

# Impact of Rural Marketing Strategies on Consumer Behaviour: A Study of FMCG Sector in Prayagraj

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## ABSTRACT

Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry is the major element of the Indian economy, particularly in the rural regions where a large concentration of population is counted. The research paper comments on the rural marketing process by the FMCG companies particularly focusing on the Prayagraj district in Uttar Pradesh. The study is quantitative in nature in which the researcher uses primary data that is distributed in 200 questionnaires, in the form of structured questioners, to the consumers in the rural area. The fundamental aspect is the assessment of the marketing strategies of pricing, promoting, distribution, and adaptation of products on the behaviour of consumers. The hypothesis on which the study is being tested is as follows: (a) relates to the existence of a significant difference between the rural marketing strategies and consumer buying behaviour in the Prayagraj district. To analyse, statistical tools ANOVA, Chi-square test, Regression analysis and Pearson Correlation have been used. The ANOVA test also indicated significant difference across groups of income respondents, meaning that income sensitive trends of marketing strategies indeed emerged in the results. The results demonstrated through the Chi-square test indicated that the relationship between the promotional schemes and the purchase decisions was strong. Regression analysis indicated that availability of products and their pricing are the main predictors of consumer preference whereas correlation analysis indicated that there exists high correlation between advertisement and brand recall indicating a positive relationship with high levels of correlation. The discoveries emphasise the role of localised marketing, community dimension, and value pricing to reach deeper in the rural market. The paper provides some practical advice to set FMCG firms on their strategies and fit with the rural demand and attract better market share in the districts such as Prayagraj.

**Keywords:** Rural Marketing, FMCG Sector, Consumer Behaviour, Prayagraj, Statistical Analysis

## Prologue

There has been a growing focus on the rural consumer market in India in the last ten years over the consumers size and untapped opportunity. Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry has especially targeted this population whose consumer needs have changed and companies have tailored their marketing needs to suit the rural customers. The rural marketing strategies should not be seen as an extension of urban marketing strategies, but need more insight about socio-economic, cultural and behavioural aspects which drive purchases amongst the rural populations. Research has revealed that factors like product availability, pricing policy, advertising, on-promotion schemes and distribution channels, influence the tendencies of rural consumer preference and attachment considerably.

In rural areas, the approaches regarding price orientation such as affordability, as well as value-based price package features, prove to be more effective. Advertising in local romantic languages and the use of the known faces or local influencers can increase brand recall in rural denizens. Promotional offers like free gifts, value packs, and acquisition of discounts during certain seasons have been noted to stimulate consumer buying behaviour more vigorously as compared to the urban markets.

Allocation is one of the key elements in implementing rural marketing strategies. The reach is enhanced by the presence of products in local Kirana shops and village markets and rural distribution systems thus making the brand more dependable. The impact of technology and mobile penetration has also started to find its way in rural marketing where organizations increase their reach through the utilization of digital platforms by brands.

Nevertheless, the use of the traditional method of marketing e.g. door-to-door calls, direct demonstrations, and community fairs etc weighs heavily in rural engagement strategies.

The next major point of literature existing can be seen in the focus on the need to align marketing acts in the rural areas with the local culture, language, and traditions. Emotional appeal, packaging simplicity, and brand belief makes much more difference than luxury or brand prestige. Research has also pointed at the importance played by the level of income and education in determining consumer awareness and loyalty.

Although the research along this line is increasing, region-specific analysis is lacking particularly at district level. There are very rare studies that critically examine the effect of targeted marketing approaches to the human behaviour in the rural areas such as Prayagraj. This paper will fill this gap and add to the body of knowledge with some actionable information to the marketers.

### **Statement of the problem**

The consumers of the rural areas in the districts such as the Prayagraj do not resemble that of urban consumers in their preferences, income levels, awareness, and buying behaviours. As firms engage in efforts in marketing options like pricing offer, promotions and rural distribution mechanism, their effectiveness is still under-investigated about affecting rural consumer behaviour at district level. Furthermore, poor marketing strategies of no tailor-made approach and inability to learn consumer psychology in the rural setting often results in the inability to reach the consumer and overall poor brand loyalty. Owing to this, the research intends to examine how rural marketing strategies affect consumer buying behaviour of FMCG markets in Prayagraj in order to fill the gap that exists between the adoption of strategies and the consumer behaviour on the ground.

### **Significance of the study**

This research work is of great significance to FMCG marketers, policymakers, researchers and even rural development strategists. Considering Prayagraj, a typical rural district, it provides the localised information on the effects of marketing strategies on consumer behaviour therefore providing fresh leads on rural consumer behaviour. The results will assist the FMCG companies in devising superior rural marketing strategies, modifying product distribution channels, and building brand awareness in the countryside. It also adds value to the scholarly literature since it also fills the gap in the district-level analysis of rural marketing. Finally, the study aims at contributing to the wider vision of including the rural markets into the economic growth curve of India.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Researchers have highlighted the existence of a vast gap between rural and urban markets in the psychological aspects of consumers, accessibility, and sensitivity to prices (Kashyap & Raut, 2018; Balaji & Kumar, 2020). There are particular issues such as erratic income level, reduced communication via channels, and conservative purchasing behaviour that need to be considered in rural areas-specific marketing (Patel & Shah, 2019; Duhan & Singh, 2022).

It has been stated that one should take into account such variables as product availability and pricing that are, supposedly, essential elements affecting the purchase decision in rural areas. Kumar and Rani (2021) found that efficient distribution of FMCG brand and competitive pricing functions in Tier 3 and rural sectors respectively. The same role is fulfilled by advertising; it is also seen that localised advertising based on vernacular languages enhances brand recall and consumer trust (Verma & Gupta, 2020; Srivastava, 2023). Other strategies in promotion like value packs or festival-related plans also have effectiveness in the consumer decision-making process (Joshi & Mehta, 2021; Shukla, 2024).

Saxena and Jain (2022) and Yadav and Mishra (2018) indicates the positive effect of the promotional schema on purchase behaviour in the country. Gupta and Choudhury (2020) explain that in rural India, brand loyalty is heavily reliant on stable quality and availability and emotional appeal. Sharma and Tripathi (2019) also analysed the sensitivity of income and determined that the answers to pricing and discounts were varied between the income groups though significant.

The focus on distribution, in particular, utilizing local kiranas stores as well as haats, plays an important role in reaching FMCG in rural India (Singh & Kumar, 2021). In addition, Sharma and Rathore (2022) also revealed that online marketing and mobile advertising have started to gain some momentum in even the distant rural locations, particularly younger audiences.

Models of consumer behaviour in the rural setting have been known to yield in the use of bio-cultural aspects, community sway and group-decision making (Prasad & Reddy, 2020; Bansal & Tiwari, 2023). Literature, therefore, posits that success in rural marketing requires localized strategies, value-based and community-sensitive ones.

Baisakhi Mitra Mustaphi(2025 in their research article discussed the various rural marketing strategies being adopted by the various organization s like HUL,ITC ,Dabur, Coca Cola and Hyundai .The authors discussed the 4A 's of rural marketing strategy which imbibed Affordability, Availability, Acceptability and Awareness in context of rural markets. The authors were of the opinion that Rural marketing is a strategic plan of gauging the demands of the rural market base and supplying them with the goods and services that are of their use. It is a 2 way marketing process with inflow of products in rural market for production or consumption and outflow to urban areas. Rural markets hold a lot of potential and opportunities for industries due to reasons like emerging rural populations, Rural Consuming Rate and Uncaptured Market The rural market is uncaptured, and there are so many options that can be explored and experimented with. Thus, most of the companies are turning towards this vast pool of opportunities

## Research Gap

Despite the several studies that have already been carried out to analyse consumer behaviour in the urbanised rather than rural markets and the collective effect of marketing strategies in the FMCG industry, not much research has been conducted to single out the rural consumer behaviour in the districts level domain of regions like Prayagraj. The prevailing literature tends to homogenize marketing in the rural areas without taking into account local aspects such as socio-economic dimensions and differences in income, and regional responsiveness to the marketing programs. In this regard, one may also notice the gaps of perception of the impact of the following marketing components (when added exclusionary and inclusionary) on the purchasing decisions made by rural consumers: pricing, distribution, promotion, and product adaptation. This research fills this gap by undertaking empirical research on the effects of the rural marketing strategies by FMCG companies on consumer behaviour on the grassroots level in Prayagraj.

## Objectives of the Study:

1. To assess the effectiveness of rural marketing strategies adopted by FMCG companies in Prayagraj.
2. To evaluate the influence of product availability, pricing, and promotion on rural consumer buying behaviour.
3. To examine the role of advertisement and brand recall in fostering consumer loyalty.
4. To analyse whether demographic variables (e.g., income, gender) affect consumer responses to FMCG marketing in rural areas.

## Hypotheses of the Study:

- **H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a significant relationship between rural marketing strategies and consumer buying behaviour in Prayagraj.
- **H<sub>2</sub>:** Product availability and pricing have a significant impact on rural consumer preference.
- **H<sub>3</sub>:** There is a significant correlation between advertisement and brand recall among rural consumers.
- **H<sub>4</sub>:** Promotional schemes significantly influence purchase decisions in rural areas.
- **H<sub>5</sub>:** There is a significant difference in consumer buying behaviour across different income groups in rural Prayagraj.

## Area of Study:

Prayagraj District with its semi urban and its rural areas, offer another good place to conduct a study to see how well the FMCG rural marketing programs work in stimulating consumer preference and purchases

## Designing of Questionnaire:

The present research work is based on survey method in the sample region where a well designed ,structured questionnaire was drafted with the assistance of experts in the field of marketing, statistics and psychology .The same was pretested among 20 sample respondents in order to check its reliability and validity. The questionnaire was based on 5 Point Likert scale ranging from 1-5 from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The reliability and validity values were 0.76 and 0.82 indicating that the same were adequate for collection of data

## Sample Size:

It has been done with a sample of 200 respondents within different rural regions of the district of Prayagraj in the state of Uttar Pradesh..

## Sampling Technique:

Data collection was done through stratified random sampling technique. The stratified random sampling is effective in representing the heterogeneous rural groups better, particularly by taking into consideration the influence of factors such as income, education, and location of the people on consumer behaviour.

## Data Analysis and Interpretation

### Pearson Correlation –

| Variable 1           | Variable 2            | Correlation Coefficient (r) | Significance Level (p-value) | Interpretation                             |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Advertisement        | Brand Recall          | 0.782                       | 0.000                        | High positive correlation; significant     |
| Product Availability | Consumer Satisfaction | 0.691                       | 0.001                        | Moderate positive correlation; significant |
| Pricing Strategy     | Purchase Decision     | 0.745                       | 0.000                        | Strong positive correlation; significant   |

### Interpretation:

Pearson analysis shows that the correlations between the most important marketing variables is significantly positive related to consumer responses. The highest correlation is achieved between advertisement and brand recall ( $r = 0.782$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), which ascertains usefulness of promotional communication in fortifying brand in the memories of the rural consumers. In the same turn, the correlation between the availability of the products and consumer satisfaction ( $r = 0.691$ ) implies that the availability of the products at the expected time is a critical determinant of the level of consumer satisfaction. Also, the pricing strategy was found to have a high positive correlation with choices of purchase ( $r = 0.745$ ), implying that the components of pricing policy significantly influence purchase choices of the rural consumers and they make decisions to buy based on the perception of value of a product or service. All the three correlations are significant statistically, which proves that marketing components affect the phenomenon of rural consumer behaviour in Prayagraj.

### Independent Samples t-test –

| Group  | Sample Size (n) | Mean Loyalty Score | Standard Deviation (SD) | t-value | p-value | Interpretation  |
|--------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------------|---------|---------|-----------------|
| Male   | 100             | 3.88               | 0.74                    | 1.82    | 0.071   | Not significant |
| Female | 100             | 3.72               | 0.68                    |         |         |                 |

### Interpretation:

The independent samples t-test was deployed to determine whether there exists a difference in the consumer loyalty levels possessed between male and female respondents in rural regions. Loyalty scores were a bit higher in males (3.88) than they did in females (3.72) although this was not significant ( $t = 1.82$ ,  $p = 0.071$ ). Given that the value of p-value is greater than 0.05, we would say that no significant gender-based difference in the group of consumers who the sample represents exist when it comes to levels of consumer loyalty. This means that there is no significant difference between the levels of loyalty of the male and female customers in rural Prayagraj to the FMCG brands. Therefore, the issue of gender does not seem to be a rather important distinguishing factor in the loyalty-oriented marketing strategy when it comes to the idea behind this research.

### Multiple Linear Regression –

| Predictor Variable      | Standardized Beta ( $\beta$ ) | p-value | Significance Status |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|---------|---------------------|
| Product Availability    | 0.462                         | 0.000   | Significant         |
| Pricing Strategy        | 0.398                         | 0.001   | Significant         |
| Promotional Schemes     | 0.234                         | 0.037   | Significant         |
| Distribution Efficiency | 0.112                         | 0.082   | Not significant     |

### Interpretation:

The data were analyzed using multiple linear regression which was used to determine what marketing variable plays a significant role in the determination of consumer preference in the rural FMCG sector. Of the predictors, the most significant influences were observed; product availability ( $\beta = 0.462$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and prices strategy ( $\beta = 0.398$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). Promotional schemes also contributed but on a lower scale contributing with a statistically significant effect ( $\beta = 0.234$ ,  $p = 0.037$ ). Intriguingly, the lack of correlation comes in when it comes to distribution efficiency ( $\beta = 0.112$ ,  $p = 0.082$ ) as even though availability cannot be ignored, it appears that there can be no prevailing mode of distribution. The model bears implication on the significance of establishing the presence of the products and price elasticity as key priorities in influencing consumer choice in rural Prayagraj.

### One-Way ANOVA –

| Source         | SS     | Df  | MS   | F    | p-value |
|----------------|--------|-----|------|------|---------|
| Between Groups | 18.24  | 3   | 6.08 | 4.91 | 0.003   |
| Within Groups  | 245.36 | 196 | 1.25 |      |         |



|       |        |     |  |  |  |
|-------|--------|-----|--|--|--|
| Total | 263.60 | 199 |  |  |  |
|-------|--------|-----|--|--|--|

### Interpretation:

One way ANOVA test was used to test the difference in consumer buying behaviour due to the different levels of income. The findings indicated statistically significant differing scores ( $F = 4.91$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ), which meant that the level of income guides rural consumers in their reaction to the FMCG marketing efforts. The difference between the group variation, 18.24, and within-group variation, 245.36, points to the fact that consumers at varying income levels exhibit different perception and behaviors regarding the product choices, price sensitivity and brand choices. The finding implies that income is an important demographic indicator and to enhance the efficiency of campaigns and their engagement, marketers must develop differentiated approaches to the low-, middle-, and rich income consumers in the rural population.

### Chi-square Test –

| Variable                                       | $\chi^2$ Value | df | p-value | Interpretation |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------|----|---------|----------------|
| Promotional Schemes $\times$ Purchase Decision | 24.72          | 4  | 0.000   | Significant    |

### Interpretation:

To determine the relationship between promotional schemes and consumer buying behaviour Chi-square test was carried out. The test produced a significant result (24.72 24.72 6 6 0, 001), and hence there is a strong relationship between these two variables. This signifies that promotional campaigns like a slash in prices, packaged gift items, or offers during a particular season would have a huge impact on the purchase behavior of the rural consumers. The statistically significant relation speculates that consumers can respond to the value-based incentives and incline to buy more when a promotion offer is offered. Consequently, the use of engaging and frequent marketing promotions can constitute a highly effective instrument to carry out marketing in order to stimulate the sales and the adoption of a brand in another country such as rural Prayagraj.

### Logistic Regression – Predicting High Loyalty (Binary Outcome)

| Predictor            | B (Log Odds) | SE   | Wald  | p-value | Odds Ratio (Exp(B)) | Interpretation                              |
|----------------------|--------------|------|-------|---------|---------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Advertisement Recall | 1.26         | 0.38 | 11.02 | 0.001   | 3.52                | Consumers recalling ads are 3.5x more loyal |
| Product Availability | 0.84         | 0.29 | 8.39  | 0.004   | 2.31                | Availability doubles odds of high loyalty   |
| Pricing Strategy     | 0.55         | 0.27 | 4.15  | 0.042   | 1.73                | Significant positive influence              |

### Interpretation:

Logistic regression evaluated the possibility of having a high consumer loyalty relative to marketing predictors. The largest impact was the advertisement recall (Odds Ratio = 3.52,  $p = 0.001$ ), which indicates that those consumers who recall advertisements are more likely (3.5 times) to be loyal. The availability of products was also instrumental (Odds Ratio = 2.31,  $p = 0.004$ ) as there was the doubling of likelihood to be highly loyal. Pricing strategy demonstrated a moderately high impact that was statistically significant (Odds Ratio = 1.73,  $p = 0.042$ ). The results suggest that closer communication, stable access to the product and justifiable pricing are key in the production of brand-loyal customers. The model validates that the rural consumer behaviour of loyalty depends on emotional and functional triggers such as memory and convenience.

## FINDINGS

Based on the comprehensive analysis using statistical tools such as Pearson Correlation, Independent Samples t-Test, Multiple Linear Regression, One-Way ANOVA, Chi-Square Test, and Logistic Regression, the following key findings emerged:

1. Close Relationship between Advertisement and Brand Recall: A positive relationship ( $r = 0.782$ ), which was considered very high, was established between advertisement and brand recall, meaning that promotional activities play a great role in increasing brand remembrance to rural consumers.
2. Availability and Pricing of Products Substantially Correlate with Houston Preference: In addition, regression analysis indicates that availability ( $\beta = 0.462$ ) and pricing strategy ( $\beta = 0.398$ ) are the most significant predictors of consumer preference in rural market with respect to FMCG products.
3. Value-based promotional schemes and their effect on purchase decision appeared influential: Chi-square test revealed a vigorous and significant intersection between promotional schemes and purchase decision confirming the usefulness of value-based promotions in affecting the rural purchase behaviour.
4. The level of income affects consumer buying behaviour: One-way ANOVA showed that consumer buying behaviour across income groups differs extremely ( $p = 0.003$ ). This implies that in rural marketing, strategies implemented should be sensitive to the income product positioning and prices.
5. Gender has little to do with loyalty: The independent samples t-test indicated that there was no significant mean result with regards to gender and consumer loyalty between the males and females respondent ( $p = 0.071$ ). This demonstrated that differentiation based on gender may not be needed in loyalty-based campaigns.
6. Advertisement Recall Leads to Greater Consumer Loyalty: In logistic regression, consumer loyalty in response to advertisement recall showed results that demonstrated the importance of recurrent and familiar advertisement in rural locations increased the loyalty of the consumer by 3.5 times.
7. Community-Based and Localised Marketing are most effective: The results of the study show that localised marketing strategies based on consumer characteristics, presence of community values, economic conditions and availability patterns appeal to the consumers in rural Prayagraj.
8. Little Influence as Compared to the Other Variables: The distribution strategy had less influence as compared to the rest variables because out of the four variables selected to examine in the study of determining the marketing strategy a consumer prefers, the one aspect of the strategy which had not been found to be a prominent predictor of the type of consumer preference, the distribution strategy.

## Suggestions

1. Emphasis on Low Prices: Set up pricing plans that are convenient to the rural earners to ensure frequent buying.
2. Improve Access: Providing timely and regular supply of products even in remote rural by strengthening the logistics and local distributors.
3. Employ Localized Advertising: Create promotion materials in the in local languages with culturally relateable messages so that there is more brand recall.
4. Introduction of Attractive Promotional Schemes: Introduce value pack, discount, loyalty programs that suits the requirements of rural buyers that would influence purchase decisions.
5. Connect with the Community: Use events in the area, fairs, markets and other gatherings to display the items and have one-on-one interaction with the consumers.
6. Simplify Packaging and Labelling: The simplification and use of simple (clear and pictorial) pack should be possible to give semi literate / illiterate consumers a chance to make intelligent decisions.
7. Conduct Consumer Awareness Campaigns: Raise awareness among the rural consumers spread the message on product usage, benefits and brand name by visiting them door-to door or holding village meetings.
8. Use Rural Influencers: join up with local well-known members (e.g. teachers or village heads) to promote items and impact credibility.
9. Income-Based Segment Marketing: Differentiate products and offers, as also promotions, based on the segmentation of the income groups.

## CONCLUSION

In a similar situation, as revealed in the present study on Impact of Rural Marketing Strategies on Consumer Behaviour: A Study of FMCG Sector in Prayagraj, the localisation and consumer- conscious type of marketing are extremely important in deciding the pattern of the consumption in those areas that are rural in nature. The evidence reaffirms that out of the numerous components of marketing mix, availability of products, price policy and marketing programs can largely determine the choice of goods and purchases among consumers. It was also revealed that the advertisement recall exhibited a high correlation with brand loyalty, which proved the usefulness of specific promotional activities in rural markets. Also, there was a finding that income levels play a major role in consumer response which means that rural marketing strategies should appeal to the economic sensibilities of the target audience. On the other hand, gender, efficiency of distribution etc. were discovered to play an insignificant role in influencing consumer loyalty or preference. Generally, the research findings can be concluded that the rural marketing strategy that focuses on affordability and accessibility, and the locally centric approach, is critical to the success of FMCG firms in places such as Prayagraj. Mixing cultural relevancy and constant communication also contributes to brand visibility and consumer confidence. The study can be used in influencing marketers, policymakers, and FMCG companies that wish to increase their penetration in the rural areas and adopt strategies that are appealing to the dynamic consumer demands in the rural setting.

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