



RURAL MARKETING : NEW ISSUES AND STRATEGIES



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ABSTRACT

Marketing may be described as the process of defining, anticipating and knowing customer needs, and organizing all the resources of the company to satisfy them. In fact, satisfaction of customer's needs and wants provides the rationale for the firm's existence. Knowledge of consumer behavior, therefore, is vital for a firm to achieve its marketing goals. The consumer's behavior comprises the acts, processes and social relationships exhibited by individuals, groups and organizations in searching, obtainment, use of, and consequent experience with

products and services. An understanding and knowledge of the motives underlying consumer behavior helps a firm in seeking better and more effective ways to satisfy its customers. It helps to select appropriate sales and advertising strategies, and to plan marketing program in a more efficient manner. The rural market of India started showing its potential in the 1960s. The 70s and 80s witnessed its steady development, and there are clear indications that the 21st century is going to see its full blossoming. In our country,

where research on consumer behavior has been nominal, not much systematized information is available about the rural consumers. Only a few enlightened companies, known for their marketing orientation, viz., Hindustan Lever, Philips India, Asian Paints, Singer and Larsen and Toubro have made concrete efforts in this direction. But, by and large, we have still to understand the rural buyer, his habits, attitudes and behavior, particularly from the marketing point of view. Many assumptions prevail about rural marketing. For instance, one assumption is that the rural buyer is not very discriminating. Once he is persuaded to buy a particular product, he develops a strong affinity for it, and if satisfied, becomes brand loyal. As a result, Indian manufacturers are generally known to prefer selling fewer items at higher prices than selling more

items at lower prices. A contrary view is that the rural buyer, being suspicious of the marketer's hard sell techniques, is quite discriminating, and is not easily persuaded. Yet another assumption is that the rural buyer is not particularly keen about quality and packaging. Some other assumptions can be quoted. But, all these need deep probing for arriving at valid and reliable conclusions. Consumer research, thus, is indispensable for entering the rural segment of the market. Rural marketing is a process of developing, pricing, promoting, and distributing rural specific goods and services leading to desired exchange with rural customers to satisfy their needs and wants, and also to achieve organizational objectives.

Keywords:

Marketing, Rural Marketing, Market Research, Potential Customers etc.