CHAPTER 12

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

12.1: Background:

As part of the research work, a need was also felt to examine the role of gender in the rural markets and the extent of their influence in the purchase decision of FMCG and Consumer Durables. Consequently a question has been raised to know the role played by gender in the rural markets.

In an urban household, all the members of the family (including the female sections) are involved in taking decisions related to purchase. But in a rural area, the entire family is not at all involved in taking decisions. In fact the womenfolk have very little exposure to the market and rather the male persons take the decisions related to purchases. According to Anand & Krishna (2008), community decision-making is a usual phenomenon in a village because of existence of a strong social structures, caste system and low education levels. In rural India, housewives manage the household and decide on its needs. They largely make brand choice for low-cost household products but males also play an equally important role. Male people are still dominant because it is largely a patriarchal society, yet a housewife establishes her ‘territory’. Family is at the core of their existence and the ‘self’ is considered less important. With the globalisation, economic liberalisation, information technology revolution, female empowerment and improved infrastructure, middle class rural India today has more disposable income than urban India (Bhatia, T.K: 2000). Consequently there have been changes in gender profile as well. Today the female sections among the rural consumers are more educated.
and are also aware of the health and educational needs of the family. The growing presence of the media also exerts a strong influence on their role and behaviour. In brief the rural womenfolk are more empowered today and their influence in the family buying decisions process is increasing day by day.

12.2: Sources of data: Data collected are basically from primary source and secondary sources. Primary source included interviews and questionnaire survey and secondary sources included available literatures on gender role of rural consumers.

12.3: Content Analysis:

After performing content analysis of the interviews and available literatures, certain roles are found to be played by either gender in the rural market. These (as given in Figure 12.1) are explained below.

Firstly the rural male basically plays the role of a Chief Earner of the family and often he is the sole bread earner. Secondly male is an important link to the external world. Males are still dominant because it is largely a patriarchal society. Thirdly the rural male has high exposure to market information. He is often involved in the purchase transactions in a family and gathers information. Fourthly male found to be the financer and purchaser of the family in matters of family role structure decisions. Lastly the male also plays the role of the decision maker in the family. The male person takes the important decisions of the family and has the final power of veto.
The roles played by female gender in rural markets are highlighted below. These (as given in Figure 12.2 below) make the position of rural females unique as compared to their urban counterpart.

Firstly in rural areas, a married female plays the role of a dedicated housewife. In rural India for a housewife, the family is at the core of their existence, where she manages the household affairs and decides on its needs. Secondly a female plays the role of a child’s up bringer. It is her shrewd diligence on which a child is dependent for the initial upbringing.
Thirdly a female plays the role of an Influencer and Initiator in matters of family role decisions. Fourthly a rural female is more liberalised than before who has the scope to generate her own source of income by participating in various Governments promoted self employment schemes. And therefore at times they can take decisions independently. Fifthly a rural woman is more educated and empowered woman can take logical decisions through proper scrutiny based upon factual information. In fact today she has more independence and authority to take decisions than before. Lastly a rural woman plays the role of a Decider in matters related to her territory.