

Rural Marketing: A Decisive Strategy to execute Make in India Ambition

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ABSTRACT

'Make in India' is an ambition of Government of India to encourage multinational and domestic players to manufacture their products in India, launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 25th December 2014, as a result of which India has emerged as the top destination globally for foreign direct investment, surpassing China as well as United States. But the question arises for whom to make in India at the time when Indian exports are dwindling? The answer lies in the fact that the rural Indian economy, comprising almost one-tenth of the total world population, is emerging as the top most destination market globally, could become a lucrative market for these domestic and international companies. The present paper articulates the advantages, challenges, models and strategies that would help in the effective implementation of 'Make in India' in Indian rural hinterland.

Key Words: Make in India, Rural Marketing, Strategic Models, Strategies

1. Introduction

'Make in India' initiative is primarily aimed at making India a global manufacturing hub, increasing GDP and tax revenues in the country, producing high quality products, hence Government of India has announced several steps to improve business environment by relaxing business norms and attract foreign investments. This increased manufacturing activity needs an appropriate target market to serve, which eventually decides the type of manufacturing processes, business models and innovational product strategies to be adopted. Rural India is a perfect target market for absorbing the additional influx in production as it accounts for almost 12.2% of the size of total world economy and has encountered a tremendous metamorphosis over the years from a lackadaisical augmented agrarian economy to an escalating vibrant sector contributing 56% to the national income, 64% of aggregate expenditure, 33% of comprehensive savings of the country (Kashyap, P. Rural Marketing) and 68.84% of the population of the country (2011 census). It further elucidates for 53% of the overall FMCGs market and 59% of the durables market of Indian economy (Census 2011).

There has been a comprehensive boost in rural population to the extent of 90.4 million in previous 10 years (Census 2011). Previously the number of villages was 638588 in 2001 which has now invigorated to 640867 in 2011 (Census 2011). Rural areas contribute 50% to the GDP of our country (Accenture Research). Rural enterprises (non-farm including shop trade, skilled work, salaried working class) consisting of 50% of rural workforce contributes 11% of GDP of India.

Credit Suisse estimates that around 75% of the factories in India in last decade were built in rural areas accounting for 55% of country's manufacturing GDP and 70% of all new manufacturing jobs. The literacy rates in rural India has enhanced from 70.1% in 2001 to 78.6% in 2011, specifically the female literacy rate which has escalated to 46.1% in 2001 to 58.8% in 2011 (Census 2011) indicating that awareness levels are increasing. All these indicators speak aloud the saga of growing rural marketing prospects in recent years and companies that are taking innovative steps to reap its benefits are reporting higher revenue growth in rural markets than in urban markets.

2. Literature Review

Kapur, M. et.al. In a report of Accenture Masters of Rural Markets: The Hallmarks of High Performance (2010) have emphasized that rural markets are offering unprecedented opportunities for global and local companies to experiment with innovative approaches and new business models. It chronicles the business sector's growing confidence in India's rural markets and demonstrates the strength of business leaders' belief in rural opportunities. It also provides a framework that highlights the features of high performance companies.

Joshi, H., et.al. (2011), have emphasized that rural marketing strategies should be devised keeping in mind product category, target segment, accessibility to a particular area and mind-set of target population. The writer suggests that by proper understanding of rural marketing variables, implementation of revolutionary ideas and innovative price, promotion and product strategies for them can help a company to capture these markets.

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Taneja, G. et.al. (2012), have elucidated that most of the global firms failed to understand the needs of Indian consumers and peculiarities of Indian market except a few companies like Kellogg's, Mc Donald's, LG, Reebok and Coca-cola, who have modified their products according to Indian conditions so as to become successful in positioning their brands in Indian minds by understanding the needs of their target customers. His research concentrates on investigating the reasons of failure of some internationally successful brands who have failed to allure Indian customers effectively.

Neuwirth, B. (2012), witnessed that companies confront a host of unqualified challenges like the dispersed rural population, distribution complex design and lack of brand conviction whilst marketing in rural markets. The scrutinized these challenges from marketing channel perspective and developed a framework for it.

Devi Prasad Kotni, V. V. (2012),has conversed that the overall growth of economy has influenced the purchasing capacity of rural folks and to gratify their needs, a distinctive strategy called Rural Marketing has emerged which has got a tremendous potential. They conducted SWOT analysis and recommended various policy measuresfor enhanced performance of companies in these markets.

Venukumar, G. (2012)the writer compared the challenges faced by marketers while catering to rural segments with that of urban fragments. He has discussed the cognitive abstractions of various companies in rural marketing and has recommended an assortment of marketing strategies for going rural.

Sharma, A. (2013),has made an attempt to analyze the growth potential of Indian rural markets and has presented several startling facts regarding rural markets like the most preferred media to get information about products is television, familiarity with the brand name has a profound affect on their purchase decision, and hitch for accepting a new product among rural consumers.

Ahmed, A. (2013),has emphasized that companies ought to deploy a range of strategies like superlative promotion, worth perception and uncomplicated communication. He further suggested that products should be premeditated according to rural customers' necessities by focusing on their requirements.

Kumar, P. (2013),have suggested that to be able to economically serve these markets it is vital to customize products according to rural consumer demographics, reinforce supply chain and infrastructure, instruct rural consumers on product quality and usage, widen product awareness using rural centric media and implementation and amendment of laws to manage grey markets.

Kumar, P. et.al. (2013),have noticed that organizations

that are pursuing these markets are suffering from diverse challenges like derisive transportation, deficient warehousing, underdeveloped people and underdeveloped markets. He elucidates that there is imperfect media coverage, compound languages and irregular demand which afflicts rural marketing initiatives in the country's rural hinterland and prevents them from generating the desired impact.

Miglani, B. (2013),has witnessed that borrowed concepts from western world have modest relevance for Rural India's circumstances unless these are incorporated and modified in congruence to Indian ethos and culture. He emphasized marketing endeavors through shandies/ haats /jathras/ melas which work as effective rural supermarkets. He also stressed on refining the personnel selling network so as to make a valuable rural marketing presence.

Kapur, M. et.al. (2010),in a report of Accenture 'Masters of Rural Markets: Profitably Selling to India's Rural Consumers',it has been suggested that companies must build and maintain efficient sales and distribution networks tailored to the unique needs of our country. It further explains the strategies for rapidly generating profits and achieving scale by reaching, acquiring and retaining rural consumers.

Patel, S. K. (2013), has emphasized various development initiatives undertaken by government. At the same time she has highlighted the limitations that persists in this market and has suggested various strategies including marketing strategies, distribution strategies and promotional strategies to be adopted to overcome the same.

Shukla, P. Y. (2013), has observed various reasons for this spurt in the use of FMCGs by rural folks like increase in rural population, large inflow of government investment in rural programs, influence from urban counterparts, increase in literacy and education, inflow of foreign remittances, change in land tenure system, increase in the buying power of consumers and their desire to upgrade their standard of living.

Rana, J., et.al. (2014), have observed that companies are overwhelmingly employing a strategy called BHARAT involving techniques associated with direct selling similar to practices adopted by banglewalas and spice sellers, by finding suitable dealers, adopting sound warehousing system, making use of better display of products, educating rural consumers, providing them valuable information and providing them easy finance.

Achar, S. et.al., (2014), has noticed that the behavior of rural consumers is converging with that of their urban counterparts. The writer has suggested competitive strategies for rural markets based on systems approach. He has further divided these strategies into three parts push marketing, pull marketing and pull up marketing.

3. Objectives of the Study

- i. To undertake a study of strategies adopted by renowned brands like Patanjali, L.G, Vodafone, Dabur, HUL, Amul, Coke, Colgate and Hero Honda in Indian rural markets.
- ii. To conduct SWOT analysis of implementing 'Make in India' campaign in rural India.
- iii. To propose a model to guide the entrepreneurs in effective implementation of 'Make in India' campaign in rural India.

4. Research Methodology

Secondary data is procured from renowned and authentic statistics that exist in various journals, books, research papers, reports, magazines, newspapers, internet websites reports and surveys undertaken previously. Intensive secondary data analysis and analysis of selected cases are undertaken. It is an attempt to develop apt strategies for Rural Marketing, in order to tap rural market of India.

5. Discussion

5.1 Policies under 'Make in India'

- New initiatives aimed at ease of doing business in India including increasing the speed with which protocols are met and enhancing transparency. Government has taken several measures like online environmental clearances, online filing of income tax returns, extension of validity of industrial license upto three years etc.
- Foreign direct investment upto 100% has been allowed except in Space(74%), Defense (49%) and news media (26%), removing the restrictions in tea plantations.
- Intellectual property rights of innovators and creators have been protected and improved by using state-of-art-technology to establish a vibrant intellectual property regime in the country.
- Vision to enhance national manufacturing sector growth to 12-14% per annum, creating 100 million additional jobs by 2022, creating appropriate skills set among rural migrants and urban poor for inclusive growth.

5.2 Definition of Rural Market

The Census of India (2011) describes a rural habitation as an area with:

- A minimum population of 5000
- Population density of less than 400 persons per square kilometer
- Where at least 75% of male working population is engaged in nonagricultural pursuits.

5.3 Why Rural Marketing is Crucial for 'Make in India' Campaign?

Companies that want to invest and manufacture under 'Make in India' ambition cannot afford to ignore the contemporary opportunities offered by India's rural markets (3/4th of the country's approximately 1.1 billion people live in villages). Estimated annual size of rural market in 2015 in terms of FMCGs is US \$ 18.92 and expected to cross US \$ 20 billion in 2018 and US \$ 100 billion by 2025 (Source: AC Nielson, TechSci Research, Dabur Reports)

The focal reasons why companies should target rural markets and inventing ingenious strategies for capturing its aptitude are:

- (1) Escalation in rural population There has been an increase in rural population to the extent of 90.4 million. Growth of rural population means increase in consumers and resultant increase in consumption. (Census, 2011)
- (2) Escalating prosperity The broad-spectrum rise in the level of prosperity has resulted in two ascendant shifts in rural consuming system - one is conspicuous consumption of consumer durables by almost all sections of rural people and the consequent preference for branded goods as compared to non branded ones due to acquaintance to mass media, which has been mainly due to:(a) amplifying MSP,(b)Government initiatives, (c) Mounting non-agricultural professions and (d) Escalation in organized finance
- (3) Expanding per-capita consumption expenditure Rural markets are emerging faster than their urban counterparts (per capita consumption expenditure in rural areas compound annual growth rate of 16.7% compared to 15.6% in urban centers-NSSO) so they are more profitable to serve. Also the urban markets have become mature and intensely competitive leading to low margins for the manufacturers of these commodities; hence, they are going for more and more rural markets.
- (4) Swelling literacy and awareness The spiraling literacy rates, growing mass media awareness and inclination of rural customers towards premium quality branded products especially those that symbolize educated or modern lifestyle has spurred the sale for these products in rural areas.
- (5) Astounding technological advances Astounding technological advances and increasing affordability of mobile communication has integrated the once fragmented rural economy to a great extent, serving as an important tool in synchronizing the unorganized rural market. Rural markets have become more strategic as companies have developed a customer

centric perspective, constantly innovating and experimenting with technology to produce the preferred products for their customers.

- (6) Revolution in promotion techniques companies are appreciating the significance of unconventional approaches of communicating with their target audiences, devising various strategies of rural marketing mix to acquire a competitive edge over their competitors. Reverse innovation from rural to urban is the key for imminent growth and profitability.

5.4 Issues and Challenges in Rural Markets

Rural India being traditionally subjugated during various regimes continues to inherit its underdeveloped economy. The socio economic census shows that one out of three families living in villages is landless depending on manual labor for their livelihood, around 2/5th of rural population is illiterate and only 1/5th holds a matriculation certificate, 23.52% of rural families have no literate adult above 25 years depicting a poor state of education among rural masses.

The deprivation data revealed that 5.37 crore households in rural areas are landless deriving a major part of their income from manual labor. As many as 2.37 crore families (13.25%) in villages live in houses of one room with kaccha walls and roof. It further reveals that 3/4th of rural households highest earning member earns less than 5000. Statistics show that the number of rural households with a salaried job is only 9.68%. As per 2011 census, sex ratio has improved only marginally from 946 in 2001 to 947 in 2011. Further, the child sex ratio has recorded its lowest since 1961 census at 919 which has declined by 13 points from 934 in 2001 in rural India.

Still from 2007-08 to 2011-12, the monthly per capita rural consumption expenditure compound annual growth rate of 16.7% compared to 15.6% in urban areas(NSSO). In the previous three years it has risen at a CAGR of 11.4% against 11.8% for urban areas (Mid-year review 2015-16, Ministry of Finance).

Hence, there are numerous challenges in rural marketing like outsized population base (90.4 billion) and dispersed market, dwindling per-capita income, underdeveloped people and underdeveloped markets, variations in the level of literacy, distribution challenge and channel management, skeptical nature of rural people, heterogeneous cultures and languages (22 official languages), persistent structural bottlenecks like transportation, inadequate communication network, inadequate warehousing, etc. seasonal demand, technological advancement is costly, skilled local talent is hard to find, developing new business models, unavailability of appropriate media, lack of granular information on rural market and time consuming data collection and analysis.

5.5 Strategies adopted by Renowned Brands in Rural India

Following companies have undertaken a host of strategic initiatives to ameliorate their presence in Indian rural markets:

Patanjali

- Baba Ramdev's spiritual marketing and content marketing techniques and efforts like targeting masses through pranayam and yoga, brand positioning of Patanjali yogpeeth .
- Identifying areas, villagers, self-help groups, cooperatives and clusters for growing crops of high quality.
- Providing necessary technical know-how to farmers for growing organic crops and superior plantations.
- Forward marketing contracts with registered farmers and collective farm production making use of mobile collection centers and primary collection centers.
- Safe and quick transportation, and ensuring direct and lucrative remuneration to the farmers.
- Reducing processing charges by supplying high quality products through a wide network of Patanjali centers. (Patanjali Ayurveda Ltd Strategy, 2015)

Vodafone

- Impelled operational performance through value enhancement and cost reduction.
- Innovate and dispense on customer's total communication needs.
- Vigorously manage portfolio to maximize returns.
- Calculated tie-ups and alliances.
- Vodafone India and HDFC bank have announced plans to launch a mobile banking service across the country called 'M-pesa', which will facilitate selected retailers to offer banking service to Vodafone customers, who would be able to withdraw from or deposit to their HDFC account and transfer funds using their mobile device. (vodafone.com)

Hindustan Unilever Limited

- Circuitous coverage approach: Company vans were replaced by vans belonging to redistribution stockiests, serving a selected group of neighboring markets.
- Operation Harvest: It endeavored to supplement the role of conventional media in rural areas and, in the process, forge viable relationships and attained loyalty of rural customers. It implicated conducting product awareness programs on vans.
- Cinema Van maneuvers: It had films and audio

cassettes with song and dance sequences from popular films along with advertisements of HUL products.

- Project Shakti: It is a rural distribution initiative targeting small villages which benefits HUL by enhancing its direct rural reach and also creates livelihood opportunities and empowers the rural women.
- In addition to the distribution arrangement, the Shakti project also includes 'Shakti Vani', which is a social awareness program operating in more than 20000 villages in Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka,, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh.
- 'iShakti' is a portal initiated as a part of Project Shakti which bestows the rural community with a computer based information portal, equipped with 'ishakti' software on key areas such as agriculture, health, vocational training, legal procedures and education.(hul.co.in)

Dabur

- It employed rural oriented T.V. commercials, radio publicity, newspaper advertisements, POP displays, wall paintings, contest in mellas and haats, video vans, and regional brand strategy.
- It is trying to capture the market by launching its products with a regional twist, e.g. Sivappu Pal Podi.
- Its distribution channel is Dealer ---Wholesaler--- Agents---Retailer---Kirana store.
- Dabur uses ASTRA (advanced sales training for retail ascendance) to boost rural sales.
- Shopkeepers are trained to sell consumer products through role play.
- Dabur goes rural with campaign for immunity, by educating 10 lakh students about the requirement for immunity in 1000 schools across the country.
- 'Dabur Gulaberi Miss Fresh Face Contest'.(Marketing Mix of Dabur-Marketing91.com)

Amul

- Advertisements on Aakashwani, hoardings, and posters.
- By implementing low cost pricing strategy to make its products affordable and attractive to consumers.
- By edifying transparency among farmers for building cooperative societies and restoring their trust.
- By training rural inhabitants about the quality and supply of milk.
- By getting the entire activity chain of GCMMF under an uninterrupted information flow network.

- Empowering rural masses towards self-development activities by cultivating their competencies.
- By confronting global competition with effective decision making.
- Eliminating the middlemen to beget producers closer to consumers. (Amul strategy-Marketing91.com)

Coke

- It doubled the number of its outlets in rural areas.
- Vindicating the gap between soft drinks and other local options like tea, butter milk, lemon water etc. through effective rural oriented advertisements.
- It doubled its expenditure on Doordarshan which has still the principal reach among the masses, augmented price compliance from 30% to 50% in rural markets and reduced the overall costs by 40%.
- It also tapped local entertainment predilections like haats and fairs and set huge investments in infrastructure for distribution and marketing.
- Tagline-"Thanda matlab Coca-cola" was targeted at rural or semi-urban clientele.
- Coca-Cola launched assembly campaign phase in a new 200ml bottle, smaller than the conventional 300ml bottle found in urban areas.
- Coke started to draw up a hit list of high potential villages from various districts, ensuring full loads, by appointing large distributors and supplying them through company's depot in large towns and cities. (How Coca Cola conquered rural India-India Brand Equity Foundation)

Colgate

- In 1998 it contacted 6 million people in 20000 villages, out of which 15000 villages had not practiced toothpaste or toothpowder before.
- 'Sampark', a scheme was started as a door to door promotion campaign by specialists in advertising people, with the objective of suggesting and implementing rural promotional plans.
- It explored the media accessibility at different locations.
- It also developed region specific consumer profiles to comprehend the characteristics of its target audiences. (Branding Strategy in Rural Markets in India-Publishing India Group)

LG

- It set up a lifestyle research team to analyze the needs and preferences of rural customers in depth.
- In 1998, LG developed a television brand specifically for the rural market, christening it 'sampoorna', which

had features that addressed the needs of semi urban and rural consumers.

- LG spent close to US\$ 50000 in developing a unit with on screen display options in the regional languages like Tamil and Bengali.
- It priced the model with rural affordability in mind at 14400.
- It also invested in building a strong district networking system to drive its marketing efforts, creating a hierarchy of 45 area offices and 59 remote rural area offices. (LG India - Approach to Rural Markets, 2005)

Hero Honda

- The company set up separate rural vertical in 2007 and undertook a series of initiatives related to product development, consumer understanding, marketing, distribution and after sale services.
- The company does 'rural footprint' studies on a quarterly basis to chart different events taking place in the villages with the aim to understand and map event suitability for promotional drives and increased sales push.
- It builds its rural marketing strategy around influencer groups like rural elders, teachers, panchayat

members etc. with a focus on building and enduring relationships with rural customers.

- It started the 'har gaon har angan' program with 500 sales representatives who were required to meet potential customers and opinion leaders in the villages. It also included free service and check up camps, consultations for obtaining driving license safe driving educational programs, health checkups and awareness programs.
- It also started 'sikhao baliye', another unique initiative targeting rural women to persuade them to drive motorbikes.
- To help increase its reach to 70% of 6 lakh villages, it added a new layer of 'Authorised Representatives of Dealers'(ARD), based on profit sharing mechanism, to its distribution network, similar to the hub and spoke model in the district headquarters.
- It has kept the brand fresh and appealing to rural consumers through product differentiation.
- It has launched some entry level products tailored to suit rural consumer like adjustable suspension, strong headlights and good ground clearance. (Hero Honda Marketing Strategy, 2009)

5.6 SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Lower costs	Lack of patents	Export opportunities	Changes in technology increases complications
Extensive customer base	Limited product line	Change in consumer lifestyle	Price wars and resultant rise in costs
Image of Trust	Lack of good infrastructure result in higher prices	Encouraging Government policies	Competition
Increase in literate consumers	Less availability of raw materials	Opportunity for customization	Costly to create product awareness
Good government support	Hurdles in physical distribution system	Shift from quantity to quality	Changes in law
Social responsibility to produce healthier products and lifestyle.	Limited consumption level	Brand consciousness and brand awareness	Political interference
Promote natural products without any side effects.	Strong competition from indigenous products	Influence of family members from urban areas	Controversies may have a strong negative impact

6. Proposed Model for Implementing 'Make in India' Campaign

Product strategies

- Focus on customer product requirement
- Creating new product categories
- Developing specific product for specific segment
- Customizing products as per Rural Mindset
- Create value through innovative use of technology

Price strategies

- Setting the right price points with a range of cheaper variants by selling products as discrete units rather than in multiunit packs.

Promotion strategies

- Regards for cultural and social values
- Generating awareness through the right media such as puppet shows and live demonstrations in haats and rural fairs.
- Right positioning and quality perception
- Easy communication targeting a rural market
- Advertising through patriotic messages

Distribution strategies

- Adapt and minimize the supply chains
- Optimizing sourcing processes by replacing middlemen with direct manufacture to producer linkages. Example- ITC's e-choupal network
- Devise localized distribution channels
- Adopting a hub and spoke distribution model
- Infrastructure sharing among non-competing companies

Institutional strategies

- Tapping rural sources to fill talent needs
- Be a part of local community e.g. HUL, ITC and Hero Honda have moved beyond traditional vendor roles to partner with local communities
- Integrate rural marketing strategy into the company's core strategy
- Secure top-down commitment and advocate constantly
- Invest in future workforce
- Capturing and analyzing research data in novel ways.

7. Conclusion

Spiraling literacy rates, surging awareness owing to multifarious mass media channels and regenerating lifestyle has coerced an exorbitant change in the mindsets of rural population and encouraged the rural marketing

crackerjacks like Hindustan Unilever, Godrej Consumer Products, Patanjali, Dabur, Marico, ITC, LG, Samsung, Maruti, Hero Honda and Bajaj for increasing their penetration in rural hinterland. Rural marketing whence has become a perfect target market for Indian and multinational corporates, who have invested or want to invest their fortunes under 'Make in India' campaign so that they can crevice a position for themselves in the Indian economy.

However, the issues and challenges of rural India are of immense magnitude while formulating strategies to egress its titanic potential, as they help in thoughtful understanding of rural mindsets, their lifestyle and their buying behavior, to develop cutting edge marketing plans apt for rural encompassment, positioning ones organizations distinctive capabilities to respond to diversity and dynamics of countryside, constantly reinventing cultures and strategies, diagnosing rural challenges for yielding and bolstering a sustainable competitive edge in rural scenario. Hence, discerning the psyche of rural consumer, employing avant-garde product technologies, amplifying communication methodologies specifically for them to ingress the last mile rural consumer has become exigent for the companies.

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