

UNDERSTANDING RURAL CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION

Dr. Raj Kumar, IIMT College of Management, Greater Noida, India

Dr. Rajender Kumar, Department of Commerce, Rajdhani College, University of Delhi

Dr. Bijay Prasad Kushwaha, IIMT College of Management, Greater Noida, India

ABSTRACT

Globalization is an interactive co-evolution of several factors such as economic, social, cultural, institutional, technological, and environmental. The progressive stride of globalization has led each sphere to produce, reduce costs, distribute, and enlarge the terrain. The urban markets have been saturating, so the focus is on trapping the rural markets. The marketer's efforts and their own increased interaction riding on the growing reach of media, of course apart from increased purchasing power marketers are looking for fresh challenges and approaching in a big way to attract this large market with newer variety of products specially designed for those markets, lucrative schemes, appealing advertisements and logistical supports. The globalization has replaced modest rural consumers with modern rural consumers, led to access varieties of media, modern technologies, product alternatives, and gather enough information before making buying decision. This paper presents the impact of globalization on rural consumers' buying behaviour, their expectations, and utility aspects. The data is collected from the existing users of two-wheelers residing in the rural part of Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh.

Key Words: *Globalization, Modest, Consumer Buying Behaviour, Expectations*

INTRODUCTION

With the economic liberalization of 1991, de-licensing of sector in 1993, and Auto policy 2002, the automobile industry has acquired additional boost to become vibrant and globally competitive. The income and size of rural consumers and market itself states of its potential. The present marketing environment and economic scenario have brought the corporate under contemporary roofs of modern India, which is challenging the current standards of segmenting, targeting and reaching the customers (Kalotra, 2013). Realistically, India with 31.14 per cent (Census, 2011) urban consumer account nearly 68 per cent of the overall company profits while rural contribution is 32 per cent (McKinsey, 2010). India has witnessed the rural durable market growing at 25 per cent per annum (Patel, 2013). The motorcycles and scooters share of rural market as a percent of all India automobile market are 48 per cent and 40 per cent respectively. Hero Honda, the world's largest manufacturer of two-wheelers, generates over 40 percent of sales from rural areas (Accenture, 2010). In current scenario, the urban market growth rate is declining due to market saturation. The companies are looking forward new customer base, opportunities, avenues and challenges, and they do have a huge, untouched, untapped Indian rural market. For success in rural market companies have to revisit some common myths such as rural markets

being uneconomical to serve on account of their wide dispersion, wealth being concentrated in the metros, the role of elders and women in decision making, the low aspiration levels, non-rationality, price sensitivity, lack of brand awareness and quality consciousness of the rural consumer (Jha, 2003).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A plethora of product market opportunities are available to the post-modern consumers of present day globalized economy. The marketers produce competitive product and supply a variety of products and a number of brands to choose from and, these products are targeted to the consumers in every possible way, as part of the marketer's push strategy (Alex & Raveendran, 2007). In recent years, there is a large shift in consumer behavior among Indians due to enhanced awareness and information technology. Lifestyle among rural consumers has changed dramatically with influence of socio-economic conditions, cultural environment, education level, occupation and wide media coverage (Blackwell, R. D. et al., 2006). Consumers' decisions can provide a clue for which industry to survive, which companies to succeed, and also which products to excel. Through understanding the reasons for consumers to buy the products and their buying habits, the firms can make use of such information to devise corresponding marketing strategies in response to the consumers' needs (Blackwell, R. D. et al., 2006). Information technology, which creates a communication platform that, enables the exchange of goods, communication and resources regardless of geographic proximity, greatly increased the international flow of commerce and ideas (Scriven, 2014).

Consumer behavior is complex and very often not considered rational. A further challenge will be consumer personalities which differ across borders and also between and within regions. From the market perspective, people of India comprise different segments of consumers, based on class, status, and income. An important and recent development in India's consumerism is the emergence of the rural market (Kumari, 2012). Socioeconomic conditions considerably affect consumer behavior. Income affects the buying behavior in terms of amount, type and prices of products purchased. Income is more important in the buying of low social value product (Williams, 2002). When the income of the consumer is low, the consumer largely tends to focus on price and performance attributes and with the increase in income the consumer becomes more hedonic and may start desiring goods from western nations (Kim, 2002). Despite the basic characteristics of consumers the behavior pattern of consumers are more or less similar to each other. It may not be always correct to say that consumers behave in the same way as it much depends on type of products, quality of the products and price of the products. Therefore the producer must be paid special attention at least with regard to price and distribution system to cover the large number of customers (Rajaselvi, 2002). Rural areas are scattered and it is next to impossible to ensure the availability of a brand all over the country. It is true that Consumer India is flourishing, but at the same time Indian Consumer has his roots deep into his traditions (Rastogia & Chaudhary, 2012). Levitt in 1998 has acknowledged that the globalization trend coexisted with the opposite reality of heterogeneity, fragmentation and parochialism: "the more powerfully homogenized and relentlessly globalized

the world's communications and commerce get, the more varied its products and more numerous its consuming segments seem to become" (Nezakati & Akhoundi, 2013).

The two-wheelers segment has recorded significant changes after striding into 21st century in Indian Automobile Industry. The market for motorcycles is growing and its sale rose by 27 per cent annually during the last four years (Haniff, 2006). Two-wheeler has become an expression of the owners' personality. The customer in making his choice does evaluate the product in terms of utility, fuel economy, reliability, maintenance, affordability, performance, better after sales service at reasonable cost, performance, good parts at economical price, looks, safety and comfort and ease of riding for driving (Sathish, 2011). The two-wheelers in India are used for variety of work such as visiting people, carrying loads, outdoor jobs like selling and buying. In rural areas it helps people to travel more frequently has become a valuable support for increasing productivity and in turn the profit, besides helping as a personal mode of transportation (Siddhartha, 2002). A major part of growth in the two-wheeler industry has come from motorcycles, which considered fuel efficient, reliable and its suitability on rural Indian rough road. Marketers can benefit most if they can make the rural people feel that they value them as their customers (Kalotra, 2013). He also found in his study that the rural consumers usually do not experiment with a new product unless something triggers them. Despite examples of success and failure of companies expanding globally, consumers everywhere have been exposed to other cultures (Scriven, 2014). The consumer decision making is multinational, that is consumer choices are not base on a single product attributes instead consumers view products as bundles of attributes. Product attributes as well as household characteristics (Dardis & Soberon-Ferre, 1994) and finally, the colour of vehicle seems to play an important role in consumer preference (Devaki & Balakrishana, 2013).

The consumers prefer to purchase the Bikes which offer high fuel efficiency, good quality, technology, durability and reasonable price (Chadha, 2011). Better services like after sales service, free service, customer relation will retain the existing user in the same brand and also help to spread positive word of mouth regarding brand and products. Preference should be given not only in expanding the market. This can be successfully carried out only by rendering services in a satisfying manner (Vetrivel, 2012). The strong forward and backward linkage the automobile industry has strong and positive multiplier effect in propelling the progress of Indian economy (Ahmed, 2012). The government policy has positive influence on the development of India's automobile industry making it self-reliant and more dynamic (Ranawat, 2009). Two-wheeler Automobile industry is contributing significantly and playing an important role in the economic development of India. The sector has shown a tremendous growth after liberalization (Gopal, 2013).

IMPACTS OF GLOBALIZATION

Globalization is the new slogan in the world economy, dominating the world since the nineties of the last century. People had additional belief in private capital and resources, global companies started playing a vivacious role in the growth of developing countries. Talking on the optimistic side of its impact, globalization

has been fair enough on the developing economies to a certain extent. It brings varied opportunities for the developing country like FDI, Administration, Technologies, and so on. It gives a fillip for better access to the developed markets. From the theoretical aspect, trade in goods and services ensures allocating different resources and that has to be consistent. The administration and technology transfer assured better productivity and thus improved standard of living, quality, etc.

Globalization has also terrified open varied challenges such as disparity within different countries, instability in financial market and worsening the environmental situation. It creates high competition, price war between manufacturers. Foreign manufacturers also get the access to national resources and other benefits. Economic integration by 'globalization' also enables the cross country free flow of information, ideas, technologies, goods, services, capital, finance and people. The global transfer of funds led to the financial crisis, which has by now become a worrying phenomenon for the developing countries.

TWO-WHEELER INDUSTRY IN INDIA

In 1948, first time Bajaj Auto Ltd. Started importing and marketing of Vespa scooters in India. Later on, Enfield India Ltd., the manufacturer of the famous 'bullet' motor bike joined with manufacturing operations in India. In 1960s, another two companies Ideal Jawa and Escorts Ltd. entered in Indian two-wheelers market. The motorcycle segment registered as a healthy upward trend during 1960s and in the early 1970s, it was accounted for 36 per cent of the entire two wheeler market (Vetrivel, 2012). During this time the market of two-wheelers was largely seller/dealer dominated.

After the liberalization era, the two-wheelers markets in India have been leveraged to the extent that they are well protected by legal procedures and boasts of efficient administrators. The government has always been proactive in its strategies to make the future of Indian market productive and attractive. The two-wheeler market in India comprises of 3 types of vehicles, namely motorcycles, scooters, and mopeds. Among the 3 segments of the Indian two-wheeler market, major growth trends have been seen in the motorcycle segment over the last one decade (Gopal L. N., 2013). One good cause for such rise in demand for motorcycles is due to its resistance and balance even on bad road conditions. Most of the rural areas in India do not have decent roads and hence the need for good, shock-resistant, and steady two-wheelers such as motorcycles had been felt.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The choice of the two-wheelers for the purpose of the study has great relevance and significance in the present marketing framework as the overall growth of the economy has resulted into substantial increase in the purchasing power of the rural communities. There are very few instances of understanding the rural consumers' mindset. There exists only the practice of rural marketing. The marketers assumptions, generalizations and stereotypes has replaced insights and now it's required extra effort to think rural consumers with starting point

making our understanding more real by breaking up a few myths about rural consumers in the globalization era. Manufacturer of two-wheelers should understand the change in demand pattern, preferences, and perception before designing new product targeting rural consumers.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To investigate the impact of globalization on rural consumers' buying behaviour.
- To find out the various motive factors that play important role in the purchase decision in terms of two-wheelers.
- To study the utility aspect of two-wheelers segment in rural consumers point of view.

LIMITATIONS

This survey is conducted by considering the small sample size of one hundred twenty one respondents. The area of study is only one district of Andhra Pradesh, which may not justify the reliability of survey. Lack of secondary data and study on this topic on this particular area, it was difficult to be precise about the most appropriate sample size for conducting such research. Due to subjectivity and beliefs of respondents, some responses of the questionnaire may differ from the reality. Also due to lack of researcher's knowledge about the culture and language of this area may affect the validity of the data.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive in nature because it explains the impact of globalization on rural consumer and cues they prefer. For investigating the research objectives the researcher has chosen structured questionnaire as primary data source. The questions were framed in such a manner to elicit the different types of information relating to the buyer behaviour of two-wheelers in rural areas, and also an instrument to establish relationship between the income levels and rural background with purchase decisions as dependent variable, and occupation and demographic background as independent variables. The questionnaires were pre-tested on 15 rural consumers and minor changes in questions were done. Nonprobability convenient sampling technique was used for interviewing of 121 existing owners of two-wheelers. SPSS Software tools have been used for Chi-square and ANOVA statistical hypothesis testing.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

1. ANOVA between Consumers' Age Groups and Sources of Information

H0: The rural consumers' age groups don't have significant effect on the sources of information and their belief on it regarding two-wheelers.

H1: The rural consumers' age groups have significant effect on the sources of information and their belief on it regarding two-wheelers.

ONE WAY**DESCRIPTIVES**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
18-25	17	3.06	2.331	.565	1.86	4.26	1
26-35	55	4.00	2.152	.290	3.42	4.58	1
36-45	35	4.14	1.768	.299	3.54	4.75	1
46-60	10	3.90	1.969	.623	2.49	5.31	1
60+	4	2.50	1.000	.500	.91	4.09	2
Total	121	3.85	2.048	.186	3.48	4.22	1

ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	22.195	4	5.549	1.338	.260
Within Groups	481.127	116	4.148		
Total	503.322	120			

A one-way ANOVA between subjects was conducted to compare the effect of consumers' age groups and sources of information. As per the result of ANOVA test shows that rural consumers' age groups don't have significant effect on the sources of information and their belief on it regarding two-wheelers. The significant level is 0.260, which is more than 0.05, thus ANOVA is statistically not significant. So that we reject alternate hypothesis H1, and accept null hypothesis H0 that is rural consumers' age groups don't have significant effect on the sources of information and their belief on it regarding two-wheelers.

POST HOC TESTS**MULTIPLE COMPARISONS****Tukey HSD**

(I) AGE	(J) AGE	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
18-25	26-35	-.941	.565	.459	-2.51	.62
	36-45	-1.084	.602	.378	-2.75	.58
	46-60	-.841	.812	.838	-3.09	1.41
	60+	.559	1.132	.988	-2.58	3.70
26-35	18-25	.941	.565	.459	-.62	2.51
	36-45	-.143	.440	.998	-1.36	1.08

	46-60	.100	.700	1.000	-1.84	2.04
	60+	1.500	1.055	.615	-1.42	4.42
36-45	18-25	1.084	.602	.378	-.58	2.75
	26-35	.143	.440	.998	-1.08	1.36
	46-60	.243	.730	.997	-1.78	2.27
	60+	1.643	1.075	.546	-1.34	4.62
46-60	18-25	.841	.812	.838	-1.41	3.09
	26-35	-.100	.700	1.000	-2.04	1.84
	36-45	-.243	.730	.997	-2.27	1.78
	60+	1.400	1.205	.773	-1.94	4.74
60+	18-25	-.559	1.132	.988	-3.70	2.58
	26-35	-1.500	1.055	.615	-4.42	1.42
	36-45	-1.643	1.075	.546	-4.62	1.34
	46-60	-1.400	1.205	.773	-4.74	1.94

Looking at the Sig. column of Post Hoc Tests, we can see that all values of it are greater than 0.05. This Post Hoc Test also supports the result of One Way ANOVA. Thus both results suggest that rural consumers' age groups don't have significant effect on the sources of information and their belief on it regarding two-wheelers.

2. ANOVA between consumer's incomes and the Factors influence purchase decision

H0: The rural consumers' incomes don't have significant impact on the factors influence purchase decision of two-wheelers.

H1: The rural consumers' incomes have significant impact on the factors influence purchase decision of two-wheelers.

One Way

ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	12.893	5	2.579	1.386	.235
Within Groups	213.884	115	1.860		
Total	226.777	120			

A one-way ANOVA between subjects was conducted to compare the effect of consumer's income and the factors influencing purchase decision. As per the result of ANOVA test shows that rural consumers' incomes

don't have significant impact on the factors influence purchase decision of two-wheelers. The significant level is 0.235, which is more than 0.05, thus ANOVA is statistically not significant. So that we reject alternative hypothesis H1, and accept null hypothesis H0 that is rural consumers' incomes don't have significant impact on the factors influence purchase decision of two-wheelers.

POST HOC TESTS

MULTIPLE COMPARISONS

Tukey HSD

(I) INCOME	(J) INCOME	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
0-5	6-10	-.543	.399	.751	-1.70	.61
	11-20	.333	.394	.958	-.81	1.47
	21-30-	-.240	.409	.992	-1.43	.95
	30-50	.171	.475	.999	-1.21	1.55
	50+	.100	.747	1.000	-2.06	2.26
6-10	0-5	.543	.399	.751	-.61	1.70
	11-20	.876	.358	.150	-.16	1.91
	21-30-	.303	.375	.966	-.78	1.39
	30-50	.714	.446	.600	-.58	2.01
	50+	.643	.729	.950	-1.47	2.76
11-20	0-5	-.333	.394	.958	-1.47	.81
	6-10	-.876	.358	.150	-1.91	.16
	21-30-	-.573	.369	.631	-1.64	.50
	30-50	-.162	.441	.999	-1.44	1.12
	50+	-.233	.726	1.000	-2.34	1.87
21-30-	0-5	.240	.409	.992	-.95	1.43
	6-10	-.303	.375	.966	-1.39	.78
	11-20	.573	.369	.631	-.50	1.64
	30-50	.411	.455	.945	-.91	1.73
	50+	.340	.734	.997	-1.79	2.47
30-50	0-5	-.171	.475	.999	-1.55	1.21
	6-10	-.714	.446	.600	-2.01	.58
	11-20	.162	.441	.999	-1.12	1.44
	21-30-	-.411	.455	.945	-1.73	.91
	50+	-.071	.773	1.000	-2.31	2.17

	0-5	-.100	.747	1.000		-2.26	2.06
	6-10	-.643	.729	.950		-2.76	1.47
50+	11-20	.233	.726	1.000		-1.87	2.34
	21-30-	-.340	.734	.997		-2.47	1.79
	30-50	.071	.773	1.000		-2.17	2.31

Looking at the Sig. column of Post Hoc Tests, we can see that all values of it are greater than 0.05. This means that rural consumers' incomes don't have significant impact on the factors influence purchase decision of two-wheelers. When we look at the income 6-11 and cross ponding income 11-20, the value is 0.15. This value is very less and closer to 0.05 compare to other values but still it is greater than 0.05. Thus both results suggest that the rural consumers' incomes don't play important role in their purchase decision of two-wheelers.

3. Chi-Square between Occupations of Consumers and Purposes of Buying

H0: The rural consumers' occupations don't have significant relation with the purpose of buying two-wheelers.

H1: The rural consumers' occupations have significant relation with the purpose of buying two-wheelers.

CROSSTABS

PURPOSE * OCCUPATION CROSS-TABULATION

		OCCUPATION				Total
		Student	Businessman	Salaried	Others	
PURPOSE	For Business	2	6	7	9	24
	Going Market	4	8	7	7	26
	Going Office	10	6	21	2	39
	Visiting Relatives	3	2	2	3	10
	Carrying Goods	4	3	1	11	19
	Can't Say	0	0	2	1	3
Total		23	25	40	33	121

CHI-SQUARE TESTS

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	32.659 ^a	15	.005
Likelihood Ratio	37.313	15	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	.050	1	.823
N of Valid Cases	121		

a. 13 cells (54.2%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.57.

From the top row of the Chi-square Test Table, Pearson Chi-Square statistic (χ^2) is 32.659. The chi-squared statistic has 15 degrees of freedom and p value equals .005. There is an important warning at the bottom of the Chi-Square output. The warning tells us that 54.2% of the cells have expected frequencies less than 5. However the p value is less than the .05 then we can accept alternative hypothesis H1 and reject null hypothesis H0. That is, the rural consumers' occupations do have significant relation with the purpose of buying two-wheelers.

RESULTS

- ❖ Hero, Bajaj, and Yamaha manufacturers of two-wheelers have dominated the rural market, offering the products with fuel efficiency, availability, and low price of vehicles. Customers love to buy global brand but due to out of their budget price and inaccessible to store as well as lack of service center in rural area, they are bounded to domestic products. Customers like speed, pickup, and outlook of global brand most.
- ❖ Almost half of the owners of two-wheelers are self-influenced followed by more than one-fourth of are influenced by family members that they need two-wheelers. More than half of the owners consider fuel efficiency and resale value followed by 20 per cent of customers consider pickup while purchasing two-wheelers. Where 39 per cent of salaried owners consider pickup most.
- ❖ Two-third of customer has bought two-wheelers by means of usage in day to day activities, its benefits and the last but not least income of owners. One-third of the customers have owned two-wheelers by the means of transportation for going office, more than one-fifth for going market, and business. This could be due to lack of efficient transportation facilities and rough road condition.
- ❖ More than one-third of customers have trust on users' review, word of mouth, and family & friends as source of information. TV commercial and Newspapers are still far from rural consumers but they are also slowly and gradually increasing their shares in purchase decision. Internet has also got a good share and has better growth than TV and Newspapers.
- ❖ More than one third customers are self-funded for owning two-wheelers. Whereas almost half of the customers have got fund from either banks or finance company. These sources of fund have greater positive value from the customer view point. Money lenders have been pushed back near to zero.

SUGGESTIONS

The marketers can promote the product in a way that the brand image itself can express the rural customers about product quality, utility, technology, fuel efficiency, durability, and reasonable price of two-wheelers. It

can be suggested that the brand image and brand loyalty could be boosted by selling quality product at a reasonable price to suit the needs of middle income group. The majority of Indian consumers in generation Y, also known as the millennial generation, they keep the most popular brand in their heartbeat. If marketers can make product seems cool, that brand will be popular to consumers in this generation. A product that is viewed as cool is nothing more than a product that is popular and in style, and what is popular and in style relates to the consumer's culture. Culture plays a very important role in consumer buying behaviour of two-wheelers.

Global manufacturers should establish their outlets nearer to area where rural customers can access it. They can introduce economy bike with better mileage and their spare parts of products should be easily available. Global manufacturers can target salaried rural customers who have regular source of income and upper class who have huge disposable income. The good relationship with existing customers will help to blowout positive users' review and word of mouth promotion which are highly effective in rural market. It also helps to retain the existing customers. The same can be advice to domestic manufacturers also, because TV commercial and newspapers ads are costlier and they do not have very important role on purchase decision because of less trust on these formats of promotion. As we know rural customers have very limited disposable income so that they expect economy two-wheelers with less fuel consuming, strong engine for loading goods and in accounted price.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The study has focused to rural marketing in globalization era pointing out the influencing factors, customer expectations, suitable media for advertisement and preferred promotional strategies. This will empower the business tycoons to sustain in the market with appropriate alterations in their marketing strategies. It also gives a very valuable guidance for marketers and advertisers to select the right type of promotional structures and media to reach rural consumers. In Indian rural market, word of mouth and users' review are the best way of marketing to appeal consumers.

The separating marketing strategies have to be distinctly developed with certain unique characteristic to suit the rural market. This is especially because rural consumers vary in terms of its consumption pattern, purchase decisions, purchase behaviour, attitudes and perceptions towards products. The dominant economic peculiarities of rural India may be recognized in terms of the source, the frequency and the seasonal nature of income and consumption. These differences also affect the buying pattern of rural consumers.

CONCLUSION

One outcome of the globalization is abundance of alternatives available to rural consumers. Hereafter even rural consumers seem to conduct more enquiries on products generally looking for the best deal. Consistent with this notion is the result that when it comes to two-wheelers, brand name is not always the primary determinant for rural consumers' choice. Fuel efficiency and price are usually the driving forces that ultimately cause the rural

consumers to make a purchase decision. Single unique promotional tool may not successful lead to the consumers, for the reason it may be identified the potential of consumers in segment wise, and the best way of promotion applicable on those segments. So there will be possibilities to emphasize the product in multi dimension approach.

The globalization has brought certain changes in rural consumers' buying behaviour but still it is in slow pace. The cause may be lack of education, scarce source of information for rural consumers, and untargeted Indian rural market by global manufacturers. Domestic manufacturers have deliberated all the rural consumers' expected features in their bikes. Thus rural consumers are very satisfied with their bikes and they still love to buy domestically produced one. Slowly and progressively rural consumers are interested in using internet to know about new upcoming models and their features. Customers are now availing credit facilities from banks and finance companies, which have ruled out money lenders from rural area too.

The extent of rural consumer behaviour is enormous, and utmost topics are important as they are remarkable. Further studies on each variable may also be undertaken in-depth, for instance, a study could be undertaken to explore the globalization and its impact rural consumer behaviour in information search, post-purchase behaviour, etc. There is scope to conduct a comparative study to identify differences in information search behaviour between low involvement and high involvement products.

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