampoo created the jasmine variant (in tune with the culture of women using jasmine flowers to style their hair). TVS mopeds created functional value in tune with the all purpose vehicle culture existing in several parts of the non-metro areas.

### **Pricing Strategy**

The Chik shampoo sachets sells for 50 paise, Parle-G biscuit packs for Rs 2 and the Coca-Cola 200 ml bottle for Rs 7. Here it may be noted that these successful experiments of rural areas would be implemented to urban areas also. Shampoo in sachets created a new product segment. All shampoo manufacturers today retail in sachets, and demand from urban India for this category is very strong. The sachet is as much a packaging as well as pricing strategy. Villagers were facing problems of hardness in water in various parts of country so it was in the interest of people and company to launch such product. Shampoo in sachets sold in villages is same as in towns. Company tailored the products to suit the rural and urban people. Distribution and promotional channels also needed to be different for rural markets. Private sector Company like ITC has set up the e-Choupal network and Hindustan Unilever Limited had project Shakti under which women's self-help groups worked as the link of the retail chain. Here it may be noted that Indian markets have witnessed change to convert itself into a retail chain for a variety of products. An even fair-price shop is created for those who are above the poverty line and prefers quality products at higher prices.

In fact government's rationing system has been revolutionised in post globalisation era where people are trying to get more fancy items at increased price. In the area of promotion, television has

invaded rural India. TV reaches even very small villages through community but advertising is more important to create awareness among the population specially trying to target rural areas.

Several FMCG companies such as Godrej Consumer Products, Dabur, Marico have increased their marketing efforts in rural India and small towns in order to establish a local distribution networks. "Rural melas" are being organised by Godrej in order to attract and access potential rural consumers. Major domestic retailers like AV Birla, ITC, Godrej, Reliance and many others have already set up farm linkages. Hariyali Kisan Bazaars (DCM) and Aadhars (Pantaloan-Godrej JV), Choupal Sagars (ITC), Kisan Sansars (Tata), Reliance Fresh, Project Shakti (Hindustan Unilever) and Naya Yug Bazaar have established rural retail hubs. Coca-Cola and Pepsi soft drink brands suffered a setback in August 2008 due to a product contamination scare. Both of them had already cut profit margins in order to meet competition from low-priced local fruit drinks. This prompted their focus to shift towards the rural belts. Indian consumers are accustomed to drinking a variety of locally-produced soft drinks that are sold in small stands throughout the country. Rural India is still a highly price-sensitive marketplace. Moreover the average consumer has insufficient income to engage in discretionary spending. In order to increase sales growth, the major soft drink companies have changed their pricing strategies to capture the market base at grass root level and set price of 200 ml bottle at Rs 5.

The rural economy contributes nearly half of the country's GDP (ETIG 2002-03) which is mainly based on agriculture monsoon. In India there are 6.36 lakh villages; out of which only 13% villages have population above 2000. More than 50% of the sales of FMCG companies come from the rural areas. The McKinsey report (2007) states that Indian

rural market in next twenty years will be higher than the total consumer markets in other countries such as South Korea or Canada what they have today, and almost four times the size of present Indian urban market and estimated the size of the rural market about US\$ 577 billion.

A marketer faces many challenges in rural marketing. The first is posed by the geographic spread and low population density in the villages in the country. To cater such a large scale problem across the country Company needs to plan the inventory very carefully. Inventory should be maintained at the lowest possible levels so that it can be moved easily. The availability of local transportation should be a key determinant of the warehousing network. The limited infrastructure like roads, electricity and transportation facilities must be there.

### **Research Methodology**

Soon after introducing the new economic policy in India entry of private sector companies have created a new scene in the fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector. Here an attempt is made to study the existing as well as future potential of the Indian rural market.

### **Objective of the Study**

To check the brand awareness and their effectiveness among rural population and also to check the brand positioning strategy of the company.

### **Scope of Study**

The present study is based on impact of branding in Indian rural market. The study would certainly pave the way for further improvement in the existing model. Since Indian rural market is more concerned to price, thus companies would be benefited to explore the rural areas as per societal needs.

### **Period of Study**

The period of study is covered from the year 2001 and onwards to present the best and latest position of the Indian rural market. Study is more centralized on the recent changes made in market.

### **Sources of information**

The study is mainly based on secondary source of information i.e. annual report, fact sheets and relevant website. Besides these other important information like income class, choices, purchasing power etc are also covered to explore the market.

### **Research design and Sampling techniques**

For the purpose of study data collection is based on the exploratory research to draw the specific conclusion about the rural population.

### **Plan of Study**

The analysis is based on available relevant information, which is arranged in the tabular form. The major emphasis is given on trend to check that how they are performing and how it will affect the rural population.

### **Limitations of Study**

Though maximum care has been taken for the analysis but study may suffer from some limitations. The reliability of the findings depends on the reliability of the information supplied to the researcher which is based on fact and figures.

### **Significance of Study**

The present study will be of immense help to the corporate planners, executives, professionals, academicians, government and off course to the company.

### **Population Status**

The following Tables 1-10 depict the overall performance of different products in rural areas. It is clear from the census survey report, 2011 that total number of villages increased by 2,279 from 6,38,588 (2001) to 6,40,867 (2011). It is also found that total population 1,210,193,422 (100%) constitutes rural population 833,087,662 (68.84%) with urban population

377,105,760 (31.16 %). Top three states showing the absolute share under rural population are Uttar Pradesh 155.11 million 18.6%, Bihar 92.07 million 11.1% and West Bengal 62.21 million 7.5%.

Four states recorded declining trend in rural population during 2001-11. These are Kerala (26%), Goa (19%), Nagaland (15%) and Sikkim (5%).

**TABLE 1: Rural Population Statistics**

Population	Number of Villages	Percent age of total Villages
Less than 200	114267	17.90
0200-0499	155123	24.30
0500-0999	159400	25.00
1000-1999	125758	19.70
2000-4999	069135	10.80
5000-9999	011618	01.80
10000 and	003064	00.50

According to the latest census 2011, the number of literates in India is 778.5 million which constitutes rural population 493.0 million, urban population 285.4 million. It simply shows there has been an increase of 217.8 million literates since last census in 2001, out of this 131.1 million were in rural areas and 86.6 million in urban areas.

above		
Total	636365	100.0

Table-1 presents the population and village size details. It is evident from the table that villages (3064) with 10,000 populations constitute only 0.50% of the total villages. Maximum number of villages (159400) consist population of range of 500-999.

**TABLE 2: Population**

(In Crore)

	2001	2011	Difference
India	102.9	121.0	+ 18.1
Rural	74.3	83.3	+ 09.0
Urban	28.6	37.7	+ 09.1

Source: [www.censusindia.gov.in](http://www.censusindia.gov.in)

It is evident from the Table-2 that for the first time since independence, the absolute increase in population is more in

urban areas than that in rural areas. Level of urbanization increased from 28.6% (2001) to 37.7% (2011).

**TABLE 3: Literacy Rate**

(In percentage)

	2001	2011	Difference
India	64.8	74.0	+ 09.2
Rural	58.7	68.9	+ 10.2
Urban	79.9	85.0	+ 05.1

Source: [www.censusindia.gov.in](http://www.censusindia.gov.in)

Table-3 clearly shows the overall development of literacy rate over the decade. It is also evident that improvement in literacy rate in rural area is more than that in urban areas. The rural urban literacy

gap which was 21.2 percentage points in 2001 has come down in 2011. Overall it shows a good sign.

**TABLE 4: Male Literacy Rate**

(In percentage)

Male	2001	2011	Difference
India	75.3	82.1	+ 6.8
Rural	70.7	78.6	+ 7.9

Urban	86.3	89.7	+ 3.4
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Source: [www.censusindia.gov.in](http://www.censusindia.gov.in)

It is evident from the Table-4 that male literacy rate sharply increased in rural

areas. Overall male literacy rate in urban areas is higher than rural.

**TABLE 5: Female Literacy Rate**

(In percentage)

Female	2001	2011	Difference
India	53.7	65.5	+11.8
Rural	46.1	58.8	+12.7
Urban	72.9	79.9	+07.0

Source: [www.censusindia.gov.in](http://www.censusindia.gov.in)

It is evident from the Table-5 that improvement in female literacy is more than male literacy in both rural and urban areas. The gender gap in literacy has come down from 24.6 (2001) to 19.8 (2011) in rural areas. It may be noted here that those areas which are not categorized as urban areas are considered as rural area.

#### **Changing Face of Rural Customer**

In recent times rural India has witnessed a wave of change. Media exposure and increasing literacy levels people have become more aware in rural areas and they are demanding for better lifestyle. The educated rural males in the age group of 15-34 years is moving out to work in nearby towns and cities, and sending money to their families. This has created an indirect increase in disposable incomes and a surge in demand for consumer goods. The rural youth are slowly evolving as opinion leaders in influencing brand and product decisions in market that was swayed by village elders for centuries. Looking at the challenges and opportunity that rural markets offer, the future looks promising to those who can understand the dynamics of the rural markets and exploit them to their best advantage.

#### **Chik Shampoo Strategy**

Chik shampoo came up with a wide variety of changes to target the rural

markets. Some of the changes that the company had adopted are as follows:

- 1) Adopting innovative ways of promotion by using different modes of advertisement in the form of jingles and cinema dialogues that would appeal the rural consumers even pasting the small pack of shampoo with newspaper to advertisement.
- 2) Slashing the price of the product to 50-paise per sachet so that rural consumers could afford it specially targeted daily users.
- 3) Changing the packaging of the product by introducing sachets instead of conventional bottles.
- 4) A wide variety of perfumed shampoos were available so as to give more option to the rural consumers.
- 5) The village Haats and Melas were used as an efficient way of the rural distribution channels.
- 6) The packaging looks of the products were modified and they were made to look more attractive to the rural consumers.

It can be seen that the Company has made significant changes in the 4 Ps of the marketing mix to ensure that their product successfully penetrate the rural markets. Strategically company's move to enter into the rural market in a small span of 5 years witnessed a sharp rise in the market.

Market share of the company has increased considerably from 04% (1998)

to around 23% (2002), which means that the market share of Chik shampoo grew six times during the last five years. Apart from gaining the market share qualitatively shampoo was preferred by the mass. This was because the company made its shampoo more affordable and available to the rural market through efficient packaging, pricing, promotion and distribution. Here it may be noted that 65% of the total sales of the company come from the rural markets.

### Strategic Issues

Increasing literacy level and media exposure people are becoming more conscious to enjoy a better lifestyle. Brand consciousness is more in the mind set of rural people especially in youth segment it is raising. This clubbed with increasing disposable income of rural households has made the rural consumers more demanding in purchase behaviour than ever before. Therefore, rural India offers a tremendous market potential. It is a fact that one percent increase in India's rural income translates to a mind-boggling Rs 10,000 crore of buying power. Nearly two-thirds

of all middle-income households in the country are in rural areas. Thus for the marketers have realised the fact and corporate world is now investing a sizeable marketing budget to target the rural consumers.

### Brand Awareness

Studies found that in the rural families there is a remarkable improvement regarding the products. For instance households are upgrading from indigenous teeth-cleaning ingredients to tooth powder and tooth-pastes. There is also a visible shift from local and unbranded products to national branded products from low priced brands to premium brands.

### FMCG Consumption

Most of the Companies like Hindustan Unilever Limited, Nirma Chemical Works, Colgate Palmolive and Parle have carved inroads not only into the heart of rural consumers but also in urban markets and achieved significant recognition from the country households.

**TABLE 6:** Household Penetration by Companies

S. No.	Company	Household Penetration	Company's Ranking
1.	HUL	88%	1 <sup>st</sup>
2.	Nirma Chemical Works	56%	2 <sup>nd</sup>
3.	Colgate Palmolive	33%	3 <sup>rd</sup>
4.	Parle	31%	4 <sup>th</sup>

*Source: survey report*

It is evident from the Table-6 that HUL is the leading Company with 88% penetration level which is maximum. Whereas between Colgate Palmolive and Parle there is marginal difference.

**TABLE 7:** Household Penetration by Products

S. No.	Company's Product	Percentage volume of local Brands/Unbranded	Product Ranking
1.	Washing cakes	88%	1 <sup>st</sup>
2.	Tea	56%	2 <sup>nd</sup>
3.	Salt	33%	3 <sup>rd</sup>

*Source: survey report*

It is evident from Table-7 that local brand in washing section is on the top. However

salt is least preferred by the rural consumers. Still they rely on branded salt.

It is an estimate that of the total expenditure on consumer goods in rural household approximately 44% is on food articles such as biscuits, tea, coffee and salt; 20% on toiletries, 13% on washing material, 10% on cosmetics, 4% on OTC

products and 9% on other consumables. Study also found that in the villages low-priced brands are well accepted and one might feel that a larger proportion of the purchases made in rural market can be attributed to local/ unbranded players

**TABLE 8:** Household Penetration

S. No.	Product	Product Penetration	Brand with highest Penetration	Ranking
1.	Salt	91%	Tata Salt	1 <sup>st</sup>
2.	Washing cakes	88%	Rin	2 <sup>nd</sup>
3.	Edible oil	84%	Fortune Mustard Oil	3 <sup>rd</sup>
4.	Tea	77%	Tata Tea	4 <sup>th</sup>
5.	Washing powder	70%	Nirma	5 <sup>th</sup>
6.	Talcum Powder	65%	Ponds	6 <sup>th</sup>
7.	Toilet Soap	64%	Lifebuoy	7 <sup>th</sup>
8.	Biscuits	61%	Parle - G	8 <sup>th</sup>

Source: survey report

Table-8 shows that Tata Salt has topped the category with 91% penetration level. Ponds is the leader in the talcum powder category with a penetration of 65% and its rivals like Nycil and Liril are trailing far behind. Moreover, 60% of the Ponds users are loyal to their company. This reflects the strength of the brand in rural market.

Study clearly shows that there is a vast scope for the companies in rural market, because household percentage shows further improvement. Though the commodity products have greater

penetration, traditionally urban categories such as skin creams and talcum powder have also made a mark. While the urban consumer's consumption of talcum powder suffered a setback, the rural talcum powder market darted ahead. This clearly indicated that after being considered urban for a long time, some categories are now taking a rural face. In most of the cases, it is the rural market that is actually driving the growth of category.

**TABLE 9:** Household Penetration by Products

S. No.	Product	Household Penetration (Rural %)
1.	Skin creams	75% (60%)
2.	Talcum Powders	65% (70%)

Source: survey report

In the skin care category Fair & Lovely fairness cream, with a penetration of 75%, of which 60% of the skin care market belongs to rural areas. Similarly under Talcum Powder category Ponds with 65% penetration level is enjoying a monopoly

in the rural markets. Rural India is not averse to trying out the premium brands at high prices. A study indicated that a majority of the premium brand users are using the brand for the first time. Surveys also reveal that trials are not restricted to

the more affluent echelon of the villages. The experimenting households are more-or-less evenly spread across the various

socio-economic clusters of the rural market.

**TABLE 10:** Penetration by Products

S. No.	Brand	Penetration of ProductUsers
1.	Surf	6.2%
2.	Ariel	4.5%
3.	Pantene	1.8%
4.	Denim	1.8%

*Source: survey report*

It is evident from Table-10 that Surf has captured the major market and Ariel is next to Surf. Study also found that rural youths are more open to fresh concepts as against their elderly family members. Many of the households using premium brands also use mass brands, most of the households using tooth powder also use tooth paste. It may be noted that 15% of Surf and 12% of Ariel using families also use Nirma detergent and 20% of Sunsilk households' users use Clinic shampoo too.

### **Effective Rural Marketing Mix Strategies**

Rural population due to its irregular income and limited resources is highly price sensitive. Ensuring a high market share and deep penetration will ensure large volumes thereby achieving overall economies. This overall price benefit has to be passed on to the consumer who requires value for money products. Godrej has introduced three brands of Cinthol Fresh, Fair Glow and Godrej in small packs are specially meant for the rural areas. HUL has launched a variant of its largest selling soap brand of Lifebuoy. Typically Indian villages have a population ranging from a few hundred to

5,000. It is up to the manufacturer how to decide where population is less than 2,000.

In electronic segment LG Company has planned a sharp strategy over the cities and towns besides the metros cities to tap these unexplored markets for which LG has set up area offices with rural and remote area offices. Since promotion shows all the activities undertaken to make the products and services to the preferred

users. Promotion always creates a challenge in rural markets because of the fact that villages have weak population density and widely spread over large remote areas and poor media coverages.

NCAER sponsored India Society of Advertisers in its survey studied the socio- economic effects of advertising. It covered 3,836 household in 50 towns and 50 rural districts in 10 states. Study found that 16% of rural and 25% of urban customers felt that advertising influenced them too frequently or always to buy product which they do not really needed. Therefore, poor media penetration has to be overcome by extensive use of local media, haats and weekly bazaars. At present communication for rural markets calls for a different kind of outlook. There must be a strong accent on helping the

target related to the message. Direct marketing campaigns can also be very effective and the most powerful ways to meet the target customer. Thus, direct marketing can play a crucial role in increasing the marketing base, however direct marketing campaign depends upon the field workers, their sensitivity and emotional connectivity to rural markets. Once the team is trained, being sensitive to rural culture and beliefs, they can handle activities like door-to-door marketing and product promotion.

Brand building in rural areas also requires special efforts. While using the logo, hoardings and exhibits, suitable jargons have to be deployed in the word association. People can be asked what strikes in their mind when they hear the brand name. When building a brand in rural India, word-of-mouth is a huge motivator. Focused brand-building initiatives like participation at community events such as melas, haats and street theatre shows generate positive word-of-mouth and influence buying decisions. Their understanding of the rural markets can give valuable insights to newer ventures. Government should be more

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proactive in their research. Further research will also provide an impetus to the new ventures in the rural context.

### **Findings and Conclusion**

It may be noted that rural youths are under the influential environment with new concepts as against to their elderly family members. Further study found that there is a vast scope for the companies in rural market, because household percentage shows further improvement. Though the commodity products have greater penetration, traditionally urban categories such as skin creams and talcum powder have also made a mark. Ponds is the leader in the talcum powder category. It may also be noted that in the villages low-priced brands are well accepted. Data show that there has been increases of 217.8 million literates since last census (2001) out of this 131.1 million were in rural areas and 86.6 million in urban areas. Study also found that the total expenditure on consumer goods in rural household is on food articles such as biscuits, tea, coffee and salt and rest on others.

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