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## **REVIEW ARTICLE**

# **MARKETING MIX AND ROLE OF 4A' IN MARKETING MIX**

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# Marketing Mix and Role of 4A' in Marketing Mix

Puneet Chopra<sup>1</sup> Dr. N. P. Sharma<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Scholar, School of Law and Management, Singhania University, Pacheri Bari, Distt. Jhunjhunu (Raj)

<sup>2</sup>Director, Nimbus Academy of Management, Dehradun (U.K.)

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The term "marketing-mix" was first coined by Neil Borden, the president of the American Marketing Association in 1953. It is still used today to make important decisions that lead to the execution of a marketing plan. The various approaches that are used have evolved over time, especially with the increased use of technology.

The **marketing mix** is a business tool used in marketing and by marketers. The marketing mix is often crucial when determining a product or brand's offer, and is often associated with the **four P's**: *price, product, promotion, and place*. In service marketing, however, the four Ps are expanded to the **seven P's**<sup>1</sup> or **Seven P's** to address the different nature of services.

Most of the companies treat rural market as a dumping ground for the lower end products designed for an urban audience. But, this scenario is slowly changing and importance is given to the need of the rural consumer. Hence it is important to understand the 4Ps along with 4 As of rural marketing with respect to a rural consumer.

## 4Ps

### 1. Product

A product is the heart of rural marketing. It is a need satisfying entity to a rural consumer. NCAER has classified consumer goods into 3 categories. These categories cover most of the products from Rs. 100 to Rs. 20000 and above.

### 2. Pricing

A rural customer is price sensitive and shops for value mainly because of his lower income levels than his urban counterparts. Hence the marketer has to find ways of making the product affordable to the rural consumer.

### 3. Placement or Distribution

Margins are very important to a rural retailer. The pushing by the retailers depends on margins and the pushing by the wholesalers depends on retailers. The gap is very wide because the local manufacturers do not undertake investments either in terms of advertising or anything. Hence they are very fast imitators. For rural retailers, it's the question of simple economics – Am I getting more money if I invest on these brands? More the margin better choice to stock and sell. The rural retailer stocks few brands in each category. This may have important implications for a company and its managers because whoever reaches the market first gets the share of the market.

## 4. Promotion

Communication to rural consumer is through organized media. More number of rural consumer (~70%) listen to radio and many go to cinema.

## The 4As of Rural Marketing

For rural market 4Ps alone are not sufficient. The 4As also has to be considered and kept in mind while formulating the plan to enter the rural market because these are also critically important.

### 1. Availability

Due to poor access to rural markets, poor infrastructure and irregular or no power supply to rural areas it is a difficult task for firms to make products available all the time in the reach of the rural consumers. Therefore Tata tea has started selling its tea through new channel of distribution. It decided to partner with NGOs, which have greatest reach to the rural people, acting as the first tier and followed by 2 other tiers from villages. Rural youth become Mobile Rural Distributor at level 2 and Small Rural Retailer become tier 3. HUL's Shakti Amma and Shaktimaan projects are on the same lines. Firms cannot stick to any one supply chain model. They have to be flexible to use all possible means of transport according to the terrain's requirement to achieve maximum operational efficiency. Trucks, auto rickshaws, cycle rickshaws and hand carts to even camel carts in

Rajasthan and mules in the hilly areas can be used to deliver products to the market. The first challenge in rural marketing is to ensure availability of the product or service. India's 7,00,000 villages are spread over 3.2 million sq km; 700 million Indians may live in rural areas, finding them is not easy. They are highly dispersed.

Given the poor infrastructure, it is a greater challenge to regularly reach products to the far-flung villages. Marketer should plan accordingly and strive to reach these markets on a regular basis. Marketers must trade off the distribution cost with incremental market penetration. India's largest MNC, Hindustan Lever has built a strong distribution system which helps its brands reach the interiors of the rural market.

## 2. Acceptability

The next challenge is to gain acceptability for the product or service. Therefore, there is a need to offer products that suit the rural market. Firms have to understand rural customers' need. Automotive, salt, FMCG, telecom, insurance, soft drinks, cigarettes, TV, fans, pressure cooker, washing soaps, tea, blades, tooth powder are the goods and services which are excelling in the rural market. Rural consumers prefer utility oriented products. At the same time product should be compatible with the infrastructure available in rural areas. Coca-Cola's Parivartan program provided low-cost iceboxes as families could not depend on refrigerators due to regular power cuts.

## 3. Awareness

Rural consumer is not much aware about brands. They rely more on local brands. To develop reliability factor in them towards new brands it is necessary to publicize the brand awareness by NGOs working actively in the region. This can be done through mouth publicity by any known resident of the same village also. E-Chaupal program of ITC is helping it in making brand image. Illiteracy makes them unable to read basic text about the brand identification. Building awareness is another challenge in rural marketing. A large part of rural India is inaccessible to conventional advertising media. The media penetration in rural areas is only about 57%. It has been seen that, two out of five Indians are unreached by any media - TV, Press, Radio and Cinema put together. Haats, mandis and melas are opportunities. Family is the key unit of identity for both the urban and rural consumer. However, the rural consumer expressions differ from his urban counterpart. For a rural consumer, outing is confined to local fairs and festivals and TV viewing is confined to the state-owned Doordarshan. Consumption of branded products is treated as a special treat or indulgence. Haats, mandis and melas are the place of opportunities to promote awareness about the product.

## 4. Affordability

The next major challenge is to ensure affordability of the product or service. With low disposable incomes, products need to be affordable to the rural consumer, most of who are on daily wages. A part of it has been mentioned in product (first P).

A solution to this has been introduction of unit packs by some companies. Most of the shampoos are available in smaller packs.

Some product also can be made affordable by making available the loan facility by having alliance with banks.