

**EXPLORING NEW POSSIBILITIES OF MARKET EXPANSION IN RURAL INDIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

India is the country of villages as two-third of the population survives in the rural areas. Marketers and the various big brands have major opportunities to enhance their brand value by expanding their market in a rural village. The rural population can generate a lot of profit for the companies therefore companies are showing their interest in the rural market. Large quantities of industrial and manufactured products are consumed by the rural people due to the green revolution. Rural markets provide a lot of opportunities in the form of untapped markets to increase income as well as increase the literacy level. Rural marketing strategy has been implemented by the marketers and Fast Moving Consumer Goods companies to take advantage of the opportunities. This article will help to explore the various possibilities along with the current scenario of the rural market.

**Keywords:** rural areas, rural population, multinational companies, rural market, market expansion.

**INTRODUCTION**

In a few years, the growth of the rural market will get better than the urban market. The total rural population in India is about 833 million. (**Census, 2011**) Marketers are focusing on the expansion of the rural market and “Go rural” has become the new slogan of the marketers. Multinationals as well as Indian marketers such as Godrej, Palmolive, and Hindustan Liver are showing their interest in the rural market and looking for opportunities to expand their business in the rural market. Rural markets are the future of upcoming business and big brands are trying to understand the dynamics of the rural market to get more competitive advantages (Tenhunen 2018). In the earlier time, Haats were most popular among the villages that contained the local products where local buyers and local sellers were present. It was a kind of weekly event and considered as the most important source of economy. The demand base of the rural market is quite high and provides opportunities to the marketers.

India is a country of villages two-thirds of the population lives in rural areas. Market expansion approaches help different organisations to grow along with their existing channels. In this aspect, the main consideration will be given to exploring new possibilities of market expansion in rural India. The rural markets are extremely different from the urban markets and it also offers a great aspect of opportunities. In this scenario, it can be seen that the rural market of India has a huge undiscovered and untapped market which has great opportunities as well. Through this review study, the possibilities of market expansion will be analysed as

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well as different types of strategies for exploring the market opportunities and their challenges will be discussed.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In recent decades, it can be seen that the rural markets of India are gaining much importance and they are also attracting marketers due to the substantial increase in the purchasing power of the people living in the region (AnhTu et al. 2020). Rural markets offer great opportunities because promoting and estimating certain specific products and services for the rural region can give the customers fulfilment of their necessary needs as well as the organisation goals of different companies can be accomplished (Tenhunen, 2018). Since the 1980s in the consumer market of India, the marketers or around the world especially in India are accumulating strategies for rural market because the opportunity is seen by evaluating 70% of the population who are looking forward to new products and services. The present scenario of the rural market can be understood to be extremely diverse especially in India. About 60 to 70% of the people are looking for the change and there are also looking forward to consuming demanded products in a different price range (Ren et al., 2019). It is also important to see that the rural village has increased to consume and rapid change in the last ten years by advocating the growing sales around 40%.

Rural marketing in India gives the gigantic capability to different types of businesses acknowledged with colossal undiscovered needs as well as the development of rural economy (AnhTu et al., 2020). With this particular aspect of development, the improvement in literacy rate will be seen as well as the ministration of different sectors will be understood. Different types of strategies have to be incorporated for understanding and also accomplishing several needs in the ruler market area of India. One of the greatest strategies will be the product development and market penetration strategy (Tenhunen, 2018). The products and services should be developed by organisations in such a manner that the people in rural India find them attractive and also can be satisfied.

The market penetration strategy is also important because various types of price ranges have to be changed according to their consumption as well as affordable range (Daftary,2019). This particular study mainly focuses on new possibilities of market expansion in the rural regions of India. The rural regions of India have an audience that can be targeted adequately as well as it also contributes to the growth factors of all types of organisations throughout the world. This development has considered different types of possibilities in market expansion and their importance. Different aspects of strategies have also been used for which the factors related to the exploration has been evaluated. The ways through which the possibilities can be enhanced have also been discussed with the changing scenario in the industry overview.

### **FACTORS THAT PROVIDE NEW POSSIBILITIES OF MARKET EXPANSION IN RURAL INDIA**

#### **1) LARGE POPULATION:**

Two-third of the Indian population survive in villages as India has approximately 6,40,000 villages (Census 2011). As compared to the urban population the rate of growth of the rural population is much higher than the urban population (Lele and Goswami 2017). Over 6 lakh villages, the rural population is scattered, which holds a great promise for the marketers. The large and scattered population of the villages is one of the prominent reasons for attracting marketers to explore possibilities in the village.

**TABLE NO. 1: RURAL URBAN DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION FROM 1901 TO 2011**

Year	Total	Rural Population %	Urban Population %
1901	238,396,327	89	11
1911	252,093,390	90	10
1921	251,321,213	89	11
1931	278,977,238	88	12
1941	318,660,580	86	14
1951	361,088,090	83	17
1961	439,234,771	82	18
1971	548,159,652	80	20
1981	683,329,097	77	23
1991	846,427,039	74	26
2001	1,028,737,436	72	28
2011	1,210,000,000	69	31

Sources: 1) [https://censusindia.gov.in/census\\_data\\_2001/india\\_at\\_glance/variation.aspx](https://censusindia.gov.in/census_data_2001/india_at_glance/variation.aspx)

2) [https://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/paper2/data\\_files/india/Rural\\_urban\\_2011.pdf](https://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/paper2/data_files/india/Rural_urban_2011.pdf)

## 2) HIGHER PURCHASING CAPACITY:

Increment in the population in rural areas affects the purchasing power of the people. The potential of the rural markets is increasing as the purchasing power of rural people is on the rise. As per Kovid et al. (2021), high purchasing capacity attracts marketers to expand their operations in rural India. In developing countries like India and China, the rural market has acquired significance in the last few years. Enhancement in the capacity of purchasing power has a significant impact on the growth of the economy of the country.

## 3) MARKET EXPANSION:

In the last few years, lots of improvement has been found in the rural market. The growth of the market has increased due to globalization (Kovid et al. 2021). Increments in the use of social networking sites have a direct impact on product usability in the villages. Brands like Colgate, toothpaste, team soaps have become more famous in rural places. Demand for these products has increased and that acts as an opportunity for the marketers to expand the market in the rural areas.

## 4) LOW STANDARD OF LIVING:

In the rural areas there is diverse socio-economic backwardness that impacts the living standard of the people. In the rural areas, people are less educated and have low awareness regarding the products. Marketers find opportunities to expand their markets in rural areas by taking advantage of the illiteracy of the rural people (Sinha and Bagarukayo 2019).

## 5) TRADITIONAL OUTLOOKS:

Traditional outlooks of the rural people are changing and the demand pattern of the rural community is changing to provide business opportunities to big brands in the rural market.

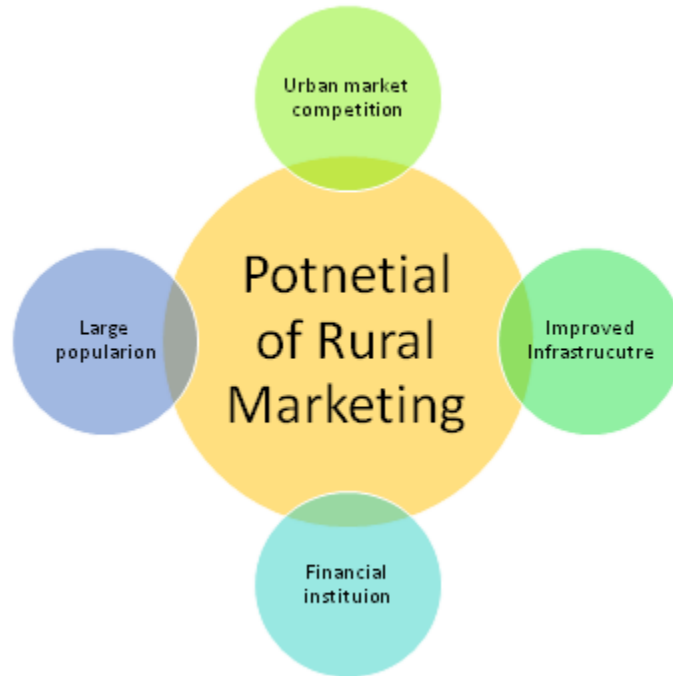
**6) INFRASTRUCTURE'S DEVELOPMENT:**

The scope of rural marketing has been increased through the development of infrastructure facilities such as transportation, construction of roads, and communication networks (Agarwal 2020).

**7) MARKETING MIX:**

Urban products and rural products are different and cannot be used on both populations. For the rural consumers, separate products are designed that need a marketing mix. According to the requirements of the rural consumers, marketing mix elements are used.

**FIGURE 1: POTENTIAL OF RURAL MARKETING**



(Source: Vicol 2017, p.456)

**8) RURAL STRATEGY**

Re-engineering of products, packaging, and practicing to customize features by some companies creates value for these markets. Chotukool refrigerator has been introduced by Godrej, low-cost ATMs have been developed by Vortex and a mobile application has been developed by Nokia that gives access to educational, agricultural, and entertainment content. Lifestyles of the rural people have improved with these innovative features and products. New communication and distribution channels have been developed by some players and created new products in the rural market including Gaon Chalo, Tata Teas, and Project Shakti. Rural India provides various opportunities to marketers to drive current business and breed news entrepreneurs (Wallenstein and Shelat 2017). Two third of the middle-class people live in rural areas and buying power of Rs 10,000 crore increased through the increment in one percent of India's rural income. A huge untapped market is required in the rural market for maximizing profitability. Still, the rural market of India is untapped and needed to implement the strategy of 3A's. 3A's include Availability, Affordability, and Acceptability.

In the few years, marketers have shown their interest in the rural market and relook for several reasons. The most important reason found is the immense market competition that leads to flat as well as declining sales. The saturation of the urban market is another big reason for the attraction of marketers.

Tapping the latent demand in the rural market as well as reaching out to 150 million rural markets is the easiest way of market expansion. As per Yadav et al. (2019), sachet marketing and microfinance are the kinds of markets that are exploring themselves in the rural market. Sachet marketing is the kind of marketing where the rural people can buy the products in an affordable range. Over a year various companies and advertising products led to the realization of the potential of rural India. The rural market expanded as various brands such as Coca-Cola started their campaign that provided a huge success to the company. Chic Shampoo as well as Cavinkare expanded their market in the rural areas. Cadbury came with one rupee of chocolate to attract the people and provided a slogan to attract the rural people such as Pappu pass ho Jaega as well as a cow campaign.

E-choupal was launched at Sagar district in Madhya Pradesh that introduced a new perspective to the branding of rural India. According to Patidar et al. (2018), the media explosion, enhancement in literacy rate brought a major change in the lifestyle of the people. Rural people are becoming more conscious as well as aware regarding their lifestyle. They understand the importance of brand values as brand consciousness is on the top. This allows the increment in the rural household's income that has made the rural consumer more demanding and choosier that can be seen in the purchasing behavior of the customers. Remarkable improvement in the form of products used can be seen in the behavior of the consumer. From indigenous teeth cleaning to tooth powder and toothpaste households of the people are improving. People have shifted to coils as well as mats from traditional mosquito repellent to get protection from the mosquito that shows the up-gradation of the rural people (Gupta 2019).

**TABLE NO. 2 :MARKET SIZE OF FAST MOVING CONSUMER GOODS IN INDIA FROM FINANCIAL YEAR 2011 TO 2020, WITH ESTIMATES UNTIL 2025**

<b>Years</b>	<b>FMCG market size in billion US \$</b>
2011	31.6
2012	33.3
2013	35.7
2014	38.8
2015	43.1
2016	49
2017	52.8
2018	68.8
2019	83.3
2020	110
2025	220

Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/742463/india-fmkg-market-size/>

From the above table no. 2 the Fast Moving Consumer Goods has been showing consistent increase in market size since 2011 to 2020. It is expected that the FMCG market will be 220 billion dollars by 2025. Though the FMCG has a low share in the Indian economy although a large volume of traded goods is growing. When India announced its first nation-wide lockdown in the face of the coronavirus pandemic in March 2020, online shopping turned into a more relevant alternative for offline FMCG purchases.

Rural people are shifting from unbranded products to branded products as well as low price brands to premium brands. At present Indian rural markets are shifting towards consumerism that outer space the urban market in increasing demand for durable products such as fans, wrist watchers, television as well as non-durable products such as ice cream, nail polish, mosquito repellents, and shampoo. As per Kumar et al. (2019), utilisations of these products have provided an opportunity to the organization to continue their markets as well as develop them in the untrapped market. They need to invest more in these markets and they need to fulfil the gap of the rural markets by following three waves. Godrej, Agrovat, ITC, and DCM Shriram are some famous brands that are expanding themselves in the rural areas and eclipse the growth in the urban counterparts that include future group-owned food Bajar chain as well as reliance fresh.

Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) in rural areas have been growing in the rural areas. Compared to urban income, the growth in the income of the rural market is better and they get the least support price for the crops such as paddy and wheat that have been hiked (Chatterjee et al. 2020). Over the last year, the price of rice, pulse, oilseeds, and milk have been dramatically enhanced. Hariyali Kisaan Bazaar has been promoted by DCM Shriram Consolidated that runs 180 stores in the various states of India including Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra. 30 to 40 percent growth in the FMCG sales has been seen in these stores (Ma et al. 2020).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

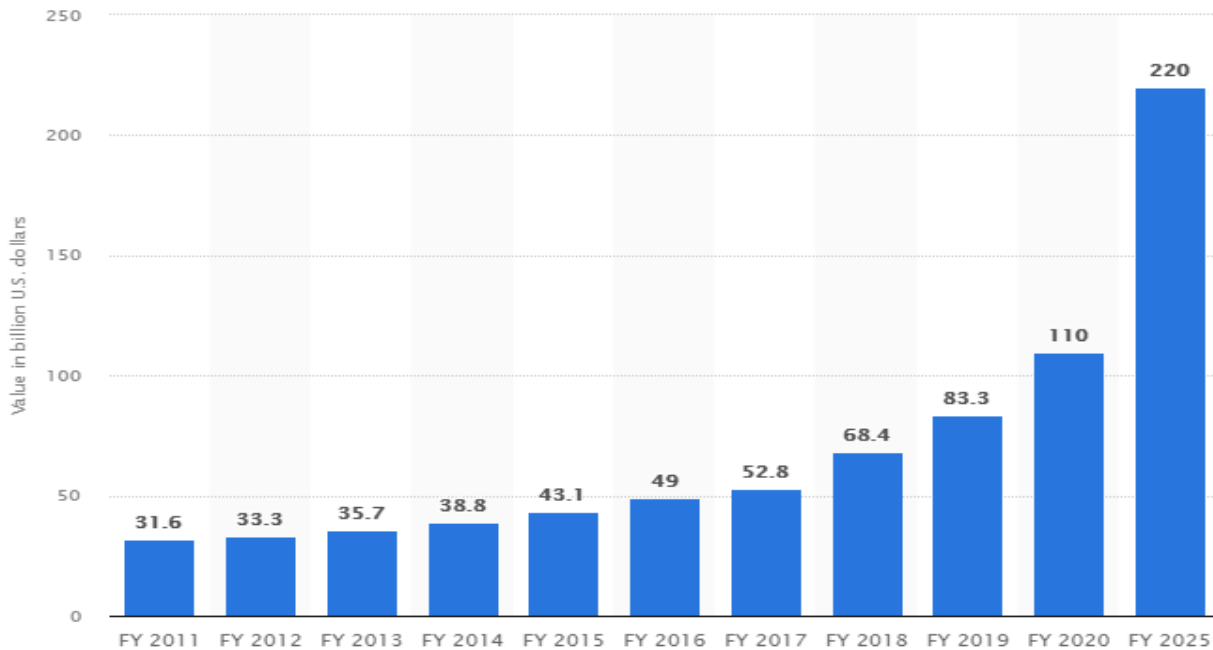
### THE 4A APPROACH

Marketers are attracting more towards the rural market due to several reasons, however; it is not an easy task. The major problem in the rural market is low per capita income as compared to urban markets income, acute dependence on the monsoon, a large number of daily wages workers as well as polar roads, power problems, and inaccessibility to get media for advertising. These are the major challenges faced by marketers while expanding their business in the rural market. As per Clinton and Whisnarat (2019), urban consumers, as well as rural consumers, are different from each other in various ways therefore multinational companies, as well as marketers, face the challenges of 4As such as Availability, affordability, acceptability, and awareness.

- i) **Availability:** Ensuring the availability of the products and services is the biggest challenge. More than 627,000 villages are present in India that spread over 3.2 million sq km. Two-third of the population including 700 million people survive in the rural areas and finding them is a difficult task. At least 13,113 villages should be strived by any serious marketer who wants to expand his market in the rural market (Sinha and Sheth 2018). Unilever is one of the famous brands that have a strong distribution system that helps to reach the interior of the rural market. Coca-cola is considered as the future growth driver of the rural market as it has evolved a spoke distribution model to reach the villages. Understanding the buyer's behavior helps increase 35%

of the purchase occasions. Decisions of brand choice are affected by sheer product availability. HLL is an FMCG giant that enhances the control of the rural supply chain through streamlining. HLL started a project named Shakthi with the collaboration of a self-help group of rural women.

**FIGURE NO. 2: MARKET SIZE OF FAST-MOVING CONSUMER GOODS IN INDIA FROM 2011 TO 2025**



(Source: Dhaliwala 2020, p.345), Graph have prepared from the Table no. 2

- ii) **Affordability:** To ensure affordability to the products and services is the second major issue faced by marketers. It is difficult for rural people to afford the products and services with low disposable income. Most of the rural people are daily wage workers and they cannot afford the products and services of multinational companies. To overcome the problem of affordability, companies have started introducing small units packs to increase the customer bases in the rural areas. Cinthol, Fair Glow, and Godrej in 50 gm packs have been introduced by Godrej at an affordable price to expand its market in the rural villages of India. Hindustan Lever is one of the most famous companies and it has released the potential of India's rural market and launched Lifebuoy at Rs 2 for 50 gm (Agarwal et al. 2018). The company has launched a variant of its biggest selling soap to attract the targeted customer of the rural areas. Coca-cola has also introduced 200 ml glass at Rs 5 for increasing the customer base. At present approx 80% of the drinker's consumers are from the rural markets. Sunfilled has also been introduced by Coca-cola which is a powdered soft drink concentrate.
- iii) **Acceptability:** To gain acceptability for the product and service in rural areas is not an easy task. In the rural areas, people are not willing to change the products that they are using for a long period. It is a big challenge for the market to bring a product that suits the rural market. LG is one of the most famous brands that reaped rich dividends and it developed a customized television for the rural market. Coca-cola started providing low-cost ice boxes due to electricity problems in rural areas as well as most people have not aware of refrigerators. For the rural

market insurance companies started tailor-made products to enhance performance in the rural market. HDFC tries with the nongovernmental organization to offer affordable price policies to get group insurance covers (Bisht et al. 2020).

**TABLE 3: ATTRACTING ATTRIBUTES OF RURAL MARKETS ESTIMATED ANNUAL SIZE: RURAL MARKET**

FMCG	INR 650000 million
Durables	INR 500000 million
Agri-inputs (including tractors)	INR 4500000 million
Two/four Wheelers	INR 800000 million
Total	INR 12300000 million

**Source: Chakravarty, Anjan. (2015). The Evolving Scope of Rural India. Advances in Economics and Business. 3. 261-271. 10.13189/aeb.2015.030702.**

Awareness: In digital time, where mass media has its value, however, it is unable to cover whole rural areas. Only 57% of the rural population are aware of the mass media. People have a lack of awareness regarding the various products and services due to having unconventional media that include ambient media. To increase the brand and pack visibility shop fonts, Cinema vans, wells, and other media vehicles are utilized. Lux and Lifebuoy use innovative media to create awareness among the people about the products. These companies have followed this idea not for the advertising purpose, however, for at the time of consumption. Most of the rural areas have no access to conventional advertising media. In rural areas, only 41 percent of people have access to television.

Building awareness among the rural people is a challenging task. The Experiences of rural consumers are different from the urban people. In rural areas, the consumption of branded products is treated as a special treat. The Hindustan lever has started its own company organized media to reach in the interior of the villages where they can promote their products. Stockists have been given the responsibility to organize their promotional events. Godrej consumer products use radio to promote their products in the various regional languages. TV, cinema, and radio are used by coca-cola to make people aware of their products. Coca-cola promotes its products at a magical price point of Rs 5 per bottle that attracts a lot of rural customers. LG has started vans and road shows to promote its products. The company uses regional language to get connected with the customers (Adomako et al. 2019).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **CHALLENGES IN RURAL MARKETING**

#### ***1) UNDERDEVELOPED CUSTOMERS AS WELL AS UNDERDEVELOPED MARKETS:***

Most of the people of rural communities are underdeveloped and they have not much information regarding the various products as well as they are not able to adapt to the changes. Most of the customers are



underdeveloped due to which the market in the rural areas is underdeveloped. People are less awareness regarding the technology as a result products based on technology can not see growth in the rural areas.

**2) *INADEQUATE MEDIA COVERAGE FOR RURAL COMMUNICATION:***

Rural people are less aware of the products due to not having the proper media coverage for rural communication. Coverage related to marketing is inadequate due to having less technology in the rural areas.

**3) *LACK OF POWER, PHYSICAL COMMUNICATION FACILITIES:***

Most of the villagers have no idea about roads and physical communication. During the monsoon period, most of the villages become inaccessible (Osunmuyiwa et al. 2019).

**4) *VARIOUS LANGUAGES AND DIALECTS:***

India is the country where languages change from place to place. It is quite difficult to manage the language while implementing any marketing strategy.

**5) *CHALLENGES OF NATURAL CALAMITIES:***

Epidemics, extreme rain or drought, lack of printer storage facilities, and inadequate market intelligence are the most common problems faced by the marketers during the implementation of any strategy.

**CONCLUSION**

It can be concluded that the future can be very promising for the marketers and the MNCs who understand the dynamics of the rural markets. Various challenges and opportunities are present that can attract marketers to expand their market in rural areas. Marketers need to implement strategies according to the nature and consumers of the rural place. Customer expectations and demand of the urban market and rural market are different from each other. Therefore, marketers need to develop different strategies by understanding the dynamics of the rural markets. There is a need for academics and practitioners to address the problem of communication that includes marketing and advertising. The rural people are mostly daily wages workers and have low per capita income that creates difficulties for the various companies to expand their business in the rural market such as nestle.

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