

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN RURAL MARKETS: PATTERNS AND PREFERENCE

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ABSTRACT

This study examines consumer behaviour in rural markets with a focus on buying patterns and preferences among rural consumers. Rural markets have become an important part of the economy as a large portion of the population lives in rural areas. The study analyzes the factors that influence purchasing decisions, including income level, price sensitivity, product availability, and cultural influence. Primary data was collected from 90 rural consumers through structured questionnaires. Percentage analysis and chi-square test were used for data analysis. The findings reveal that rural consumers prefer affordable products, small package sizes, and reliable brands. The study also highlights that awareness through television, mobile phones, and local retailers plays an important role in shaping rural consumer preferences.

Keywords: Rural Markets, Consumer Behaviour, Buying Patterns, Consumer Preferences, Rural Consumers

INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

Consumer behaviour refers to the study of how individuals choose, purchase, use, and dispose of goods and services. In rural markets, consumer behaviour is influenced by several economic, social, and cultural factors. Rural consumers usually have limited income and tend to focus on essential goods rather than luxury products.

In recent years, rural markets have gained importance due to increasing literacy levels, better infrastructure, and growing access to technology such as smartphones and the internet. Companies are now focusing on rural areas as potential markets for their products.

Rural consumers often rely on local retailers and word-of-mouth recommendations while making purchasing decisions. Their preferences are mainly influenced by price, quality, durability, and brand trust. Understanding the behaviour of rural consumers helps businesses develop suitable marketing strategies and design products according to rural needs.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the buying patterns of consumers in rural markets.
- To examine the preferences of rural consumers when purchasing products.
- To identify the factors influencing consumer behaviour in rural areas.
- To analyze the level of awareness of different brands among rural consumers.
- To provide suggestions for improving marketing strategies in rural markets.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Rural markets play an important role in the economic development of the country. A large portion of the population lives in rural areas and contributes significantly to consumer demand. However, rural consumers often face limitations such as low income levels, limited product availability, and lack of information about different brands.

Companies often find it difficult to understand the needs and preferences of rural consumers. Marketing strategies that work in urban markets may not always be effective in rural areas because rural consumers have different lifestyles, income levels, and purchasing behaviours.

Therefore, it is important to study consumer behaviour in rural markets in order to understand their buying patterns and product preferences. This study attempts to analyze these aspects and provide insights into how businesses can better serve rural consumers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to analyze consumer behaviour in rural markets.

DATA COLLECTION

1. PRIMARY DATA

Primary data was collected through structured questionnaires distributed to rural consumers. The questionnaire included questions related to purchasing habits, product preferences, and awareness of brands.

2. SECONDARY DATA

Secondary data was collected from journals, books, research articles, websites, and government publications related to rural marketing and consumer behaviour.

SAMPLE SIZE

A total of **90 rural consumers** were selected for the study.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Convenience sampling method was used for selecting respondents.

TOOLS FOR ANALYSIS

- Percentage Analysis
- Chi-Square Test

LIMITATIONS

- The study is limited to selected rural areas only.
- The sample size is limited to 90 respondents.
- The study is based on the opinions and responses of consumers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. **Kotler and Keller (2023)** studied consumer behaviour in emerging markets and found that rural consumers prefer products that provide value for money and long-term usability.

2. **Rao and Kumar (2024)** examined purchasing patterns in rural India and observed that price sensitivity and family influence play a major role in rural buying decisions.
3. **Sharma (2023)** analyzed rural marketing strategies and highlighted that small package sizes and affordable pricing attract rural consumers.
4. **Gupta and Singh (2024)** studied brand awareness among rural consumers and found that television advertisements and local retailers strongly influence purchasing behaviour.
5. **Patel (2025)** researched rural consumer preferences and concluded that quality, durability, and trust in brands are important factors affecting buying decisions.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

TABLE 1 – Frequency of Purchase in Rural Markets

Purchase Frequency	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Weekly	35	39%
Monthly	28	31%
Occasionally	18	20%
Rarely	9	10%
Total	90	100%

INTERPRETATION

The table shows that 39% of respondents purchase products weekly, while 31% purchase monthly. About 20% buy occasionally and 10% rarely purchase products. This indicates that most rural consumers regularly purchase essential goods from local markets.

TABLE 2 – Preference for Product Type

Product Type	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Branded Products	30	33%
Local Products	25	28%
Low-Price Products	22	24%
Quality Products	13	15%
Total	90	100%

INTERPRETATION

The table reveals that 33% of respondents prefer branded products, while 28% prefer locally available products. About 24% choose products mainly based on low price and 15% focus on quality. This indicates that brand and affordability play an important role in rural consumer preferences.

TABLE 3 – Factors Influencing Buying Decision

Influencing Factor	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Price	32	36%
Quality	24	27%
Brand Image	18	20%
Advertisement	16	17%
Total	90	100%

INTERPRETATION

The table indicates that 36% of respondents consider price as the most important factor influencing their purchase decision. Around 27% focus on product quality, 20% consider brand image, and 17% are influenced by advertisements. This shows that price sensitivity is a major characteristic of rural consumers.

TABLE 4 – Source of Product Information

Source	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Friends & Family	34	38%
Television	26	29%
Retailers	18	20%
Social Media	12	13%
Total	90	100%

INTERPRETATION

The table shows that 38% of respondents receive product information from friends and family. About 29% are influenced by television advertisements, 20% by retailers, and 13% by

social media. This indicates that word-of-mouth communication plays an important role in rural markets.

FINDINGS

- The study shows that most rural consumers purchase products regularly from local markets, mainly for daily and household needs.
- Price is the most important factor influencing the buying decisions of rural consumers. Many respondents prefer affordable products due to limited income levels.
- Rural consumers show preference for both branded and locally available products depending on price and availability.
- Word-of-mouth communication through friends, family, and local retailers plays a significant role in influencing purchase decisions.
- Television advertisements and mobile phones are gradually increasing awareness of different brands among rural consumers.
- Many rural consumers prefer small packaging sizes because they are convenient and affordable for daily purchases.

SUGGESTIONS

- Companies should introduce affordable products and small package sizes suitable for rural consumers.
- Businesses should increase marketing activities in rural areas through television, local events, and mobile advertising.
- Retailers in rural markets should be provided with better support and training to promote products effectively.
- Awareness programs should be conducted to educate rural consumers about product quality and brand benefits.
- Companies should improve distribution networks to ensure easy availability of products in rural areas.

CONCLUSION

Consumer behaviour in rural markets is influenced by several economic, social, and cultural factors. Rural consumers generally focus on affordability, usefulness, and reliability when purchasing products. Price sensitivity and product availability play a major role in their buying decisions.

The study highlights that rural consumers are gradually becoming more aware of different brands through media and technology. However, traditional factors such as word-of-mouth communication and retailer influence still remain important in rural markets.

Understanding the buying patterns and preferences of rural consumers helps companies design better marketing strategies and products suitable for rural areas. With improved awareness, infrastructure, and distribution systems, rural markets have strong potential for future business growth.

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