

Rural Market and Marketing

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Rural markets in India has acquired a major role in the growth of our economy. In 2018 the rural consumption has rose by 9.7% which is against the annual growth of 8.6% in urban spending (Livemint, 2018). With the increase in income because of green revolution and local value addition, the marketers have focused their eye on the rural areas. Globalisation and privatisation has given further boost to rural marketing. In recent times, rural markets are full of wide varieties of products and services and receives special attention of business houses and others. Beyond the conventional cheap and simple products and services, rural people seek right value for the product they buy. Competition for rural consumers are becoming stiff. Accordingly, marketing for rural consumers is becoming more challenging. The key objective of this paper is to review existing literature on rural marketing and develop a framework for adapting the traditional marketing mix and the linkages within in rural context.

1. Introduction

India, with more then 800 million people in rural areas, has caught the attention of businesses for their products and services. With continuous increase in purchasing power of rural people and saturation in urban markets, the focus of attention of companies has moved to rural areas. In spite of the importance of the rural markets for the growth of the economy and wellbeing of people, our understanding of the complexities and nuances of rural marketing are still evolving. Understanding the consumer needs and their characteristics is an important aspect of rural marketing. Consumers in rural areas have become a significant market for consumer durable and non-durable products and services like for agri inputs and outputs, food, construction, electrical, electronics, automobiles, finance, insurance, health, education etc.

Indian rural consumers are becoming more literate and value driven (Kashyap, 2012). They are being influenced by urban consumption pattern. With increase in their income their desire to satisfy needs and wants have lead to demand for various durables and non-durables products.

They are no more satisfied with cheaper and poor quality products. The demand on quality and aesthetic products at a low price has gone up. The youths are becoming the “key drivers for expenditure”, in the form of mobile phones, bikes, personal care products, etc. for improving their quality of life (Kashyap, 2012). According to Mohanty (2013), rural youths have emerged as opinion leaders in influencing the brand and making product decisions in a market that was swayed by village elders for centuries”. Rural consumers have become growth drivers of new products

coming into the market. They are challenging the innovators for a right bundling of utility, aesthetics and features with the price (Accenture Research Report, 2013).

Rural consumers having unique social and cultural background have put the marketers into a challenging situation for developing strategies to reach them and sale their products. This paper reviews existing literature on components of marketing and their linkages in rural context. It is divided into three sections. The first section describes the evolution of rural marketing. Second section deals with the marketing mix in rural context including rural distribution models. The last section analyses the traditional marketing mix and linkages within in rural context.

2. Evolution of Rural Marketing

Rural markets are as old as India itself. However the traditional rural market gave way to modern market with the onset of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation of Indian economy in the last decade of 20th century. Rural marketing evolved in four phases: Self-sufficient village economy (<1960), Green revolution era (1960-1990), Liberalised era (1990-2000) and ICT era (>2000).

After independence and till 1960, rural India behaved like a self-sufficient village economy. The producers and consumers were in close proximity. Barring few products from faraway places with the onset of green revolution in 1960, the rural market saw the predominance of Agri inputs and output service. It continued till 1990, the beginning of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. It opened rural market to goods and services from faraway places. The needs and wants of rural consumers got influenced with global consumers. However with ICT diffusion in 2000, the process of integration into global economy got accelerated. Table 1 indicates the stages of evolution of rural marketing.

Table 1: Evolution of Rural Marketing

Phases of Rural Marketing Evolution	Major Breakthrough	Key Characteristics
Phase-I: Self- Sufficient Village Economy (<1960)	Agricultural Marketing	Product: Rural produced and consumed, Urban produced and rural consumed and rural produced and urban consumed. Consumer durable: Traditional, simple, need oriented. Price: Low price, Barter system and Mortgage Place: Haats, Melas Promotion: Direct visualisation, Word of mouth, persuasion.
Phase-II: Green Revolution Era (1960-1990)	Green Revolution and White Revolution	Product: Agri inputs like: high yield seeds, tools, tractors, fertilisers, pesticides, pumps, sprinklers, cattle feed, milk production and packing, etc. Price: Subsidised rate Place: PDS, Melas, Producers Cooperatives Promotion: Rally, Govt supported exhibitions

Phases of Rural Marketing Evolution	Major Breakthrough	Key Characteristics
Phase-III: Liberalised Era (1990-2000)	Industrial Growth	Product: All industrial products, households consumables and durables, service sector was strengthen Price: Low, High Place: Mandi, Wholesalers, Retailers, Kirana stores Promotion: Print Media
Phase-IV: ICT Era (>2000)	Technology, Communication Network and Infrastructure Development	Product: New product developed, High end consumer durable and FMCG products, Price: High/Low, discounted rate, subsidised rate Place: Haats, Melas, SHG, Wholesalers, Retailers Promotion: e-commerce platform, Advertisements in TV, Internet, EMI schemes, Extended Warranty

With the birth of “Green revolution and White revolution”, agri inputs were given to the rural consumers in subsidised rate. Govt supported exhibitions, rallies, etc. were conducted as a promotional effort for diffusion of these products. Products were sold in melas, public distribution system (PDS) stores, etc.

During liberalisation era, more importance was given to industrial sector. Industrial products were manufactured, focusing on households consumables and durables. Local governance and reforms got a boost. Promotion of products were taken up through print media and others. Products were sold through wholesalers, retailers, small kirana stores etc.

From the onset of 21st century, ICT played a major role. With the introduction of world wide web, it opened up the market. Infrastructure availability in the form of electricity and motorable road enabled marketing of high end products through e-commerce platforms. Attractive financial schemes, bank subsidy and welfare schemes of government added steam to the existing momentum. In the second decade of 21st century many companies increased investment in rural areas.

However, the problem of affordability, information asymmetry and distribution of products and services, remain a challenge for many rural markets.

3. Marketing Mix for Rural Aspect

Marketing refers to the exchange of goods and services between parties at certain terms and conditions. Marketing is a process and the key components include product, price, place and promotion, besides the producers, consumers and other actors. Jerome (1964) and Kotler (2000) conceptualised marketing mix with above four components know as 4P's of marketing. As defined by Singh (2012), Abromaityte (2013) and Pruskus (2015), Marketing mix is a set of interrelated actions and factors that provide solutions to satisfy the consumers needs and achieve the organisations goals. The key element of marketing mix is discussed next.

Product: Product is the key element in the market. It fulfils the needs and wants of the target consumer. A product as defined by Armstrong and Kotler (2005) as “anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use, or consumption that might satisfy a want or need”. Ferrell (2005) opines that the product is the core of the marketing mix strategy where retailers can offer unique attributes that differentiates their product from their competitors. According to Borden (1984) product is characterised by quality, design, features, brand name and sizes. A rural consumer seeks the product features, its quality, service associated with it and its cost, before going for buying any product. Based on value proposition any marketer before offering any product needs to think of the product offerings in the form of Basic product, Expected product, Augmented product and Potential product (Kashyap, 2012). Any product with minimum features to perform its function as perceived by producer is a basic product. A product with all the features that are required to satisfy the reasonable expectations of the consumer (in contrast to as perceived by the manufacturer) is called expected product. An augmented product includes features beyond the immediate reasonably expected use of the consumer. A potential product has features beyond the potential (imaginable) expectations of the consumers.

For example the solar light for a rural consumer that offers lighting need only is a basic product. If the solar lighting system has features such as better quality of light, durability of battery and timely maintenance during warranty period, then it can be called an expected product. If the same solar light comes with a mobile charger and/or with a slot for a portable fan and/or operating a TV then it will be treated as an augmented product. Use of solar lighting system for unexpected use, such as income generation activity is an example of it being a potential product.

Classification of Rural Products

According to Kashyap (2012) classification of rural products has been done on the basis of convenience, shopping, specialty and agri-inputs products. Products of convenience include FMCG products, cosmetics, toiletries etc. Shopping products include clothing's, furniture, appliances etc. Specialty products cover machineries (wheeler, tractors etc.), electronics items (camera, mobile phone etc.) , etc. Agri-inputs include fertilisers, pesticides, organic material, etc. This classification lacks robust logic. Kashyap further refined the classification of rural products by dividing into FMCG, Durables, services and Agricultural goods (Table 2).

Table 2: General Classification of Rural Products

Rural Products	Products
FMCG	Toiletries, Cosmetics, Foods and Beverages, Footwear
Durables	Home appliances, automobiles, watches, furniture
Services	Healthcare, Banking and Insurance, Education, Telecommunication, ICT
Agricultural Goods	Tangible goods used in farm activities, products of allied sector, agri-input markets

Source: Kashyap, 2012

Here the durable products is that which does not quickly wear out, or more specifically, one that yields utility over time rather than being completely consumed in one use. Highly durable goods such as refrigerators or cars usually continue to be useful for three or more years of use (O'Sullivan and Steven, 2003). In the above classification, the durables like home appliances, automobiles do overlap with the agricultural goods. Further agricultural goods like tractors, power tillers, sprinklers, etc. are also the durables products which are useful for more then three or more years. Examples of some of the consumer durable products include automobiles, books, consumer electronics, furniture, tools appliances etc. (O'Sullivan and Steven, 2003).

Since consumers buy a product on the basis of their needs, place of availability and paying capacity; one can classify the products used in rural areas accordingly. Every individual requires right product and services for satisfying her need. Such needs can be classified from Maslow's need hierarchy. In rural context it will include appropriate products and services for satisfying physiological, safety and security, social, esteem and self -actualisation needs (Table 3).

Table 3: Classification of Products used in Rural Areas

Need	Products
• Physiological Needs	Food products, Clothing products, Household and furnishing products, Medicines
• Safety Needs	Insurance products, Retirement and Investment products
• Belonging Needs	Personal and Grooming products, Jewellery products
• Esteem Needs	Luxury products, Expensive products
• Self-Actualisation Needs	Hobbies, Travel and Educational products
Paying Capacity	
• High Paying Capacity	Branded products, Luxury products, Innovative products
• Low Paying Capacity	Unbranded products, low priced products
Place	
• Rural centric products	Agricultural tools, carpentry products, organic products

Rural products are broadly classified into three categories such as need, place and paying capacity. Need is required for any organism necessary for a safe, stable and healthy life (e.g. food, water, shelter). Here need is required at every levels such as in agriculture, health and hygiene, education, communication etc. Paying capacity is another base where the products can be classified as branded

products, luxury products and innovative products for a high paying capacity group. Similarly for a low paying capacity group they generally prefer unbranded products and low priced products. Place basically consist of rural centric products, which are majorly used in rural areas, like agricultural tools, carpentry products, organic products, etc.

From a basket of product and services that has the potential to satisfy certain need, a customer will buy the one that meets the criteria of availability, affordability, durability, timeliness and image. For example, LED lights even manufactured in China and sold in India is easily accepted in the market due to their low cost, easy availability and ease of use. It can increase its value if it is durable, can go for multiple usage, easy to install and maintain and provide immediate benefits. Rural consumers also respond to those products that corresponds to their religious faith, social norms and assist in their traditional occupations and life style.

Hence, any type of product, that a rural consumer thinks to buy, depends on factors like is its cost-benefit from the product, level of awareness towards the product, purchasing power of the consumer, verification/demonstration of the product, customisation aspect, utility of the product, ease of installation, maintainability, aesthetic, attitude towards the product, opinion leader's roles and the consumer's own view. A marketer while selling a product into the rural areas, should seek all the above factors.

Price: Pricing for rural consumer is another major element in the marketing mix. It is the amount of money charged for a product or service, or the total values that consumers exchange for the benefits of having or using the product or service (Kotler, 2008). In the present context, rural consumers are price-sensitive and it affects their buying decision. They prefer to buy those products which are not only low in price but also have discounts, credit and phased payment facility.

The commonly used strategy for marketing in rural areas is bundling of products. For example, a low smoke chulha comes with 5 kg of pellets and solar operated portable pumping system coming with sprinklers.

Other strategy like, a self managed instalment scheme, where a group of farmers, come together to buy a product and use it through a lottery system. This process is repeated every month till all the farmers get the chance of operating the product. This scheme is easy, interest free, self managed and can become popular in among the rural consumers and will be a means of an effective diffusion.

Product-sharing services are often used in rural areas to bring down unit price. For example a "HPCL Rasoi Gas" model, provides central cooking facility to workers in villages at low price. HPCL gives the cooking stoves, liquified petroleum gas (LPG), cylinders, utensils, a cooking counter and water connection, in a room by the local Panchayat. One SHG member takes responsibility for operation and other members use the facility for their cooking need with a user free of Rs 4 per/hour of use. The bottom of pyramid (BoP) segment experiences the advantage of a clean, convenient, safe and healthy LPG without having to buy a connection (Kashyap, 2012).

Factors affecting pricing for any rural product depends on internal factors like the cost of manufacturing the product, objective of the organisation, brand image of the organisation, product

life cycle, promotional activity and external factors like competition, purchasing capacity of the buyer, Govt control, economic conditions and channel intermediaries (Kashyap, 2012).

Place: Goods are produced to be sold to the consumers which is needed to be available to the consumers at a place so that they can conveniently purchase. A place should provide all information of customer, competition, promotion action, and marketing task. It should provide emphasis on how to deliver the product at the right time and at the right place and which channel to be should. Place is thus understood as distribution channels which is a combination of organisations and individuals and these channels enable to reach desired products to end users. According to Berman (1996) place is used for effective distribution of the firm's products among the channels of marketing like the wholesalers or retailers. This section focuses on the places/ actors/ platforms of various rural centric models undertaken by different firms to reach the rural consumers. These include haats, village malls, petrol pumps, youth groups, SHG, cooperatives, NGO, local entrepreneurs, bicycle, etc. which has been described below.

Haat: It is one of the oldest of all the marketing channels in rural India. It offers a wide range of products and services to rural consumers clustered around its location (Chatterjee, 1996). It sells fresh vegetables, fruits, garments, groceries, agricultural inputs and equipment, consumer expendables and many spurious products (Sathyanarayana and Ramani, 2008). Its frequency of occurrence is 1 to 4 times weekly depending on the availability, occasions, demand, etc. It acts as a base for supporting and providing a platform for trading purpose in rural areas.

Mobile Vans: They are often used for distribution of products into the rural areas. Here the salesman loads the van with stocks from the nearest stockist or the company stock point and sales it in the nearby market.

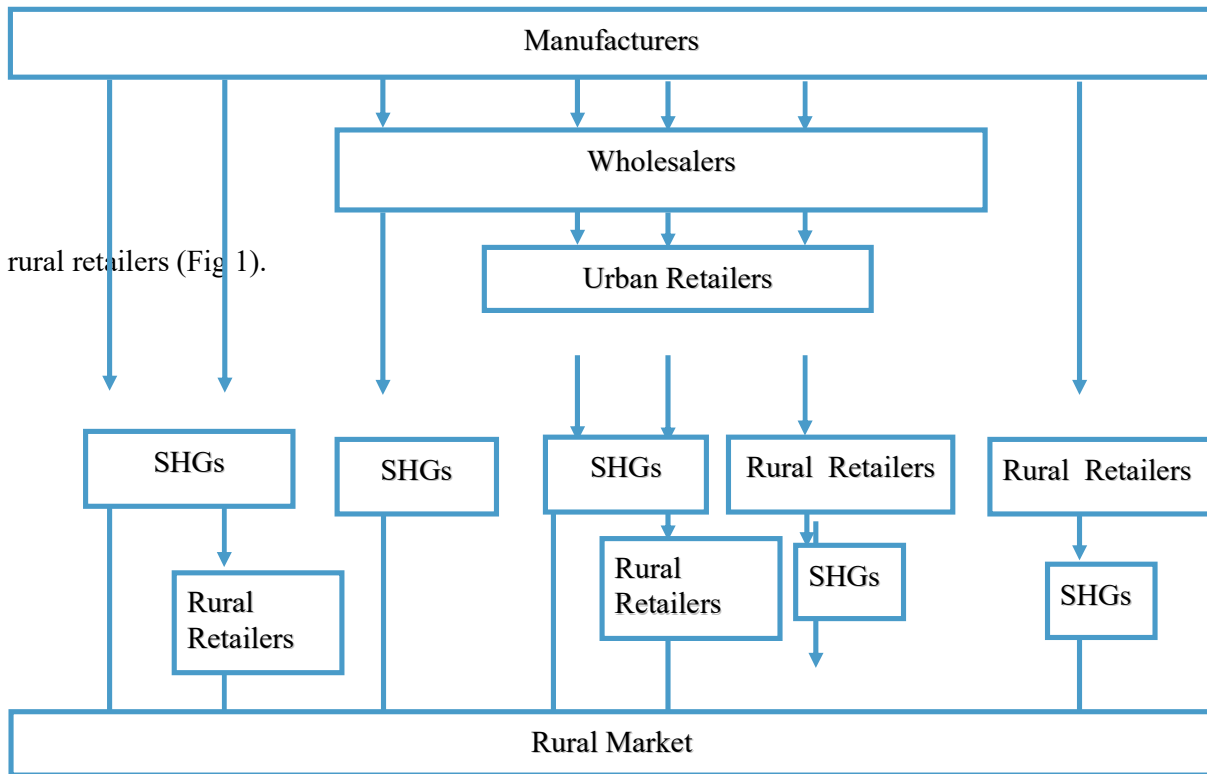
Village Mall: Recently the state Govt of Andhra Pradesh introduced the concept of "Village Mall", under the caption called 'Chandranna Village Mall' which is being supported under Prime Minister Mudra Scheme. These malls will sale basic items, household items, beauty items and other domestic products. Under this approach the ration shops of the state is converted into semi-super markets which offers different products, apart from the state Government sponsored subsidised items. Here the discounts offered by the companies to the village malls will be distributed in the ratio of 60:40 to the consumers and the dealers respectively. Products being offered in discount rate will benefit the poorer sections of the society (The Pioneer, 20th October 2018). This unique PPP model is an attempt to modernise PDS in the state through an innovative model having dual benefits of PDS and modern retail.

Petrol Pumps: They act as a platform for distribution of products into the rural areas. Bharat Petroleum is the second largest oil marketing company in our country, with over more then 6000 retail outlets spread across the country. "InandOut Convenience Store" is a unique concept launched in 2001, where different types of FMCG products are sold. It is set up mainly in the urban markets and at other sub-urban areas strategically located retail outlet sites where there is high consumer footfalls. Today more then 240 InandOut stores are present across the country. These stores promote various schemes and offers being offered by the petroleum company.

NGO: They play a significant role in making the product diffused into the rural areas. NGOs can facilitate both upward and downward communication from people to the marketers and vice versa. Here, they communicate information about their lives, purchasing power, attitudes and cultural characteristics of people at local context. They act as a synergy between the marketers and the rural consumers. They can act as point of sale for different marketers trying to intervene into the rural areas.

Cooperative society: They do also play an important role in distribution of products into the rural areas. Recently Patanjali products will be sell its products through cooperative society. It will be first introduced as a pilot project in 14 districts of Uttar Pradesh, one of the largest state in northern India. Primary Agricultural Credit Society (PACs) will work as retailers while assistant commissioners and registrar office will function as super distributor and distributors. A nodal officer at divisional office will coordinate with Patanjali to ensure that products are sold and such sales will be cash sales only. The company would bear the freight charges from the manufacturing plant based at Haridwar to warehouses of super distributors. The firm would give a credit period of 30 days to super distributors and 20 days to the retailer. Super distributors will have to deposit a security amount of Rs. 1 crore as bank guarantee or a fixed amount in favour of Patanjali. Cooperative employees will be given training on storing and handling of products as well as the stock keeping and books online. The distributors and the retailers would follow 'first in first out system (FIFO) system for selling of the product. (Times of India, 22nd March, 2018). Further Pataneswari Agricultural Cooperative Society (PACS) based at Jeypore, in South Odisha had tried to sale solar lights and solar fencing systems among its members who are basically timber growing farmers.

Model for Using SHGs as Channel Partners in Rural Markets: The consumer products can be distributed to rural markets with the help of Self Help Groups (Ramanathan, 1993). Exposure of products to women through an SHG intervention or individually influences their purchase decision. SHGs, if they have a direct contact with the suppliers/marketers/manufacturers, then they can directly procure the final products from the manufacturing facility or they may be added as channel partners. SHG may be used as first-level channel partners. Marketers can make the SHGs as their exclusive rural stockists and can add them as the promoters of products and services into rural retailers. SHGs may be used as a second-level channel to promote the consumer products into the rural areas. SHGs can act as product pushers rather than channels members. SHGs relationship with the local retailers may enhance the supply chain network. The rural markets, which include more number of surrounding villages, can be covered by the manufacturers. Appointing any SHGs as their second level stockists can act as a sub-stockists for the main stockist in respective rural retailers circumscribes and the rural retailers obtain the products from the SHGs (Ramanathan, 1993). Here SHGs can also be used as the agent for rural retailers in the form of local commission agent to push the products onto the doorsteps of rural consumers. Marketers who want to have a strong and established rural marketing network can use the SHGs as second-level channel partners with respect to exclusive rural network. Here, the SHGs simply act as selling agents for the



Source: Ramanathan, 1993

Fig 1: SHG model for distribution of Rural Products

Rural Innovation Centre: Recently Harsha Trust, a NGO working in south Odisha, India in a tribal dominated areas started “Rural Innovation Centre” in Bissamcutak in Rayagada District of Odisha. This centre is supported by Axis Bank Foundation and has the most advanced soil testing lab and a cold storage plant working on solar energy. The objective of this centre is to reach out to tribal and poor communities and development practitioners. These kind of centres can act as an demonstration hub for using of clean energy products in rural areas. Here the rural innovation centre can also can as, a point of sale and be a part of channel partners for different FMCG companies.

Bicycle model: A company used a bicycle model to sale inexpensive water-purification tablet product called ‘Aquatabs’ in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The company joined hands with another firm and recruited, trained and managed a team of eight bicycle entrepreneurs who served as a mobile sales force. Each salesman covered a wide territory of 20 to 30 villages each, traveling by bicycle up to 20 km from home to the target village. Sales took place through door-to-door and haat. Here the bicycle entrepreneurs are also encouraged to take help of key local opinion leaders including village leaders and anganwadi workers to assist with prospecting and conducting group meetings.

Syndicated Distribution: In this model two or more companies come together to form a syndicated trading organisation to jointly distribute a collective group of households products in rural markets by sharing distribution costs. The solution for small companies is to tie up with a leading company that already has a presence in the rural market, in order to distribute products through its distribution network. Here the rule is that the small companies will not deal with the same products, which the leading company sales. To penetrate into the rural areas Bharti Airtel teamed up with India’s largest micro-finance institution, SKS. This partnership enabled the consumers to take out a loan for the Nokia and pay it through instalments. It has also worked with Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative (IFFCO), which sold co-branded subscriber identity module cards through its retail outlets, by which the farmer got three voice updates on market price, farming techniques, weather forecast and fertiliser availability. To save capital, Airtel also collaborated with its competitors Vodafone and Idea for merging its infrastructure unit (mobile towers, generators, air-conditions etc). The structure allowed the three companies to share the cost of setting up massive infrastructure and reducing the investment that each of them would have taken up (Kashyap, 2012).

Kashyap (2012) has classified the distribution models as traditional distribution models and new distribution models. Old distribution models consists of haats, PDS, mobile traders, while the new distribution models consist of SHG, Cooperatives, NGO, petrol pumps and youth groups (Table 4).

Table 4: Distribution Systems based on Traditions

Traditional Models	New Models
Haats	Cooperatives
Public Distribution System	NGO
Mobile Traders	Petrol Pumps

Traditional Models	New Models
	Youth Groups

Source: Kashyap, 2012

Other possible distribution channel partners can be a post office, which can act as a point of sale, promotion and distribution. A photocopy shop, electrical shop and local tiffin stall can be a channel partner for distribution of product and services. Another classification can be on the basis of ownership. The ownership refers to the organisation that is involved in different stages of value chain till the delivery of product and services to its end consumers (Table 5).

Table 5: Distribution Systems based on Ownership

Ownership of Producer	Ownership of Consumer	Ownership of Producer and Consumer
Haat	Cooperative Societies	SHG
Van Distribution System	Youth Groups	Bicycle Model
Village Mall System		Rural Innovation Centres
Petrol Pumps		
Syndicated Distribution System		

Another way of classification can be on the basis of direct layers and indirect layers. Direct layer does not involve any intermediary between the consumer and manufacturer (zero layer). Indirect layer occurs when there are middlemen or intermediaries within the distribution channel (multi layer), (Table 6).

Table 6: Distribution Systems based on Direct and Indirect Layers

Direct Model	Indirect Model
Haats	Syndicated Distribution model
Cooperratives	Bharat Petroleum: InandOut Model
SHG Model	Petrol Pumps

Direct Model	Indirect Model
Village Mall Model	
Bicycle Model	

Promotion: According to Borden (1984) promotion is defined as the “sales promotion, advertising, personal selling, public relations and direct marketing”. Promotion is a “decision of how best to relate the product to the target market and how to persuade them to buy it” (Lovelock, et al. 1998). “Creating awareness and inducing trial”, of a product are the key objectives of promotion (Kalotra, 2013). Activities that is linked to promotion are advertising, sales promotions, personal selling and publicity. They can all influence consumer’s way of thinking, their emotions, their experience as well as their purchasing decision. Communications are devised by marketers in such a way that it offers consistent messages about the products and induces the potential customers to use the product (Munusamy and Hoo, 2008).

From the rural context consumers go for seeing, touching and feeling the product before actual purchase. Selling in haats, melas, etc, help in reducing the promotional cost. Advertising through television and radio are most effective in the rural setting (Kalotra, 2013). Some of the tactics which can be used for creating awareness are conducting cycle rallies, road shows, participating in rural melas, street plays, play role, campaigning through vans, using loud speakers for communication purpose, puppet shows, film shows, etc. Word of mouth is an important communication tool for getting the rural consumers aware. ‘Opinion leaders do play a significant role in influencing the prospective rural consumers about accepting or rejecting a product or a brand’ (Mohanty, 2013; Naidu, 2017).

Effective promotional efforts include vocal, visual or pictorial advertisements in local and regional language. Rural consumers like buying from known and established retailers who maintain close family relations with them. They mostly buy their products from retails outlets, kirana shops situated nearby, haats, etc. Colour companies like Asian Paints selected some opinion leaders in the villages and painted their houses to demonstrate that the colour does not come off. Life Insurance Corporation of India conducted puppet shows to create awareness among the rural people regarding the importance of insurance products and ICICI Prudential promoted its product in the haats, melas and other local markets organised in the rural areas. Some other companies used the art form like folk theatre as a way to promote their products (Sainy, 2014). While marketing mix elements are necessary for diffusion of products in the rural context, to make it more effective there is a need to design the linkages between the different marketing mix elements.

4. Marketing Mix Linkages and Characteristics

The marketing mix is grouped under four elements i.e. Product, Price, Place and Promotion (Singh, 2012). The 4P’s of marketing acts as a platform for the companies for satisfying the needs of their

consumers through different characteristics. Gronholm (2012) has grouped the elements of marketing mix with different characteristics (Table 7).

Table 7: Characteristics of 4P’s of Marketing Mix Elements

Product	Price	Place	Promotion
Technology	Price list	Advertising and public	Channels
Design	Discounts	Support and sales promotion	Logistics
Utility	Credit Conditions	Direct marketing	Product Inventory
Value	Redemption	Purchase point / location	Balances/Reserves
Convenience	Period	Exhibitions and fairs	Transport
Quality	Promotion	Private sale	Place
Packing		Leaflets/posters, Free gifts	
Brand			

Source: Gronholm, 2012

There is close relationship among the elements. These include such that product-price, product-place, product-promotion, price-promotion, place-price and place-promotion. Each element is linked with each other in the form of pyramid structure where all the 4P’s are at the base and together they form marketing process.

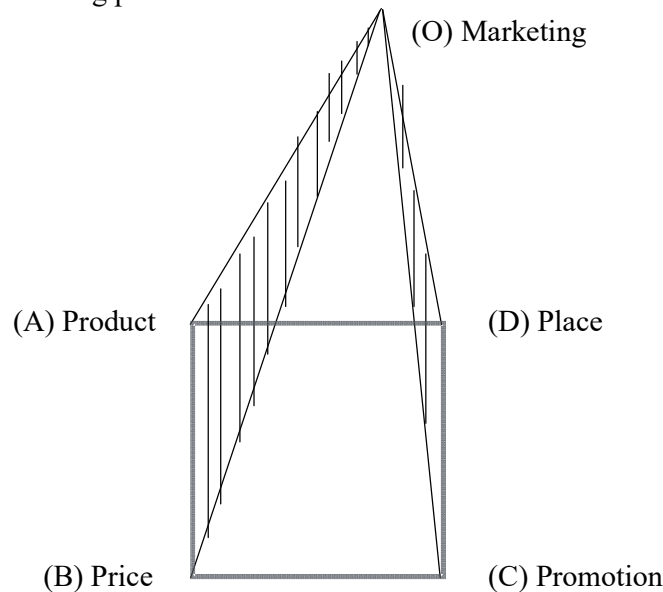


Fig 2: Marketing Mix Linkage

Table 8: Characteristics of 4P's of Marketing Mix Linkages

Product-Price	Product-Place	Place-Promotion	Price-Promotion	Place-Price	Product-Promotion
Product Characteristics	Transport	Knowledge level of the consumer	EMI Scheme	Cost of living of the consumer	Advertising
Product Price	Perishability	Social Network	Providing Loans/Micro Finance	Demand for the product	Publicity, Packing, Brand Image
Objectives of the Firm	Timeliness	Role of Opinion Leader	Warranty Scheme	Location Pricing	Sales Promotion
Competition	Storage	Attitude and lifestyle of the consumer	Subsidy by Govt and other firms	Lifestyle of the consumer	Personal Selling
Demand of the Product	Packing	Culture and Time			
Consumer Behaviour	Ease to install, use and maintain				
Govt regulations					

Product-Price: It consists of different characteristics which influences product-price relationship like product characteristics, product cost, objectives of the firm, competition, demand of the product, consumer behaviour and govt regulations. Product characteristics basically consists of life cycle of the product and product substitution. Product life cycle takes place through four phases. Introduction phase: here the product is introduced into the market, with high promotional activity. Sales of the product take off slowly. Here the marketers price their products low so as to have market penetration and gain consumer attention. Growth phase: Here there is high demand for the product and sales increases. Here competitors of the product release the same product at a lower price. Marketers lowers their prices for the product. Maturity phase: here sales growth remains stagnant, and demand of the product is less as compared to the growth phase. Marketers go for adopting discounting pricing strategy so as to increase customer traffic, clear old inventory and increase their sales. Decline phase: here there is less demand for the product, and marketers decide if they want to continue to manufacture the present product or not. They lower product's price and also go for bundling strategy which helps in get rid of the declining product and increasing their sales. Product substitutes are those products that a consumer perceives as similar or comparable, so

that having more of one product makes them desire less of the other product. Pricing of product depends on fixed cost, variable cost and incremental cost. Objective of the firm depends on pricing strategy, like skimming and penetration pricing where the product is introduced at high or low price respectively. More competition in market leads to high price of the product and low competition leads to low price of the product. If same quality product with same product line is introduced then price of the substitute product is considered. Nature of demand also affect the pricing. If demand of the product increases then it leads to high price, low demand leads to low price. Pricing strategy changes accordingly, for industrial consumer and general consumers. Further Govt regulations, subsidy, TAX, GST do also affect the pricing strategy.

Product-Place: It consists of different characteristics such as transport, perishability, timeliness, storage, packing, size, ease of use, installation and maintainability. Transportation helps in creating place utility and regularises supply of product from one place to another. It facilitates the performance of marketing functions like buying, assembling, selling, storage and warehousing. Perishability is where a product cannot be stored for a longer period time for sale in future. Once the product is rendered to a customer, it cannot be delivered or consumed by another customer. Product and services needs to be delivered at the consumer place during the stipulated period of time. Storage involves holding and preserving products from the time they are produced till consumed. Facility for storing a product is necessary for diffusion of product to take place. It protects the quality of perishable products from deterioration, stabilise price by adjusting demand and supply of the product and provides employment and income through price advantage. Packing provides product density by selecting materials, design that helps to use limited space in best way. It acts as promotional tool by self-advertising, displaying and helps in product identifying. Consumer prefer those products which require less time to install, convenient and easy to operate and maintain.

Place-Promotion: With different geographic regions, promotion of any product and service differs. It consists of different characteristics like social networking, knowledge level of consumers, role of opinion leader, subsidy, attitude, lifestyle and culture. Social networking helps in interacting with target markets, increase referrals, sales lead, build word-of-mouth and provides a means for feedback. Attitude of a consumer towards a product or service is built through a general evaluation and perception. It is formed as a result of positive or negative personal experience which changes from one place to another. Opinion leaders have the ability to influence others. They have more knowledge about a certain product or service than a average consumer and can shape how a product is viewed. Consumers follow them as they rely on word of mouth. Culture is mostly a learned behaviour, being constructed by society when a consumer grows up. It is a set of basic values, perceptions, wants and behaviours that are learned by a consumer from their families. Factors such as use of symbols, language, rituals, thought process affect the marketers in selling of the products. For a successful marketing strategy, a marketer must take into consideration the cultural influences of the society where a new product is introduced.

Price-Promotion: It consists of different characteristics like EMI scheme, subsidy, incentive, etc. Today consumers want to buy a product and pay later as because desire comes first and discipline late. As a result EMI option serves trigger for consumers to upgrade and drive sales of higher priced

product by making them more affordable. Subsidy is basically given to an individual, business or institution usually by Govt. It is given in the form of cash payment or a tax reduction to reduce the burden and to promote a product.

Place-Price: It consists of different characteristics such as cost of living, demand of product, location pricing, lifestyle, bargaining power of consumer, affordability, etc. Here cost of living is the cost of maintaining a certain standard of living. It changes over time and geographic areas. Cost of living will be higher in comparison to a metropolitan city to a rural area. Demand of the product is the willingness to buy a product or service based on the consumer's desire. If in a particular geographic location the demand of the product is high then it affects the pricing strategy. Location based pricing is another aspect where there is modifying the basic list price based on the geographical location of the buyer. It is mainly used when a manufacturer of a product or service has many inventory locations. It consist of free on board pricing (the shipping cost from the factory or warehouse is paid by the purchaser), zone pricing (shipping distance increases then prices increases), basing point pricing (all products shipped from a given basis point are charged the same amount) and freight-absorption pricing (the seller absorbs all or part of the cost of transportation, where this amounts to a price discount and is also used a promotional tactic). Lifestyle refers to the way the consumers live and spend their time and money. It is influenced by his internal factors like needs, wants and motivation and external factors like family, culture and social group. Lifestyle of a consumer involves his consumption pattern, his behaviour in market place, practice, habits, etc. It changes from one person to another and from one place to another place.

Product-Promotion: It consists of different characteristics such as advertising, publicity, brand image, sales promotion, personal selling, trial of product, etc. Advertising is a marketing communication basically done to promote or sell a product, service or idea. It is done through various mass media such as newspaper, magazines, television, radio, outdoor advertising, direct mail, blogs, social media, etc. Marketers uses these tools to communicate with consumers for selling of his products. Publicity helps in product promotion. It is a way for mass communication. Kotler has defined publicity as "non-personal stimulation of demand for the product or service by placing commercially important news in public medium that is not paid for by the sponsor". It is low cost, no direct cost is involved and has a social significance. Due to its high degree of credibility or reliability as it comes from mass media independently it has more impact on people. Brand image represents a sum of people's perception of a company customer service, reputation, advertising and logo. From product and service quality to customer service and advertising campaigns, all these factors influence brand image. It helps in increasing company's recognition, creates trust, supports advertising, builds financial value, inspires employees, generating new consumers, etc. Sales promotion helps in increasing of sales. The basic purpose is to disseminate information to potential consumers. It informs, reminds or stimulate the buyers at the point of purchase. Sales promotion tools such as providing samples of newly developed product, giving coupons, demonstration of product, organising contests such as sweepstakes (giving chance to consumers to win cash, trips or goods to attract new consumers), providing rebates, displays, exhibits, cash refund offers, giving premium (here products are offered either free or at low cost as an incentive to buy the product), going for 'price off' offer (here products are sold at less price during slump season), etc. are used for promotion of products. Personal selling is another

promotional method by which the salesperson uses his skills and abilities to sale a product. It is a face-to-face selling technique, where the salesperson highlight various features of the product to convince the customer to buy the product. It also helps in spreading awareness about the product. It takes place through two channels, through retail and direct to consumer channel. Retail channel involves interaction with potential customer who come to enquire about the product and understanding their needs and direct to consumer channel involves salesperson visiting potential customer to make them aware about the new product and convincing them to purchase it.

These characteristics helps to establish a relationship between each element of marketing mix. As a whole they constitute the marketing process.

5. Conclusion

For a successful distribution of products into the rural areas there should be proper coordination among the different stakeholders ranging from manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, etc. For selling the product manufactures have devised different distribution models and have implemented them in the rural areas. For a successful intervention into the rural markets there is need for developing an ecosystem where both the actors and factors need to come together and collaborate with each other for selling of products and services into the rural areas.

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