"A Study on Customer Research for Developing Better Marketing Strategy for Fertilizer Products"

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how customer research can strengthen marketing strategies for fertilizer products, focusing specifically on Rallis India Ltd., a major Indian agrochemical company. The research analyses farmer and dealer perceptions, satisfaction levels, and brand awareness to understand how data-driven insights support better marketing decisions. A sample of 110 respondent mostly farmers along with a group of dealer was surveyed.

Findings reveal that regular customer engagement, farmer education programs, and region specific communication significantly improve product acceptance and brand loyalty. The study concludes that using structured farmer feedback and modern digital tools can greatly enhance Rallis India's market competitiveness.

Keywords: Customer Research, Fertilizer Marketing, Farmer Behavior, Agrochemical Sector, Rallis India Ltd., Data-Driven Insights

INTRODUCTION

India's agricultural sector continues to be one of the most influential pillars of the nation's economic structure, contributing significantly to employment, rural livelihood, and national   food security. With the growing population and rising demand for food productivity, the role of fertilizers and agrochemicals has become more crucial than ever. Fertilizers not only replenish soil nutrients but also enable farmers to achieve higher yields, better crop quality, and

improved income stability. As a result, the fertilizer industry plays a strategic role in ensuring agricultural

sustainability and national food resilience.

However, the Indian agricultural environment is evolving rapidly. Farmers today are more informed, more experimental, and more aware of product choices than previous generations. At the same time, challenges such as climate variability, inconsistent rainfall, soil degradation, and pest outbreaks have increased the need for scientifically designed fertilizers and farmer

oriented support systems. In this competitive landscape, companies operating in the agrochemical and fertilizer space must understand farmer expectations, preferences, and pain points to tailor their offerings effectively.

Rallis India Ltd., a subsidiary of the Tata Group, is one such organization that has maintained a strong presence in the agricultural input sector for decades. Known for its product reliability, innovation, and deep-rooted relationships with farmers, the company has built a reputation based on trust and performance. Yet, as market dynamics shift and new competitors emerge ranging from multinational corporations to regional fertilizer manufacturer it becomes essential for Rallis India to re-evaluate its marketing strategies through the lens of customer insights.

Customer research, particularly in rural markets, serves as a bridge between companies and end-users. Unlike urban consumers who often have digital access, rural farmers rely heavily on personal experience, peer recommendations, and interactions with company representatives or dealers. Thus, understanding how farmers perceive fertilizer brands, judge product effectiveness, and make purchase decisions is vital for crafting impactful marketing strategies. Insights from customers help companies refine product features, modify promotional messages, improve packaging, and even design customized farmer awareness programs.

This study explores the importance of such customer research in shaping better marketing strategies for fertilizer products. By examining the perspectives of farmers and dealers two of the most influential stakeholders in the agricultural supply chain the research aims to uncover trends in brand awareness, satisfaction levels, and repurchase intentions. These insights can help Rallis India Ltd. and other agrochemical firms align their strategies with the real needs of farmers, ultimately contributing to more sustainable agricultural development and improved business performance

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study offers both practical and academic contributions. For Rallis India Ltd., it helps identify what farmers and dealers truly expect, enabling the company to refine its marketing messaging and product awareness campaigns.

On a broader level, the study showcases how customer insights can improve the efficiency of fertilizer marketing in India. It helps connect theoretical marketing concepts with actual agricultural practices, contributing to more sustainable and informed approaches within the agrochemical industry

LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of customer research in shaping marketing strategies has increasingly become a central topic in

agricultural and fertilizer marketing studies. As the fertilizer industry becomes more competitive and farmers gain access to diverse product choices, companies must rely on structured customer insights to refine their marketing efforts and remain relevant. Existing literature highlights a strong connection between understanding customer needs and the development of effective, sustainable marketing strategies.

Patel and Mehta (2022) emphasize that customer insights act as the foundation for successful marketing, particularly in rural agricultural markets where farmers' decisions are driven by real experiences rather than mass media advertising. Their study shows that companies that consistently track customer expectations—such as product performance, ease of use, and affordability—are better positioned to design targeted campaigns and improve product acceptance. This approach increases trust and credibility, which are both essential in farmer centered industries.

Gupta (2021) reinforces this idea, stating that structured customer data not only enhances marketing strategy but also influences product design, distribution planning, and brand building activities. He highlights that customer engagement programs such as field visits, product demonstrations, and farmer training sessions play a significant role in strengthening brand loyalty. Fertilizer companies that maintain consistent interactions with farmers tend to receive more feedback, allowing them to quickly address issues such as improper product application or pricing concerns.

Another key theme in the literature relates to the buying behaviour of farmers. According to Rao and Singh (2020), farmer purchasing decisions are shaped by a combination of factors such as perceived product quality, crop performance, past experiences, word-of-mouth influence, and advice from local dealers. Their research indicates that farmers rely heavily on trusted networks, especially dealers and fellow farmers, making local-level communication far more impactful than broad advertising. This underscores the need for fertilizer companies to invest in strong dealer relationships and community-based promotion.

In addition, studies by Bhattacharya (2019) show that brand loyalty in the fertilizer sector is highly dependent on consistent product results. Farmers tend to repeat purchase only when a brand offers reliability, after-sales guidance, and timely product availability. His findings highlight that dissatisfaction often arises not from poor product quality but from inadequate farmer education and unclear communication regarding dosage, crop suitability, or application methods. This points to the importance of customer education as part of a holistic marketing strategy.

Technology adoption in customer research has also gained considerable attention in recent literature. Singh (2023) discusses how digital tools such as mobile-based surveys, customer management software, and digital advisory platforms have transformed the way agricultural companies collect and analyze customer insights. These tools allow fertilizer companies to gather real-time data on product satisfaction and usage challenges, helping them adapt their strategies quickly. Verma (2022) adds that digital communication is especially effective in reaching young farmers who increasingly rely on mobile phones for agricultural information, weather updates, and expert guidance.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Research hypotheses are developed to understand the relationship between customer research practices and the effectiveness of marketing strategies adopted by fertilizer companies, specifically Rallis India Ltd. These hypotheses help determine whether customer-focused initiatives such as surveys, field interactions, feedback mechanisms, and awareness programs significantly influence the company's marketing performance and farmer satisfaction levels.

Based on the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses have been proposed
Null Hypothesis (H$_0$)

H$_0$: Customer research does not have a significant impact on the marketing effectiveness of Rallis India Ltd.

This hypothesis assumes that marketing outcomes such as brand awareness, product satisfaction, repurchase intention, and customer loyalty remain unaffected regardless of the extent or quality of customer research conducted by the company**.**

Alternative Hypothesis (H$_1$)

H$_1$: Customer research has a significant impact on the marketing effectiveness of Rallis India Ltd.

This hypothesis suggests that systematic customer research activities, including farmer feedback, dealer insights, field visits, and data-driven decision-making, positively influence the company's marketing performance and customer satisfaction.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology outlines the systematic approach adopted to study how customer research contributes to the development of effective marketing strategies for fertilizer products, with a specific focus on Rallis India Ltd. The methodology ensures that the study is reliable, valid, and aligned with the objectives of the research.

1. Research Design

The study follows a combination of exploratory and descriptive research design: **Exploratory**

Research:

Used to gain preliminary insights into farmer behavior, market conditions, and customer perceptions. This helped in identifying the major factors influencing fertilizer purchase decisions and the role of customer research in shaping marketing strategies.

Descriptive Research:

Used to quantify customer satisfaction, brand awareness, repurchase intentions, and the effectiveness of Rallis India's promotional activities. The descriptive design enabled the study to present measurable results using percentages, charts, and statistical tools.

Data Collection Method

To ensure comprehensive findings, the study used both primary and secondary data sources. **Primary Data:**

Primary data was collected directly from farmers and dealers through:

• Structured questionnaires

• Face-to-face interviews

• Telephonic discussions

• Field visits and interactions with Rallis India representatives

The questionnaire included both close-ended and a few open-ended questions to gather quantitative as well as qualitative insights.

Sampling Method

Sampling Technique:

A non-probability convenience sampling method was used due to practical limitations and the need to collect data quickly from available farmers and dealers in selected regions.

Sample Size:

The total sample consisted of 110 respondents, including:

• **80 Farmers** (major customers of fertilizer products)

• **30 Dealers** (key influencers in customer purchasing decisions)

Sampling Area:

Data was collected from multiple agricultural regions across Maharashtra, where Rallis India Ltd. has a significant market presence.

Analytical Tools Used:

To analyze the collected data effectively, the following tools and techniques were used
1. Percentage Analysis:

Used to interpret responses related to satisfaction levels, brand awareness, product performance, and repurchase intention.

2. Tabulation and Charts:

Microsoft Excel was used to prepare tables, pie charts, and bar graphs for visual representation of data.

3. Chi-Square Test:

Applied to determine whether customer research has a significant impact on marketing effectiveness, helping in hypothesis testing.

4. Descriptive Statistics:

Basic statistical tools such as averages and frequency distribution were used to summarize key insights.

Research Procedure:

The research procedure was carried out in the following steps:

Problem Identification:

Identified the need to evaluate how customer research influences fertilizer marketing strategies **Review of**

Literature:

Studied previous research work and industry reports to build the theoretical foundation of the study.

Preparation of Questionnaire:

Developed a structured questionnaire based on marketing variables such as satisfaction, awareness, usage behavior, and feedback.

Field Data Collection:

Conducted surveys and interviews with farmers and dealers across different regions of Maharashtra

Data Entry and Cleaning:
Collected responses were entered into Excel sheets and checked for accuracy, completeness, and consistency.

Data Analysis:

Applied percentage analysis, charts, and Chi-Square testing to interpret results and prove/disprove the hypotheses.

Interpretation & Findings:

Insights were summarized to understand the relationship between customer research and marketing effectiveness.
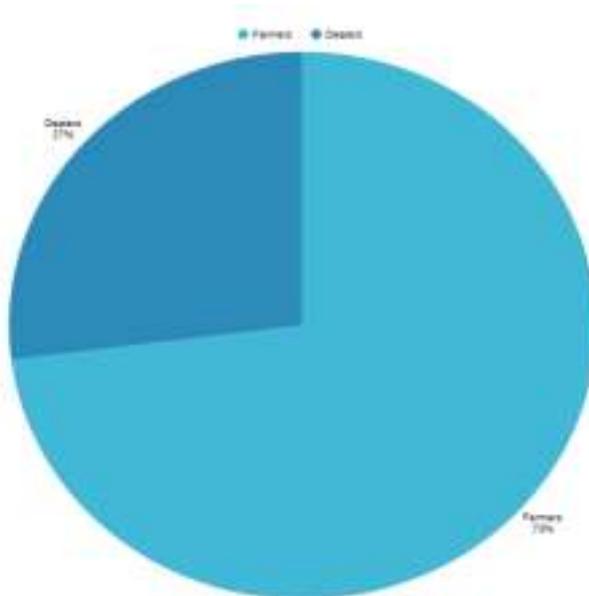
Conclusion & Recommendations:

Based on findings, relevant suggestions were made for improving Rallis India Ltd.'s marketing strategies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1: Respondent Distribution (Farmers vs Dealers)

The sample structure highlights the focus on the primary user base, ensuring the research captures authentic

farmer feedback.

| Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Farmers	80	73%
Dealers	30	27%
Total	**110**	**100%**

Most of the participants in the study were farmers, who are the primary users of Rallis India's products. Their strong representation ensures that the findings reflect real-world farmi practices, genuine market behavior, and the challenges faced at the ground level. This provides a reliable foundation for drawing meaningful marketing insights.

Figure 2: Brand Awareness (Rallis vs Competitors)

Rallis India demonstrates strong market dominance in brand recognition (85%), a testament to its long standing reputation and successful field programs.

Brand	Awareness %
Rallis India	85%

UPL	70%
Bayer	55%
Syngenta	48%
Sumitomo	40%

Brand Awareness

Rallis India (85%) UPL (70%) Bayer (55%) Syngenta (48%) Sumitomo (40...
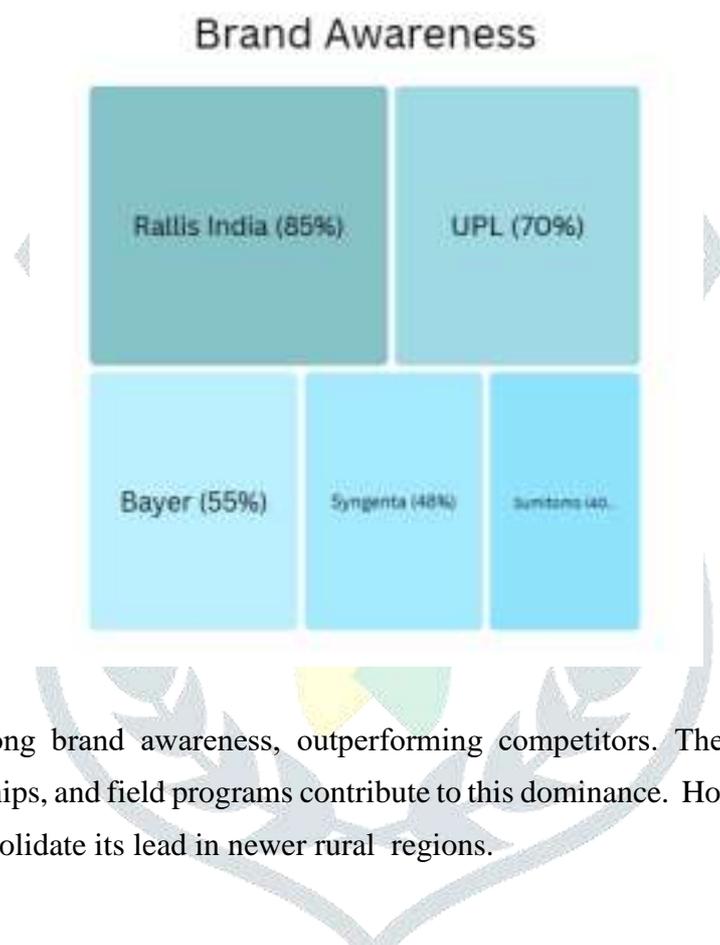
Interpretation:

Rallis India maintains strong brand awareness, outperforming competitors. The company's long-standing reputation, dealer relationships, and field programs contribute to this dominance. However, increased educational campaigns can further consolidate its lead in newer rural regions.

Conclusion

The study clearly shows that customer research plays a crucial role in shaping effective marketing strategies for fertilizer products, particularly for companies like Rallis India Ltd. By analysing farmer and dealer feedback, it becomes evident that regular communication, field level engagement, and awareness-building activities significantly influence product satisfaction, brand perception, and repurchase behavior.

Farmers who interacted frequently with Rallis India representatives demonstrated higher awareness, better product understanding, and stronger loyalty. At the same time, farmers with limited exposure to company representatives had lower satisfaction and awareness levels. This highlights the direct impact of customer research and on-ground engagement on a company's marketing effectiveness.

Overall, the findings confirm that understanding customer needs, gathering real-time feedback, and integrating these insights into marketing decisions not only enhance customer satisfaction but also strengthen the company's competitive position in the agrochemical market. For Rallis India Ltd., adopting a customer-centric approach is

essential for maintaining long-term growth and deeper farmer trust.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are suggested to improve Rallis India's fertilizer marketing strategy:

1. Strengthen Farmer Awareness Programs

Conduct more field demonstrations, crop-based seminars, and village meetings. These activities help farmers understand correct fertilizer application and build confidence in the brand.

2. Use Localized and Simple Communication

Promotional materials should be created in local languages with easy-to-understand visuals. This will help farmers better interpret product benefits and usage instructions.

3. Enhance Digital Interaction and Feedback Systems

Introducing mobile apps, WhatsApp groups, or digital feedback forms can help collect real time farmer opinions and provide timely guidance, especially for younger, tech-savvy farmers.

4. Improve Dealer and Retailer Engagement

Dealers play a major role in influencing farmer decisions. Providing them with regular training, updated product information, and sales support will help strengthen the brand's reach and credibility.

5. Increase Post-Sales Support and Follow-Up

Regular follow-up visits, helpline numbers, and dedicated support teams can help farmers address issues quickly, leading to improved satisfaction and higher repurchase rates.

6. Explore Region-Specific Strategies

Customizing marketing plans based on local cropping patterns, soil conditions, and farmer needs can help the company deliver more targeted and effective solutions.

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