CONCLUSIONS

POLICY IMPLICATIONS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

The present Study has highlighted various aspects, which the rural consumer considers while making decision. An analysis of consumption pattern, decision making, awareness and attitude have revealed a very optimistic state of affair as far as rural consumers are concerned. Even that this study, advised to marketers to include customer centric orientation in their work culture through mechanise their operations, promote their services and product vigorously, in order to keep their market share intact in the long run. Not only this would, they also have to go for devising customer relationship marketing strategies in order to retain the customers.

Further the marketers should also keep in mind that the rural consumer has also come up in the main stream as of his urban counterpart his interest therefore should receive first priority. He is ready to buy whatever being offered to him provided the product should be fit into his expectations. Quality has become prime concern for him and no more he
wants remain victim and wants to be taken care of for his needs, his problems, and his mistakes. Since no study has been conducted as such, to make a comprehensive analysis on consumption pattern, buying behaviour, awareness and attitude towards rural consumers, the present study is a contribution to the existing literature.

**Policy Implications**

The vast oceans of Indians rural market consists of six lac villages where 70 percent of the country’s population resides or nearly 625 million consumers lives and the market potential is increasing, playing a major role in the economy of country’s market consumption patterns and accounts for nearly two-thirds of its private consumption.

Further, the attitude towards rural markets should be that of an investor and the marketers has to invest to develop a separate marketing programme to meet the consumer needs. The improvements in infrastructure, vast untapped potential, increasing income, improved accessibility, increased awareness and literacy rate and the increasing competition in urban markets have created opportunities to the marketer and he should develop concepts to meet the changing and growing consumer needs in the rural market.

The marketers should concentrate on the rural segmentation and targets the identified customer groups with proper marketing mix so as to
position the product or brand as perceived by the target segment. However, agriculture prosperity is not uniform in all the rural areas. Some areas have developed rapidly, while others have remained undeveloped. This should be kept in mind while segmenting rural markets. Therefore, a selective approach is essential for penetration in the rural market and proximity to a feeder village/town has high influence on rural demand, as people nearby areas are more aware of various consumer products, promotion activities and experiment oriented too. These areas should be taken up first and developed. Further, the target may be the younger generation, as they are more literate and have greater exposure to changing values and lifestyles.

The main problem facing by the marketers is lack of rural marketing strategy. Further, there is no data on consumer research and market segmentation and there is no proper customer monitoring and feedback mechanism also. The marketers should not only develop products which suit the needs of rural consumer, but also find new means of distribution and promotion channels to reach the rural population scattered over a large geographical area. Further, research on the traditions, customs, belief, habits, tastes, preferences and psychological mindsets of rural consumers is also required. Rural marketing could be used as one of the instruments and mechanisms for achieving the rural development goals.
The marketer has the responsibility of making his product available near the place of consumption so that consumers can easily buy it otherwise he may buy some other brand. Thus, a marketer should ensure that his product is available to the target consumers wherever required.

For many years, physical distribution was neglected area of marketing management; therefore, the marketer should emphasis its importance in the overall marketing strategy. The retailers in present context needed at the village level, the semi-wholesalers or authorized dealers at the block level and the stockists at the feeder town level. However, in the absence of his own forward links, the marketer cannot exercise much direct control over the whole distribution system. Therefore, in spite of a large network, the marketer should own retail outlets being more effective for deeper market penetration in long run, but one has to compromise between this advantage and the cost involved in organizing such a market.

The rural requirements are different from their urban counterparts in respect of attributes like colour, fragrance, size of product, shape, technology etc, must be taken care of and product features should be simple and cost reasonable. Packing should be strong enough to withstand rough handling of products. Rural consumers are illiterate and semi literate but marketers still advertise in Hindi and English and do not specify product use. Rural market demand is fast changing and today
mass media like radio and television are fast catching up. The sales of consumer durables like fans, frost-free refrigerators, wristwatches only show that the rural consumer is changing his requirements.

Suggestions

From the above scenario, the following suggestions can be made:

- As the consumption pattern of the rural people has changed drastically hence, to serve it properly it is needed to improve the efficiency and scope of distribution network so that they can get required commodities at right time in right place with affordable prices.

- As one of the observation of the study is that the rural consumers are equally quality conscious as their urban counterparts, therefore, due attention should be paid to maintain quality of the products being served to them to fulfill their aspirations.

- It was also found that the brand retention is also considerably high among the rural consumers, so marketers should concentrate on brand value i.e. the quality, utility and reliability of their products.

- It was observed that big companies face stiff competition from smaller companies on price and margins. Therefore, the companies should developed products with low prices and in sachets to meet competition. The strategic responses in such situations are to strengthen their existing access (promotion and distribution channel), offer a value for money and retention of dealer margin.
➢ It is very common features in rural markets that the leading brands find themselves confronted with duplicates and imitation. In this context, the marketers need to take additional steps such as to focus on brand building, availability of products, unique packaging, educate consumers on quality, legal methods and persuasive measures involving association with other firms in order to prevent duplicates and fakes.

➢ Further, it is very critical aspect in rural markets that the leading brands compete with substitute also. While competing with substitute, the marketers should educate consumer using demonstration and trial and also designing a product with relative superiority which could be easily perceived by the rural consumers.

➢ As it was also observed that electronic messages have a limited influence on decision making of the rural consumer, for the decision, apart from his own rationality he relied upon his own families too. Therefore, it is imperative that the marketers should understand the mindset of the rural consumers and make their distributors and outlets more reliable and consumer oriented.

➢ As the study reveal that the haat and melas are the routine features in the study areas therefore, marketers should focus on haats and melas held in the villages to introduce new products and brands through demonstration and sampling. It not only increased the penetration of
existing products but also create awareness and preference for products and brands as they provide platform to get the attention and interest of the rural consumers.

➢ Marketers should also understand the need of consistency in sales promotion to be maintained but the repetitive use of the same type of promotion reduces the incentive value and excess promotion will reduce the novelty value of the offer.

➢ As the study reveal that the rural people have also good interest on local products hence, the local manufacturers should increase quality and durability if they want to remain in competition with the branded products in the area.

**Conclusion**

It is encouraging to note that there is a remarkable improvement in buying behaviour and consumption pattern of rural consumers, which will create more demand to companies in future as well. But the companies also has to accept this fact that rural buyers look for value for money from their purchase, and do not buy any thing for the sake of buying it. As also reported in the study that brand and price play an important role in their choice, hence the marketers should think only of rural variations of their products with desired innovations to meet the need and the context of the rural consumers, leaving the product features essentially the same as those offered to urban consumers.
Tapping the ocean of rural market in India demands creative marketing and many developmental efforts to be made in order to exploit the immense marketing opportunities. In the rural areas, demand has to be created and for this personal selling is supreme means of promotion because rural sales force have familiarity with rural culture, traditions and habits. The sales person has a plus point that he can communicate in the local rural languages.

Further, the marketers should also use non-conventional communication media such as haats, melas, folk media, puppet shows and mobile audio-visual van having portable exhibition kit for village-to-village sales campaigns. These A.V. vans are now popular in rural markets and they can act as effective tools of promotion, therefore, the spirit of creativity and all marketers in rural marketing should evince innovations in promotion as these media is more effective and have greater impact on rural psyche.