STUDY AND ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY SOURCES OF INFORMATION AS INFLUENCERS IN BUYING DECISION OF CONSUMER OF TWO WHEELER IN RURAL REGION OF PUNE DISTRICT IN MAHARASHTRA

Prof. Pramod N. Sasane, Research Scholar, Naralkar Institute of Career Development and research, Pune-30

Dr. Amod D. Markale, Research Guide, Naralkar Institute of Career Development and research, Pune-30

Abstract: Upward Mobility of rural consumers has been an impetus to rural economy. The products they purchase for improving their lives are bringing major game changer in Indian economy. So as a marketer of these products one must understand the rural consumer behavior. In this study we tries to find the different sources of information and their relative importance in decision making of rural consumers. The study will be a ready reckoner for marketers of the two-wheeler. The study shows that primary sources of information has some influence on buying decision making of rural consumers.

Key words: Rural consumer, sources of informations, Influencers.

Introduction:

According to the third annual edition of Accenture Research, “Masters of Rural Markets: From Touchpoints to Trustpoints - Winning over India's Aspiring Rural Consumers,” rural consumers are particularly aspiring or striving to purchase branded, high quality products. Consequently, businesses in India are optimistic about growth of the country’s rural consumer markets, which is expected to be faster than urban consumer markets. The report highlights the better networking among rural consumers and their tendency to proactively seek information via multitude sources to be better informed while making purchase decisions. Importantly, the wider reach of media and telecommunication services has provided information to India’s rural consumers at their fingertips and is influencing their purchase decisions. In line with general trend, rural consumers are evolving towards a broader conception of value provided by products and services which involves aspects of price combined with utility, aesthetics and features, and not just low prices. Consumption patterns in these rural areas are gradually changing to increasingly resemble the consumption patterns of urban areas. Consumers need information to make the buying decision as the market is filled with number of products similar in function and value. So they seek more and more information from the available sources. This leads to ascertain that their influencers in buying decisions are the same or changing?

Maharashtra is the second largest state in India in terms of population and has geographical area about 3.08 lakh sq. km. As per Population Census-2011, the population of the State is 11.24 crore which is 9.3 per cent of the total population of India and is highly urbanised with 45.2 percent people residing in urban areas. Rural population of Maharashtra is 54.8 percent of total population. The total number of villages in Pune district is 1877 as per the Census - 2011.
The increased consumption of farm produce and agri-product due availability employment opportunities. The rural motorbike owner’s product expectations differ from his urban counterpart’s.

Zacharias et al (2009) found that irrespective of the occupation, respondents of their study felt that friends and relatives strongly influence a consumer decision. They also found no significant difference in the influence of these two types of influencers.

Unnithan. B. Anandakuttan and HariSundar (2008) had observed that the role of friends and relatives was having an important role in influencing the purchase decision of the rural folk relating to the consumption of mopeds. The study carried out in the border districts of Tamil Nadu namely Kanyakumari and Nagercoil proved that 31% of the sample were influenced by friends and 20% by relatives.

FICCI (2004) observed that sarpanch / pradhan still continues to be a key opinion leader by virtue of his position in the administrative machinery. However, their influence is diminishing and is now restricted to purchase of agricultural products. Similarly school teacher is also losing the position to rural youth who are slowly becoming influencers of products purchases in rural markets. Migrated rural people also act as influencers to several purchases in rural markets as they are exposed to the urban life. The findings of study will equip them to make their marketing efforts to be more customers centric and will also facilitate them in the selection of the right medium for communicating with the customers.

**Literature Survey:**

Literature on rural market is at an early stage. A few notable research work (both of Indian and foreign authors) have been reviewed which have several antecedents and consequences. The reviewed work is divided into various sections based upon the research objectives framed. These are (a) Consumer’s buying behaviour (b) Demographic profile, VALs (values-attitudes-lifestyles) (c) Influencers in product purchase. It may not be an all-inclusive snapshot of all research works in rural marketing. These studies are considered because they have found a place in major scholarly journals (both of national and international repute) and have made an impact on the identified field of the study. The reviewed research work has been arranged in chronological order of publication for each section respectively based upon the objectives framed.

A person’s influenceability often appears as a consequence of personality variables, such as self-esteem or social anxiety (Batra et al. 2001; Bearden et al. 1990; McGuire 1968).

Mark Grinblatt, Matti Keloharju and Seppo Ikäheimo (2005) investigated whether social influence exists in the consumption of a particularly important commodity — automobiles — and what might drive this influence. Using a comprehensive panel, it found that neighbors’ purchases significantly increase a consumer’s decision to purchase an automobile. The influence was dominated by the very nearest neighbors, and it lasted for a remarkably short period of time.

Shrirang Altekar and Anil Keskar (July 2014) in the study indentified the factors impacting shopper decision making in three stages of the Buying Decision Process – Introduction,
Influencing and Decision Making in respect of certain consumer durables. The findings indicated that while Advertising plays a predominant role during the introduction stage, in introducing the brand to the consumer, family members play the most important role in stages, influencing the choice of the brand pre-store and in the decision making as regards the brand choice. For home appliances, the spouse is the pre-dominating influencing element whereas children are the dominating factor in the family as regards electronic goods.

K. P Najeemudeen1, N. Panchanatham in this paper studied Information Sources for Two-wheeler Purchase. Information is an important aspect in our life. Information or knowledge about the product he intends to purchase is very important for a customer. Similarly, knowledge about the sources from where the customers are getting information is very vital for a marketer for channelizing his marketing communications in such a way that it will reach his target customers in the right way at minimal cost. The study was intended to investigate and identify the information sources through which customers were gathering information on two-wheelers and the relative importance of these sources on their purchase decision. This study was carried out by using a questionnaire survey method. Sample size was 681 Two-wheeler users in Malappuram district of Kerala. Statistical tools like Chi-square analysis, ANOVA, Z-Test, Multiple Correlation, Multiple Regression and Friedman Test had been used for the meaningful analysis and interpretation of data. The findings of the study will equip them to make their marketing efforts to be more customer centric and will also facilitate them in the selection of the right medium for communicating with the customers.

Prialatha and Malar Mathi (2011) conducted their study to analyze the various factors affecting the rural consumer and the variation among rural respondents with regard to demographic variables on a sample of 100 respondents. The study found that rural consumers are more concerned about the quality, brand name and brand benefits of the personal care products purchased by them. Local retailers were found to play a vital role, especially when the respondents are illiterate. Friends and Social group were found to have considerable influence. Younger respondents as they prefer attractive package colours and design, while illiterates often identify their brand with the colour of the package rather than the brand name. With increased education the rational thinking of rural consumers is improved and impulse buying is reduced. Income had a significant difference across marital status and gender of respondents in influencing their purchase decision.

Parihar, Yadav and Siddiqui (2007), in their study related to urban and rural consumer behaviour in regard to consumer durables, tried to identify the existence of gap if any, among the urban and rural consumers. The stimuli taken were technical features, brand image, price, style, and after-sales service. It was an exploratory study on 200 consumers (100 for rural and 100 for urban). The study found the existence of differences in the profile of rural and urban consumers in terms of education, 30 occupation, reference groups, level of income and media habits. The study also found the existence of a significant difference in the buyer’s behaviour of urban and rural areas with respect to product choice criteria like technical features, brand image, price, style, and after-sales service of consumer durables.

Singh and Chandhok (2010), conducted their study to identify key market segments and the basis of targeting segments by FMCG companies such as Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) and Indian Tobacco Company (ITC) in India in the personal care products. Their study revealed that both HUL and ITC used income as the basis for segmentation and has made
available the personal care products in every segment of the market. HUL has segmented the market into three groups namely the low income or the striving customers, the aspiring customers who strive for recognition (and have relatively high purchasing power) and the affluent customers who have abundant wealth. ITC has also gone for similar classification based on the purchasing power of the customers.

In the rural areas, besides understanding the relevance of demographic and psychographic profiles of consumers (Reynolds and Darden, 1972), marketers need to know the response of customers to marketing mix since it is different from marketers’ 39 understanding of the urban market (Kapoor, 1976).

Jha (2013) in their study related to rural consumer buying behaviour, tried to study the factors that influence the behaviour of the rural consumers. The study used Cluster Analysis (Analytical Hierarchy Process-AHP) to know the important factors make impact on a sample of 300 persons. Altogether six factors namely price, family size, product packaging, culture, age and advertising were used. The study found that consumption pattern was much influenced by family size and structure. The study found that in the final choice, factors like perceived risk associated with the product as well as influences by opinion leaders, family and friends play a significant role. Perceived risk was high among rural consumers as they found it difficult to gather and process relevant information. Due to this reason they make a collective decision. The study also found that quality and value were vital for the success of a new product.

Bukhari and Gupta (2013) in their study tried to study the different factors that affect the marketing policies and strategies in rural markets. Multistage sampling technique was used for a final sample of 150 respondents who were asked to rate their perceived level of satisfaction toward the various attribute on a five point Likert scale ranging from Strongly disagree denoted by 1 to Strongly agree denoted by 5. The study found the existence of significant potential in the rural markets. The study found that most of the rural people heard about the new product from their friends and retailers. The most valid reason that existed about the usage of the products by the rural people was low price and easy usage. It was also found that rural consumers were fewer brands conscious and were highly price conscious.

Dr. V. Hemanth Kumar Dr. P. PremchandBabu (2013) is studied the impact of advertising on purchase of two-wheeler with reference to women. The main aim of advertisement is to make people aware of the product produced by the company. The company produces the product mainly to meet and satisfy the needs of the customers. Advertising plays an important role on changing the consumer behavior and also provides new patterns for purchasing or using any type of goods and services. It is the most convenient way to reach the female consumers because they are more deployed by advertisement promises that the product will give them something special for satisfaction. The advertiser, the agency, the media and the consumers view advertising according to their desires, expectation and opportunities. Over the recent years, advertisements remain the favored method of sales promotion. Consequently, the challenge for an advertiser is to explore every possible avenue of making an advertisement more noticeable, attractive and impellent for consumers. This study brings the insights on the impact of ads in the purchase behavior of the two-wheelers among the women customers, and the output shall pave the way for rejuvenating the marketing and advertising strategy to tap
the market on the wider range. Youngsters being the decision maker on purchase relies more on ads. Thus advertisement induces people to decide on purchases of a branded product.

S. Franklin John and J. Anand Christopher (2013) in this study focused on to find out the importance of peers on buying behaviour of consumers for buying two wheelers. Buyer behavior occupies a pivotal place in marketing research. Enormous factors, including both internal and external to buyer, seem to extract an effective and efficient influence on the purchasing decisions of the buyer. They used convenient sampling technique to gather the opinions of 85 Two-wheeler buyers as sample for the study. Research instrument used for gathering opinions was developed by Clement.S. & Venkatapathy. R (2002) for analysis they used One-Way Anova statistical technique. They concluded in findings a positive trend on the influence of peers on the decision making of the consumers.

Thiyagarajan .D (1994) in his study analysed the different sources that influenced the customers in buying cars. The study aimed to assess the extent of this influence on the purchase, and among the different sources, family members influence the customers to go for buying a particular brand.

Addressing this gap, the current study attempts to identify the influencers and it’s relation with the demographic characteristics.

Research Gap and importance of Study: The previous studies carried out for urban consumers. Marketers always use marketing communications to address urban as well as rural consumers. And also thought that by marketing their product through traditional influencers would help to achieve their marketing target in rural market. But advancement in technology, development of infrastructure, Increased literacy, change in occupation pattern, and increased interaction with urban society, the buying behaviour as well as buying pattern has been changed in rural market. So in this research paper, researcher proposes which are the primary sources of information that give impetus to change in buying behavior and who are influencing the buying behavior?

Research Methodology:

A survey was carried out in select rural markets of Pune District of Maharashtra. These villages were selected on a random basis. These rural markets include Chakan, Urulikanchan, Khedshivapur, Shirur, Dive Gaon, Pirangut and Shikrapur areas in Pune district. Only 116 respondents who owned and purchased the above mentioned Two Wheeler were selected for the study.

As reviewed from the literature earlier, given that male is the decision maker in rural markets, but as there is a change of role played by the women in the family in the rural part of Pune District. So the researcher approached the owners of two wheelers irrespective of their gender. The number of influencers identified and widely used in previous research was Family member, Friends/ Peer, Sarpanch /Mukhiya/ Local body Member, Expert/Garage Mechanic in village, Sales person, etc.
Research Design

The Research design used for this study is Descriptive Research design. The key purpose of using this type of research design is to identify and describe the characteristics of influencer of rural consumer as well as to estimate the product type (Necessity or Luxury) given to Two wheeler by rural consumer. What role are they playing? So that it will help marketer to understand the influencer and to design communication strategy to influencers and rural consumers.

Sources of Data:

The data for the study was mainly collected through two sources - Primary and Secondary sources.

Primary Data:

The data is collected through survey by implementing a research tool i.e. a questionnaire. Thus total number of respondents was 128 but only 116 respondents answered all questions in all respect. So researcher considered the data from 116 respondents only. The data thus collected is tabulated and analyzed further.

Secondary Data:

Secondary data provided information on consumer behavior, Information processing for decision making by consumers, Sources of information, primary sources of information as influence rs.

Literature review is carried out to find out what were factors making impact on buying behaviour of consumer in particular rural consumer. Primary sources of Information in rural markets are identified through literature survey.

Data Analysis & Discussions:

The sample of was drawn from several demographic contexts. Details of the sample are given in Table 1. While choosing a sample respondent, care was taken that the respondent must have purchased the two wheeler in last six months.

Testing of Hypotheses:

1) Hypothesis I: It is the Primary sources of information that influence the buying decision of buying personal vehicle particularly Two Wheeler.

Background: The researcher defined the primary source of information as the information obtained from Salesperson, Knowledgeable person (Auto mechanic), Educated Member in family, Sarpunch (Patil), Bank Manager, etc. As these variables were discrete categorical
variable, Pearson’s chi Square test for independence of variable was thought to be the most appropriate test. All other sources of information were secondary sources of information.

**Null Hypothesis** (H0): Buying decision of buying Two wheeler is independent of the primary sources of information.

**Alternate Hypothesis** (H1): Buying decision of buying Two wheeler is dependent on the primary sources of information.

**Tests used**: Pearson Chi-Square, for independence of variable.

**Observation**: Since Chi-Square value: 811.137, with 12 df and p = 0.001, which is < 0.05.

**Inference** – Since p is less than 0.05 there is some association, between primary sources of information(Influencers) and the buying decision of rural consumer buying Two wheeler,

*Hence, ‘H0’ Null Hypothesis rejected and Alternate Hypothesis, ‘H1’ is accepted.*

**Conclusion**: Primary sources of information have some influence on the buying decision of rural consumer of buying Two Wheeler.

2) **Hypothesis II**: The rural consumers rely most on the information gathered from expert's advice for making their purchase decision.

**Background**: To validate the hypothesis two sets of information was identified. First set consist score of respondents to a) *I always follow Expert's advice* in buying decisions, second set consist of score given to the statement b) Most of the times *I take decision based on advertisements in media*.

**Null Hypothesis** (H0): There is no difference in the mean of the scores given to the statements a and statement b

**Alternate Hypothesis** (H1): There is significant difference in the mean of the scores given to the statements a and statement b

**Tests used**: Paired sample ‘t’

**Observation**: ‘t’ value = 1.108 with 116 df and ‘p’ value = 0.000 which is less than 0.05.
Inference: since p is less than 0.05 and lower and upper limit do not contain 0 there is significance difference in mean score of the two.

**Hence, ‘H0’ Null Hypothesis rejected and Alternate Hypothesis, ‘H1’ is accepted.**

**Conclusion:** The rural consumers rely most on the information gathered from Expert's advice for making their purchase decision.

Conclusion: The research outcome proves that the rural consumers get influenced by primary as well as secondary sources of information. Though marketer provides all information through marketing communications, they rely more on primary sources of information. So these primary sources of information have more influence in decision making of rural consumers. They authenticate the information received through marketing communication as well as word of mouth publicity. Ultimately expert's advice becomes the most influential in decision making of rural consumer's.

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