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## REVIEW ARTICLE

### MARKETING MIX AND MARKETING MIX ELEMENTS FOR RURAL SEGMENTS:

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# Marketing Mix and Marketing Mix Elements for Rural Segments:

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Poverty and low level of literacy characterize rural population in India. As a result, traditionally rural markets were viewed as markets for essential commodities only. In post-independence period Government of India, had introduced a number of measures to improve the quality of life of rural masses. These measures included agricultural development programmes, rural industrialization, cooperative movement, mass education and other social developmental activities through state Government of Maharashtra and other voluntary organizations. After agricultural revolution green and white, the yield per acre land and animal has increased substantially.

Marketing mix (programme) comprises of various controllable forces (often referred as elements) like product, price, promotion and place. Success of any business enterprise depends on marketing mix. These four elements are like powerful weapons in the hand of manager to defend his market and/or attack on rivals. A manager needs to understand his rural market carefully, considering all important characteristics of rural customers.

Since behaviour of rural consumers is different and less predictable, the marketing manager has a challenging task to design marketing mix strategies for the rural segments. Due to considerable level of heterogeneity, a manager needs to design tailor-made programme to cater needs and wants of specific groups.

## **RURAL MARKETING**

Rural marketing involves the process of developing, pricing, promoting, distributing rural specific product and a service leading to exchange between rural and urban market which satisfies consumer demand and also achieves organizational objectives. It is a two-way marketing process wherein the transactions can be

1. Urban to Rural- It involves the selling of products and services by urban marketers in rural areas. These include Pesticides, FMCG Products, Consumer durables, etc.
2. Rural to Urban- Here, a rural producer (involved in agriculture) sells his produce in urban market. This may not be direct. There generally are middlemen, agencies, government co-operatives, etc who sell fruits, vegetables, grains, pulses and others.
3. Rural to rural- These include selling of agricultural tools, cattle, carts and others to another village in its proximity.

### **Following part deals with marketing mix elements for rural segments:**

#### **1. Product Mix:**

Product is a powerful determinant of firm's success. The products must be suitable to rural customers in all significant aspects. The company must produce product according to the present and the expected state of rural buyers. Product features (size, shape, colour, weight, etc.), qualities, brand name, packaging, labeling, services, and other relevant aspect must be fit with needs, wants and capacity of buyers. Product must undergo necessary changes and improvements to sustain its suitability over time. Note that effectiveness of other decisions like pricing, promotion and place also depends on the product.

#### **2. Price Mix:**

Price is the unique element of marketing mix, particularly, for rural markets. Rural customers are most price sensitive and, hence, price plays more decisive role in buying decisions. Pricing policies and strategies must be formulated with care and caution. Price level, discounts and rebates, credit and installment facilities, and so on are important considerations while setting and altering prices.

Normally, the low-priced products attract rural buyers. However, some rural customers are quality and status conscious.

### 3. Promotion Mix:

Rural markets are delicately powerful. Certain adaptations are required to cater to the rural masses. The promotion strategies and distribution strategies are of paramount importance. Ad makers have learned to leverage the benefits of improved infrastructure and media reach. The television airs advertisements to lure rural masses, and they are sure it reaches the target audience, because majority of rural India possesses and is glued to TV sets!

Marketing manager has to decide on promotional tools such as advertisement (objectives, message, media, budget, scheduling, etc.), sales promotion (sales promotion tools, levels, costs, timing, etc.), personal selling (including objectives, sales force size, recruitment and selection, training and development, remuneration, training, controlling, etc.), and publicity and public relations.

The method of promotion needs to be tailored to suit the expectations of the market. Van/ vehicle campaigns, edutainment films, generating word of mouth publicity through opinion leaders, colourful wall paintings, etc., techniques have been proved effective. The wide reach of television has exposed the conservative audience to westernization.

Similarly, puppet-shows, dance, dramas and mythological songs, specially developed for product-promotion purpose, are now being used in rural markets. These traditional art forms readily render for communication with the rural society.

Village fairs and festivals are ideal venues for projecting these programmes. In certain cases, public meetings, too, are used for rural promotion. Music cassettes (CDs) are another effective medium for rural communication. It is an appealing medium and a comparatively less expensive medium.

Different language groups can be reached with a low budget. They can be played in cinema houses or in other places where rural people assemble. It is also essential that in all rural communication, the rural genius must be kept in view. The theme, the message, the copy, the language, and the delivery must match the rural context.

Evidently, rural communication needs creativity and innovation. In rural marketing, usually a greater time lag is involved between the introduction of a product and its economic size sale. This is because the rural buyer's adoption process is relatively more time consuming.

Opinion leaders play a key role in popularizing products and influence in rural market. Nowadays

educated youth of rural also influences the rural consumers. Rural consumers are influenced by the life style they watch on the television set. Their less exposure to outside world makes them innocent and fascinated to novelties. The reach of mass media, especially, television has influenced the buying behavior greatly.

### 4. Place Mix:

Rural markets face the critical issues of distribution. The marketer has to strengthen the distribution strategies. Distributing small and medium sized packets through poor roads, over long distances, into deep pockets of rural India and getting the stockiest to trust the mobility is a herculean task.

Both physical distribution and channel of distribution should be decided carefully to ensure easy accessibility of products for rural buyers. Choosing suitable mode of transportation, locating warehouses at strategic points, sufficient insurance, maintaining adequate inventory, maintaining a sufficient number of retail outlets at different regions, and deploying specially trained sales force are some of the critical decisions in rural distribution.

Normally, indirect channels (particularly one or two level) are more suitable to serve scattered rural customers. In two level channels wholesalers are located at urban and semi urban to serve urban and rural retailers. However, not only in backward states, but also in progressive states, local producers (farmers and others) distribute directly to customers.

For service marketing, employees of rural branches and agents can do better jobs. Banking, insurance, investment, satellite and cable connection, cell phone, auto sales and services, etc., the market is booming in villages of some states. Service industries are trying to penetrate the rural segments by deploying the specially trained employees and local agents.

Surprisingly, online or cyber marketing is making its place gradually in rural areas of the progressive states. Marketer must design and modify time to time its distribution strategies according to nature of rural segments, may be quite differently than that of urban markets.

## RURAL CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

The study of consumer behavior is the study of how individuals make decisions to spend these available resources (time, money, effort) on consumption related items. It includes the study of what they buy, why they buy it, when they buy it, where they buy it, how often they buy it, and how often they use it.

The field of consumer behavior holds great interest for us as consumers, as marketers, and as students of human behavior. As consumers we benefit from insights into our own consumption related decisions;

what we buy, why we buy, how we buy, and the promotional influences that persuade us to buy. The study of consumer behavior enables us to become better, which is wiser consumer.

As a researcher, it is important for us to recognize why and how individuals makes their consumption decisions, so that we can make better strategic marketing decisions and are able to predict how consumers are likely to react to various informational and environmental cues, and shape their marketing strategies accordingly. So it is necessary to gain insights into why individuals act in certain consumption related ways and with learning what internal and external influences impel them to act as they do. Consumer behavior study can be defined as the study of individuals, groups, or organizations and the processes they use for acquiring and organizing information in the direction of purchase decision, and further, applying this information to use and evaluate products and services.

Behavior occurs either for the individual, or in the context of a group. Consumer behavior involves the use and disposal of products as well as the study of how they are purchased. Product use is often of great interest to the marketer, because this may influence how a product is best positioned or how we can encourage increased consumption. The impact of consumer behavior on society is also of relevance.