PREFACE

Over the last decades there has been an unbelievable change in the size, spread and scope of activities of rural consumers in India. The rural market of India is fascinating and challenging at the same time. It offers large scope on account of its sheer size. And, it is growing steadily. Even a modest growth pushes up the sales of a product substantially in view of the huge base.

Whereas the urban market is highly competitive, the rural market is relatively quiet. Simultaneously, the market also poses several problems and hurdles. The firms have to encounter them squarely and put in a great deal of effort, if they have to get a sizeable share of the market.

Efforts to capture the market with due thought and focus on the constraints with streamlined strategies to overcome the same will tend to define the path ahead for rural marketing in India.

A Hindi poet has rightly said, “Bharat mata gram vasini” which means Mother India lives in her villages.

As a general rule, rural marketing involves more intensive personal selling efforts compared to urban marketing. Marketers need to understand the psyche of the rural consumers and then act accordingly. 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. Marketing of products made in urban centers and sold to rural areas like soap, toothpaste, television sets, etc.

Marketers cannot now assume that rural India consumes only certain traditional/essential products and that its share in other product category is meager. It is perhaps well known that products like packaged tea, bath soaps and washing products, including detergents/detergents cakes, are popular items of consumption in rural market. Products like shampoo, toothpaste and talcum powder, and durables like electric irons, bicycles, mopeds, scooters and motorcycles have joined this category in recent years.

Inclusive Marketing is an approach that looks at the poor not only as consumers but also as producers/suppliers. At present these rural producers/suppliers are struggling to market their products and services due to various reasons such as Low Capital Labor ratio, preponderance of small land holdings, and excessive dependence on monsoons; massive unemployment and illiteracy.
Apart from these, rural producers in both farm and nonfarm product categories are facing serious problems about technical and marketing knowledge. They are also ignorant about modern marketing issues like quality, delivery schedule, packaging, after-sales-service, etc. The pricing concepts are not aligned with consumer want and goods are produced without a proper market survey or ascertaining beforehand whether there is a demand for a particular product.

Consequently the rural producers are not able to give stiff competition to their urban counterparts.

The present study is confined to tribal region of South Rajasthan. Rajasthan is the largest state in India in terms of geographic area. South Rajasthan is predominately habited by tribal. This province is rich in natural resources and boosts a lot of cultural diversity. Against this backdrop, the proposed study attempts to achieve many more objectives which are to be highlighted in this thesis.

Marketing is the pivot of economic development in rural areas. It is a vital component in income and employment generation in farm and non-farm sectors. Various rural development programs have been introduced by Central and state governments which are in turn instrumental for an upsurge of employment opportunities for the rural poor.
Despite all odds, the ‘rural market’ in India is now hot and showing some unprecedented trends. Four consecutive years of positive growth in rural GDP has not just boosted sentiment but also spending power, Power play of MNREGS, farm loan waiver and more than 40 per cent hike in support prices of crops over last two years, Higher percentage of disposable income in rural vis-a-vis urban areas due to negligible expenses on house rent and taxes, Corporate engagement is beginning to have a small but definitive impact on rural incomes, All this shows up in demand. Corporate giants like Maruti, Airtel, Hero Honda, Idea cellular (Aditya Birla Group), IFFCO Tokio, LG, Samsung, HUL, ITC and many more are very excited to diversify their product lines specially for ‘Rural India’.

Major findings and recommendations about rural consumers’ products in Rajasthan have also been highlighted in this thesis.

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Mamta Maheshwari