CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS, DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

5.1 Introduction to the Chapter

The empirical findings of the study were presented in the previous chapter. This final chapter of the study presented major conclusions and implication (including theoretical, practical and managerial) based on empirical findings of the study. This chapter highlighted the significance of study after restating the summary of the research. The chapter compared the empirical findings with the results of previous studies for providing sound suggestions and recommendations. The chapter culminated with the conclusion of the study.

5.2 Summary

The current marketing environment is totally different from the environment a decade before. The rapid shift in the marketing practices and technology has transformed the behavior of today’s marketers from brick to click marketing. It has become very essential for the marketers to cope up with these transformations for their survival in the digital age. The concept of rural marketing was totally unknown to many people from independence to green revolution. At that time, it was considered as synonym to agricultural marketing. Its scope was very limited and consumers were only concerned about the agro products like fertilizers due to their low purchasing power. The market was totally unorganized due to lack of competition and suitable strategies. Rural areas are the habitat of India’s two-third consumers and contributed approximately half of the national income. 742 million people constituting the 72 percent of India’s population living in 6,27,00 villages in 42 million households offered great opportunities to the marketers. Just like China, the concept of rural markets in India is still evolving, with
several difficulties to penetrate rural markets. The future is very promising for those who can understand these issues and exploit them to the optimum levels. This calls for the radical change in the attitudes of marketers towards unpredictable rural markets so that they can impress on 230 million rural consumers in six hundred thousand villages of rural India. The India rural market is offering great opportunities to the Indian marketing firms due to its large size and demand.

There is a boost in the rural people spending due to income remittances from migrant and increase in trading and agro-processing. The in hand money of rural consumers increases due to rise in procurement prices. There is rise in the cash inflows to rural households due to improved access to finance. Waiving of agricultural loans and national rural employment guarantee scheme reduced rural unemployment. In India, many leading public and private companies explored and penetrated rural market through various projects. The various success stories of Indian rural market included 55 percent of LIC policies were sold in rural areas, almost half of the BSNL mobile users were from villages, in terms of plastic money, 41 million Kisan Credit Card users were from rural areas.

FMCG sector, one of the fourth largest sectors in Indian economy with a total market size in excess of US$ 13.1 billion or Rs. 60,000 crores, played a significant role in the India’s GDP and providing employment to five percent of total factory employment. The purchasing power of farmers is surely going to increase due to backward linkages established by many companies. Availability of key raw materials, cheaper labor costs and presence across the entire value chain gave India a competitive advantage over foreign players. The FMCG market is expected to rise from US$ 11.6 billion to US$ 33.4 billion in 2015. The growth of FMCG sector in rural India is outpacing the urban India in terms of both volume and value. For the year 2010-2011, the growth of FMCG volume and value in rural area are more as compared to the previous year.
5.3 Problem Discussion

Today Indian Rural markets started attracting many companies than a decade before. Many domestic and multinational companies have realized that rural markets must be served on priority basis and cannot be ignored. In Punjab and Haryana, the most of the rural markets are unsaturated and companies are trying to attract the rural consumers by matching their marketing mix elements with the affordability, acceptability, awareness and availability of their products for consumers, which ultimately affect the customer preferences, satisfaction and loyalty status. This called for the need to study the factors related to customer satisfaction and loyalty and their preferences in context of FMCG products to increase their market share.

5.4 Objectives of Study

The research objectives have been derived by critically examining the relevant literature in order to solve the research questions of the study. The objectives of the present study are:

1. To examine the impact of rural marketing practices on the behavioral aspects of rural consumers in Punjab and Haryana.

2. To examine the rural consumer’s preferences towards various brands, promotional schemes and media.

3. To study variations in the constructs under study across different demographic variables.

5.5 Proposed Hypotheses of the Study

$H_1$: Marketing practices are the positive predictor of overall customer satisfaction.

$H_{1a}$: Product practice is a positive predictor of overall customer satisfaction.

$H_{1b}$: Price practice is a positive predictor of overall customer satisfaction.
H₁c: Retailing/Selling practice is a positive predictor of overall customer satisfaction.
H₁d: Advertising practice is a positive predictor of overall customer satisfaction.

H₂ Marketing practices are the positive predictor of Switching Cost.
H₂a: Product practice is a positive predictor of Switching Cost.
H₂b: Price practice is a positive predictor of Switching Cost.
H₂c: Retailing/Selling practice is a positive predictor of Switching Cost.
H₂d: Advertising practice is a positive predictor of Switching Cost.

H₃ Marketing practices are the positive predictor of Customer loyalty.
H₃a: Product practice is a positive predictor of Customer loyalty.
H₃b: Price practice is a positive predictor of Customer loyalty.
H₃c: Retailing/Selling practice is a positive predictor of Customer loyalty.
H₃d: Advertising practice is a positive predictor of Customer loyalty.

H₄ Customer satisfaction, switching cost and trust are the positive predictor of Customer loyalty.
H₄a: Customer satisfaction is a positive predictor of Customer loyalty.
H₄b: Switching cost is a positive predictor of Customer loyalty.
H₄c: Trust is a positive predictor of Customer loyalty.

H₅ Marketing practices differ across demographic profile of consumers.
H₅a: Males and females differ in their opinions towards marketing practices.
H₅b: Respondents belongs to Punjab and Haryana differ in their opinions towards marketing practices.
H₅c: Married and unmarried respondents differ in their opinions towards marketing practices.
H₅d: Respondents belongs to different age groups differ in their opinions towards marketing practices.
H₅e: Respondents having different family size differ in their opinions towards marketing practices.
Hsf: Respondents with different occupations differ in their opinions towards marketing practices.
H5g: Respondents with different education background differ in their opinions towards marketing practices.
H5h: Respondents with different levels of income differ in their opinions towards marketing practices.

**H6. Behavioral aspects differ across demographic profile of consumers.**
H6a: Males and females differ in their opinions towards behavioral aspects.
H6b: Respondents belongs to Punjab and Haryana differ in their opinions towards behavioral aspects.
H6c: Married and unmarried respondents differ in their opinions towards behavioral aspects.
H6d: Respondents belongs to different age groups differ in their opinions towards behavioral aspects.
H6e: Respondents having different family size differ in their opinions towards behavioral aspects.
H6f: Respondents with different occupations differ in their opinions towards behavioral aspects.
H6g: Respondents with different education background differ in their opinions towards behavioral aspects.
H6h: Respondents with different levels of income differ in their opinions towards behavioral aspects.

5.6 Research Methodology

5.6.1 Research Design

The purpose of this study was to analyze impact of rural marketing dynamics in consumer’s point of view. As there was a need to describe, clarify and explain the relationship among the constructs marked by the prior formulation of specific hypotheses...
5.6.2 Research Techniques

As descriptive research design was adopted to deal with Who, What, Where, How much, How many aspects of contemporary research problem and which required no control over the behavioral events so “Survey” strategy was used for this study. Survey method was used to find out the relations between impact of rural consumers towards rural marketing practices adopted by selected FMCG companies and satisfaction and loyalty status of rural consumers’. A multi-item questionnaire was designed in order to find out these relationships with the help of quantitative approach.

5.6.3 Information Needed

The demographic information regarding the respondents’ gender, age, family size, occupation, education, marital status and income was included in the study. Rural consumers’ perception of product, price, retailing, selling, switching cost, trust, satisfaction and loyalty and preferences towards various brands, promotional schemes and media adopted by FMCG companies was included in the current study.

5.6.4 Sampling Process

The elements of the study included entire end users of select FMCGs. The sampling units were the rural households containing the above elements that were available for selection. The study was extended to the geographical boundaries of Punjab and Haryana for the time period from the year 2010 to 2012. The database in possession of retailers in the form of credit bill books served as the sampling frame. The systematic sampling, the kind of probability sampling technique by selecting every third house was adopted. In this study, the sample size was selected as 600 respondents which was significantly greater
than the appropriate sample of 113 to represent population adequately. The current study was taken up in twenty-four villages from Hoshiarpur, Gurdaspur, Sangrur (representing Doaba, Mahja & Malwa regions respectively), Panchkula, Ambala and Kurukshetra districts. Out of these, the first three districts were from Punjab and rests three were from Haryana states respectively. Four villages were selected from each district on convenience basis.

5.6.5 Measurement and Construct

In this study three primary levels of measurement: nominal, ordinal and interval were used. Nominal level was used to measure the variables like name of state, gender, occupation and marital status. The ordinal level was used to measure the variables like income, education, family size and age. The rest all other variable like product, price, retail, advertising, switching cost, trust, customer satisfaction, loyalty and consumer preferences were measured with the help of interval level. In this study, the questionnaire consisted of seven parts. All responses were assessed using a five point Likert scale.

5.6.6 Data Collection/ Treatment

The primary data was originated from the questionnaire. Out of the total questionnaire administered, 578 questionnaires were valid in all respects. The number of questionnaire that qualified for analysis from each state were 290 from Punjab (10 were excluded), 288 from Haryana (12 were excluded). The data collected was analyzed with the help of descriptive statistics to find out the mean, standard deviation. The relationships among the defined variables were studied with the help of correlation and regression. The rural consumer preferences were measured by using conjoint analysis. Multivariate analysis of variance was used for the comparative analysis of variables under study across different demographic variables. In this study, the value of Cronbach’s alpha was more than 0.79, which showed that the scales were internally consistent.
5.6.7 Scope of the Study

The study was confined to selected villages of three districts of Punjab and Haryana. The study was limited to respondents’ perception regarding Bathing soaps from Toiletries, Shampoo from Cosmetics and Biscuits from Foodstuff.

5.7 Significance of the Study

The current study was theoretically as well as practically very significant. Theoretically, it emphasized the strategic importance of both the marketing practices and behavioral aspects variables for the rural marketing. It also highlighted how the variables of marketing practices namely product, price, retailing/selling and advertising practices and the variables of behavioral aspects namely switching cost, trust, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty were related to each other.

Practically, it added to the limited body of knowledge on the impact of rural marketing practices on the behavioral aspects of rural consumers in a northern Indian perspective. It added to the efforts made to determine the relationship between marketing practices and behavioral aspects. It supported the previous research findings by validating the application of standardized scales of previous studies.

5.8 Summary of Results of the Present Study

In relation to the proposed hypotheses that were tested in this study, this section summarized the empirical results of the study. The study tested 31 hypotheses with the help of multiple regression models and multivariate analysis of variance. The Table 5.1 indicates the hypothesis and the corresponding method used to test the same.
Table 5.1: Hypotheses and Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses number</th>
<th>Statistical tests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hja-Hid</td>
<td>Multiple regression model 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2a-H2d</td>
<td>Multiple regression model 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3a-H3d</td>
<td>Multiple regression model 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4a-H4d</td>
<td>Multiple regression model 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5a-H5b</td>
<td>Multivariate analysis of variance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6a-H6b</td>
<td>Multivariate analysis of variance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total=31

The outcomes of above statistical tests are summed up as per objectives below:

**OBJECTIVE 1: TO EXAMINE THE IMPACT OF RURAL MARKETING PRACTICES ON THE BEHAVIORAL ASPECTS OF RURAL CONSUMERS.**

- **Outcomes of Multiple Regression Model 1**

The regression model 1 was used to test the first four sub hypotheses (Hia, Hib, Hic and Hid). The results of this model are summed up in the table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Results of Hypotheses with Regression Model 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed Hypothesis</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hia: Product practice is a positive predictor of overall customer satisfaction.</td>
<td>Hia is accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hib: Price practice is a positive predictor of overall customer satisfaction.</td>
<td>Hib is accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hic: Retailing/Selling practice is a positive predictor of overall customer satisfaction.</td>
<td>Hic is accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hid: Advertising practice is a positive predictor of overall customer satisfaction.</td>
<td>Hid is accepted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The independent variables namely advertising, retailing, price and product all were positive predictors of overall customer satisfaction, with advertising having the largest influence on overall customer satisfaction.

These findings were expected because in the previous studies conducted by Gaski and Etzel (1986); Chan Cui (2004) consumer attitude towards marketing practices had a significant impact on their overall satisfaction. With regard to satisfaction, the rural consumers were more satisfied with advertising practices followed by product, retailing and price practices.

These results were also consistent with the study conducted by Baidya and Basu (2009) focused upon the issues of customer satisfaction with respect to 4Ps for a brand and suggested that product, price, promotion and distribution had significant positive effects on the overall satisfaction of customers with product having the highest satisfaction index among all. Further, the Table 4.16 indicates that the correlation coefficient between customer satisfaction and product, price, retailing and advertising were 0.847, 0.835, 0.825 and 0.843 respectively. The high correlations, among overall customer satisfaction and product, price, retailing and advertising practices indicated that all these four independent variables (product, price, retailing and advertising) explained much of variance in the overall customer satisfaction.

- Outcomes of Multiple Regression Model 2

The regression model 2 was used to test next four sub hypotheses (H₃a, H₃b, H₃c and H₃d). The results of this model are summed up in the Table 5.3 labelled results of hypotheses with regression model 2.
Table 5.3: Results of Hypotheses with Regression Model 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed Hypothesis</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H2a: Product practice is a positive predictor of Switching Cost</td>
<td>H2a is accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2b: Price practice is a positive predictor of Switching Cost.</td>
<td>H2b is accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2c: Retailing/Selling practice is a positive predictor of Switching Cost.</td>
<td>H2c is accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2d: Advertising practice is a positive predictor of Switching Cost.</td>
<td>H2d is accepted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The independent variables namely advertising, retailing, price and product all were positive predictors of switching Cost, with product having the largest influence on switching Cost.

Further, the Table 4.16 indicates that the correlation coefficient between switching Cost and product, price, retailing and advertising were 0.903, 0.887, 0.858 and 0.875 respectively. The high correlations, among switching Cost and product, price, retailing and advertising practices indicated that all these four independent variables (product, price, retailing and advertising) explained much of variance in the switching Cost.

- Outcomes of Multiple Regression Model 3

The regression model 3 was used to test next four sub hypotheses (H3a, H3b, H3c and H3d). The results of this model are summed up in the Table 5.4 labelled results of hypotheses with regression model 3.

Table 5.4: Results of Hypotheses with Regression Model 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed Hypothesis</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H3a: Product practice is a positive predictor of Customer loyalty</td>
<td>H3a is accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3b: Price practice is a positive predictor of Customer loyalty.</td>
<td>H3b is accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3c: Retailing/Selling practice is a positive predictor of Customer loyalty.</td>
<td>H3c is accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3d: Advertising practice is a positive predictor of Customer loyalty.</td>
<td>H3d is accepted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The independent variables namely advertising, retailing, price and product all were positive predictors of customer loyalty, with product having the largest influence on customer loyalty. Further, the Table 4.16 indicates that the correlation coefficient between customer loyalty and product, price, retailing and advertising were 0.883, 0.872, 0.854 and 0.873 respectively. The high correlations, among customer loyalty and product, price, retailing and advertising practices indicated that all these four independent variables (product, price, retailing and advertising) explained much of variance in the customer loyalty.

• Outcomes of Multiple Regression model 4

The regression model 4 was used to test the fourth hypothesis (H₄). The results of this model are summed up in the Table 5.5 labelled results of hypotheses with regression model 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed Hypothesis</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H₄a: Switching cost is a positive predictor of Customer loyalty</td>
<td>H₄a is accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₄b: Trust is a positive predictor of Customer loyalty.</td>
<td>H₄b is accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₄c: Customer satisfaction is a positive predictor of Customer loyalty.</td>
<td>H₄c is accepted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The independent variables namely customer satisfaction, trust and switching cost all were positive predictors of customer loyalty, with switching cost having the largest influence on customer loyalty. Further the Table 4.16 indicates that the correlation coefficient between customer loyalty and customer satisfaction, trust and switching cost were 0.895, 0.886 and 0.834 respectively. The high correlations, between customer loyalty and customer satisfaction, trust and switching cost indicated that all these three independent variables (customer satisfaction, trust and switching cost) explained much of variance in the customer loyalty.

Hence, from above it is clear that rural marketing practices had positive impact on the behavioral aspects of rural consumers.
OBJECTIVE 2: TO EXAMINE THE RURAL CONSUMERS' PREFERENCES TOWARDS VARIOUS BRANDS AND PROMOTIONAL SCHEMES AND MEDIAS.

- Outcomes of Conjoint Analysis

Conjoint analysis was used to examine the rural consumer preferences towards various brands, promotional schemes and media. The resulting conjoint model was significant with correlation coefficient 0.650 representing a very good predictive strength. The results indicated that rural consumer preferred to buy FMCG brand, which was international in nature, advertised through local media in local language, and promoted with value-added schemes with immediate incentives.

OBJECTIVE 3: TO STUDY VARIATIONS IN THE CONSTRUCTS UNDER STUDY ACROSS DIFFERENT DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES.

- Outcomes of MANOVA for Marketing Practices

The multivariate analysis of variance was used to test the eight hypotheses (H5a to H5h). The results of multivariate analysis of variance are summed up in the Table 5.6 labelled results of hypotheses with multivariate analysis of variance.

Table 5.6: Results of Hypotheses with Multivariate Analysis of Variance for Marketing Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed Hypothesis</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H5a: Males and females differ in their opinions towards marketing practices.</td>
<td>H5a is rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5b: Respondents belongs to Punjab and Haryana differ in their opinions towards marketing practices.</td>
<td>H5b is rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5c: Married and unmarried respondents differ in their opinions towards marketing practices.</td>
<td>H5c is rejected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[163]
The respondents belonged to different state, gender & marital status, age, family size, occupation, education & income did not differ in their opinions towards marketing practices like product, price, retailing and advertising practices.

- **Outcomes of MANOVA for Behavioral Aspects**

The multivariate analysis of variance was used to test the eight hypotheses (H₆a to H₆h). The results of multivariate analysis of variance are summed up in the Table 5.7 labelled results of hypotheses with multivariate analysis of variance.

**Table 5.7: Results of Hypotheses with Multivariate Analysis of Variance for Behavioral Aspects**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed Hypothesis</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H₆a: Males and females differ in their opinions towards behavioral aspects</td>
<td>H₆a is rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₆b: Respondents belongs to Punjab and Haryana differ in their opinions towards</td>
<td>H₆b is rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>behavioral aspects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₆c: Married and unmarried respondents differ in their opinions towards behavioral</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aspects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[H₅d: Respondents belongs to different age groups differ in their opinions towards    |
marketing practices.                                                                 |
H₅d is rejected                                                                      |

[H₅e: Respondents having different family size differ in their opinions towards       |
marketing practices.                                                                 |
H₅e is rejected                                                                      |

[H₅f: Respondents with different occupations differ in their opinions towards        |
marketing practices.                                                                 |
H₅f is rejected                                                                      |

[H₅g: Respondents with different education background differ in their opinions       |
towards marketing practices.                                                        |
H₅g is rejected                                                                      |

[H₅h: Respondents with different levels of income differ in their opinions towards    |
improvement practices.                                                              |
H₅h is rejected                                                                      |]
H₀d: Respondents belonging to different age groups differ in their opinions towards behavioral aspects

H₀e: Respondents having different family size differ in their opinions towards behavioral aspects

H₀f: Respondents with different occupations differ in their opinions towards behavioral aspects

H₀g: Respondents with different education background differ in their opinions towards behavioral aspects

H₀h: Respondents with different levels of income differ in their opinions towards behavioral aspects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H₀d</td>
<td>is rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₀e</td>
<td>is rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₀f</td>
<td>is rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₀g</td>
<td>is rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₀h</td>
<td>is rejected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents belonged to different state, gender & marital status, age, family size, occupation, education & income did not differ in their opinions towards behavioral aspects like switching cost, trust, satisfaction and loyalty status.

**Hence, the constructs under study did not vary across the different demographic variables.**

### 5.9 Suggestions and Recommendations of the Study

- **Increasing Overall Customer Satisfaction**
  
a. The marketers need to understand the importance of rural marketing practices as it has been observed that rural marketing practices have a strong correlation with overall satisfaction of rural consumers.

b. It has been observed that the rural consumer satisfaction is highly influenced by the advertising practices. So companies need to focus on the advertisement of product (whether to inform, remind and persuade to buy products) in order to raise the level of satisfaction of rural consumers. The advertisement should be
better planned, more imaginative, more entertaining and more rewarding to rural consumers.

c. The study revealed that the product practices play significant role to satisfy the rural consumers. Marketers should keep a check over the product quality, features, style and design. The quality of product should be such that it supports its positioning. The features of product must enable the rural consumer to differentiate it easily. The product should be designed such that it will add to its usefulness and its looks in order to raise the satisfaction level of rural consumers.

d. The study discovered that the price practices have direct impact over the contentment of rural consumers. It demands high level of attention on the pricing policies by marketers. The customers should be persuaded that the prices charged are fair and are not unreasonably high. The marketers have to justify the price of the product rather than indulging in price-cutting policy, which is not the market friendly approach.

e. The retailing/selling has confirmed to be very important aspect in increasing the satisfaction of rural consumers. The retailing/selling is the most important aspect in the marketing of FMCG because it is a massive task to manage such a large sales and distribution networks. The marketers have to focus on small shops, as these are the backbone of rural retail network. The smooth retailing signals the quality of product delivery. The companies have to adopt the alternative rural retailing systems, which also help in empowering the rural women.

- **Fortify Switching Barriers**

a. The rural consumer’s perception towards marketing practices comes out to be an important determinant of their intention to switch to other products. Therefore, marketers should pay attention to the same in order to reap benefits out of it.

[166]
b. It has been found that the product practices are the significant predictor of switching cost. Therefore, the marketers can directly affect the switching intention of the rural consumers by stressing the role of product practices.

c. The difference in the price of product usually compels the rural consumers to switch because rural consumers are very much price-sensitive. So in order to retain the existing customers, marketers have to focus on other alternatives like relationship investment and attractiveness of alternatives.

d. If a product that consumer is looking for is not available easily then it increases the chances for him to switch to other products which are available easily. The job of marketers is to make rural consumer feel comfortable by widely increasing availability of product at common places where the customers are usually found.

e. The advertisement is found to have significant impact over the switching cost. The marketers can easily strengthen the switching barriers by designing and promoting the advertisement in such a way that enable common rural consumer to feel that they are the part of it.

- **Improving Customer Loyalty**

a. In today’s scenario, maintaining customer loyalty is more important than any other objective of the company. Loyalty increases the commitment of the customers to current products that they are using. The marketers have to improve product practices in order to increase the loyalty status of customers as product practices are the significant determinants of customer loyalty.

b. It has been observed that the product practices make highest contribution in explaining the Customer loyalty. The marketers should design a product that should last longer, effective in some way, perform well and have consistent improvements in the quality.
c. The study revealed that advertising practices could change the loyalty status of rural consumers. In order to retain and increase the loyalty of rural consumers, companies should design the ads which are very pleasant, makes true claims, help consumers and are intended to inform them.

d. The price always plays a significant role in influencing customer loyalty towards a particular product and same is the result of current study. Therefore, marketers should design such a price policy that makes the rural consumers to feel that price which they are paying is fair and reasonable.

e. The study revealed that the retailing practices play significant role to make rural consumers loyal. The marketers make sure that the retail stores should serve well, treatment of the retailers should be pleasant, retail salespeople should help the rural consumers, consumers should get assistance in store and retailers should provide adequate services.

f. The study revealed that switching cost is a significant determinant of customer loyalty. Higher the switching cost, higher will be the customer loyalty. To do so, companies should encourage the existing consumers to use more new but varied products of their company. As the more new but varied products will be used, consumers will observe higher switching cost, making it more difficult for consumers to switch to other company’s product.

g. It has been observed that trust is positively influencing the customer loyalty. The marketers should take necessary actions for building the trust of rural consumers in order to gain their loyalty.

h. The study proved that customer loyalty is positively influenced by customer satisfaction. More the level of customer satisfaction more will be their loyalty. The customers who are satisfy will tend to go on using the same product, will prefer the same company, will recommend the same product to people and will encourage the friends who plan to buy such products.
• Meet Rural Consumer Preferences towards Various Brands and Promotional Schemes

a. The study implied that the sales promotion offer which is exclusive, offering immediate incentive if possible with value-added schemes is preferred by the rural consumers. So, marketers can use these behavioral results to segment the rural market to catch the attention of rural consumers towards a particular sales promotion offer.

b. The marketers of international, national and local brands have to pre decide the type of promotion, level of incentives, timing of giving incentive and type of media used to publicize the offer keeping in mind the rural consumers tastes regarding the same.

To summarize, the companies should keep on improving the marketing practices regularly, which will not be a cost, but rather it will be a permanent investment in the rural consumers. This can result in enough profits to the company rather than struggling for the one-time sale's margin.

5.10 Directions for Future Research

1. Such kind of study can be conducted in urban area with different cultures, by using better sampling technique to study the other marketing practices not covered in the study.

2. The study can be conducted revolving around children (less than 18 years of age) only as children are the compulsive buyers now days.

3. The study attempted to identify the impact of rural marketing practices on the behavioral aspects regarding non-durables like FMCG only. The study may be extended to include durables also.

[169]
4. The study can be conducted to analyze the various distribution strategies and distribution models adopted by the different companies in rural areas.

5. As the present study is concerned with the end-users of FMCG (customers) only, so the same study on the part of dealers can be the area for future research.

5.1  Limitations of the Study

The results of the study are applicable to Punjab and Haryana only and cannot be generalized to other parts of India as the people living in others parts may have different perception. However, children (below the age of 18 years) constitute a larger chunk of rural population and are compulsive buyers but were not the part of the study. The present study is product specific so its results cannot be generalized to service sector.

5.12  Conclusion

The present study provided the critical summary of the available literature related to constructs under study and tried to fill the gaps that were identified in the area of rural marketing. The study revolved around only two major aspects including the marketing practices and the behavioral aspects of rural consumers in relation to Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG). The study also tried to identify the rural consumers’ preferences towards various brands, promotional schemes and media. Rural market which is very attractive on one side due to its large potential, is also very much challenging on the other side due to its diverse nature. The companies interested in targeting the rural markets have to tune their products according to local taste of rural market. The study revealed that rural marketing practices have a strong impact on the behavioral aspects of rural consumers. The rural marketing practices, which are applicable in urban areas, cannot be applicable in rural areas. Hence, marketers need to reframe their rural marketing practices keeping in mind the changing rural scenario and changing behavioral aspects of rural consumers.

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