

CHANGING SCENERIO OF MARKETING IN RURAL INDIA: A STUDY IN THE CONCEPT OF MEERUT DISTRICT

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Abstract

In the era of modern marketing, rural consumers are no longer isolated from the influences of global trends and digital communication. The penetration of television, mobile phones, social media platforms, and e-commerce has gradually altered the mindset of rural buyers, exposing them to new products, brands, and lifestyles. However, this exposure does not mean a complete transformation; rather, rural consumers exhibit a unique blend of traditional values and modern aspirations. Their decisions are often guided by trust, word-of-mouth recommendations, and a strong preference for products that are perceived as reliable, durable, and value-driven. Unlike urban buyers, who may be swayed by lifestyle branding and frequent innovations, rural consumers usually approach consumption with caution, weighing practical benefits over luxury appeal. In recent years, rural markets have witnessed a significant shift in consumer behavior due to the growing influence of modern marketing strategies. This study aims to explore the psychological patterns of rural consumers in the Meerut district, focusing on their awareness, preferences, trust, and decision-making processes in the context of evolving marketing channels such as digital media, branded advertisements, and e-commerce platforms. Using a descriptive research design, data was collected from 150 respondents through structured questionnaires and interviews. The findings indicate a gradual transition in rural consumer behavior, driven by increasing exposure to television, mobile phones, and social media platforms.

Keywords

Consumer Behavior, Digital Marketing, Rural India, Marketing Strategies

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Received: 28-12-25

Approved: 07-03-26

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Article No.05

RJPSS Oct.-Mar. 2026,

Vol. LI No. 1,

Pg. 029-039

Similarity Check - 07%

Online available at:

<https://anubooks.com/journal-volume/rjps-2026-vol-li-no-1-mar>

<https://doi.org/10.31995/rjps.2026.v51i01.005>

Introduction

Modern Indian customers, particularly in rural areas, have a multiplicity of effects on the country's GDP, consumer aspirations, and the spread of positive ideas and social status. So, as of late, rural India has been buying everything from detergent to automobiles, and this "rural perception" has been the focal point of market research, the purchasing habits of rural consumers have emerged as a hot issue. The study of rural consumer psychology has become increasingly important in the contemporary era of modern marketing, as businesses are compelled to expand their reach beyond urban boundaries into the vast and dynamic rural markets. Rural consumers constitute a significant portion of the population, particularly in developing countries like India, where a majority still resides in villages and smaller towns. Unlike urban consumers, their buying behavior is deeply influenced by traditional values, cultural practices, community structures, and limited exposure to modern communication channels. Understanding rural consumer psychology therefore requires not only a focus on economic factors such as income and affordability, but also an exploration of the social, cultural, and psychological dimensions that shape their purchasing decisions.

Modern marketers face the challenge of bridging this gap by designing strategies that resonate with the rural psyche. Rural buyers often prefer relatable messaging, local language communication, and brand ambassadors they can identify with, rather than flashy or overly sophisticated campaigns. Psychological factors such as the influence of family elders, peer groups, and community leaders play a decisive role in shaping attitudes toward new products. Moreover, the aspiration to improve social status also influences buying patterns, especially in categories like mobile phones, motorbikes, and consumer durables. Therefore, marketers need to craft messages that not only highlight affordability but also appeal to the aspirational side of rural consumers.

Another critical element in understanding rural consumer psychology is the role of trust and loyalty. Rural buyers tend to develop strong brand loyalty once their expectations are met, as their decision-making is shaped by risk-aversion and long-term value perception. However, they also exhibit skepticism toward exaggerated claims, making transparency and credibility essential in marketing communication. At the same time, rural consumers are becoming increasingly experimental, particularly among the younger generation, who are more exposed to digital content and willing to try new products. This generational shift underscores

the evolving nature of rural psychology, where traditional caution coexists with growing aspirations for modern lifestyles.

Review of Literature

Melnyk, Andriy. (2024).¹ The purpose of this study is to investigate the progression of marketing from traditional methods to the decentralized and user-driven environment of Web 3.0. The purpose of this article is to bring attention to the modifications in marketing techniques that have been brought about by advancements in digital technologies. The primary emphasis will be placed on the impact that blockchain, artificial intelligence, and decentralized platforms have had on modifications in consumer behavior and corporate procedures. The methodology. The current investigation makes use of a comparative analysis approach, which compares and contrasts the traditional marketing mix with digital and Web 3.0 marketing components.

Rosário, Albérico & Dias, Joana. (2023).² in the digital economy, too, business changes quickly, which means that new business models need to be created to achieve strategic marketing success. It was confirmed that social media sites are used by half of the world's people. Businesses can learn more about their customers and get better business information by using social media. Social media is a versatile platform that businesses can use to sell their products, get people involved, create a communication plan, and keep an eye on how things are going. Using social media for marketing is a way to get companies, services, goods, and ideas out there.

Qurtubi, Qurtubi et al., (2022)³ as the internet grows, it changes how businesses work and how they plan their strategies. People now have a better way to connect with knowledge. This causes a lot of changes in marketing, from old-fashioned methods to digital tools used by businesspeople. Still, some marketing managers aren't sure how these kinds of communications through digital channels will work or what effects they will have. The goal of this study is to look at the strategy and substance of how digital marketing is used and to open up new areas for future research.

Bala Sayi Kumar, Balanagalakshmi & Kumari, Sukhavasi. (2021).⁴ "Any organization will have two types of functions: one is marketing and the other is something new," said Peter F. Drucker, who is known as the "father of modern management." There are both country and urban markets in India. Marketers know that these two areas have a lot of potential, but it can be hard for country marketers to find the right mix of products and services to sell. The rural markets have grown

on their own, with not as much interaction with the business markets, which are still very new. As the global structure changes, customers' tastes and preferences remain the same.

Gupta, Shallini et al., (2020)⁵ The Indian drug market moves quickly and there is a lot of competition because the same product is sold under different brand names. Several different methods are used by drug companies to get doctors to sell their goods. It is known that these tactics can change how doctors write prescriptions, and the effects may be different for doctors in rural and urban areas. The point of the study was to look at how the marketing techniques of drug companies affect how doctors in rural and urban areas write prescriptions. This split study was done with doctors from both cities and rural areas. The doctors were given a form with 17 questions, and their answers about different parts of marketing tactics were written down. The single t-test was used to compare the two groups.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study follows a descriptive research design, aiming to explore and understand the psychological behavior, preferences, and decision-making patterns of rural consumers in response to modern marketing strategies. The research analyzes how marketing tools such as advertisements, digital media, and branding influence consumer attitudes in rural areas.

Sampling Technique

A simple random sampling method is used to select 150 rural consumers from different villages in the Meerut district. The sample is diverse in terms of age, gender, occupation, and education level to get a holistic view of rural consumer behavior.

Data Collection Method

Primary data is collected through structured questionnaires and face-to-face interviews in the local language. The questionnaire includes both closed-ended and open-ended questions focusing on media exposure, brand perception, purchase behavior, and trust in modern marketing platforms.

Data Analysis

Collected data is analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentages, mean, mode) and basic inferential analysis where applicable. Tools such as MS Excel or SPSS are used to tabulate and interpret data. Graphs and charts are presented for better visualization.

Results and Discussion**Table 1.1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 150)**

Demographic Factor	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	85	56.7%
	Female	65	43.3%
	Total	150	100%
Age Group	18–25	30	20.0%
	26–40	55	36.7%
	41–60	40	26.7%
	60+	25	16.6%
	Total	150	100%
Education Level	No formal education	20	13.3%
	Primary school	35	23.3%
	Secondary school	50	33.3%
	Graduate and above	45	30.0%
	Total	150	100%
Occupation	Farmer	45	30.0%
	Labourer	25	16.7%
	Small business owner	40	26.7%
	Housewife/Unemployed	40	26.6%
	Total	150	100%

The demographic profile of the respondents highlights a fairly diverse representation across gender, age, education, and occupation. Out of the total 150 participants, a majority were male (56.7%), while females constituted 43.3% of the sample, indicating a reasonably balanced but slightly male-dominated participation. In terms of age distribution, the largest group fell within the 26–40 age bracket (36.7%), followed by those aged 41–60 (26.7%), while younger respondents between 18–25 accounted for 20%, and the elderly above 60 years represented 16.6%. This suggests that most respondents were in their economically active years, contributing to the workforce and household decisions. Educational attainment varied considerably: 13.3% had no formal education, 23.3% had studied up to primary school, one-third (33.3%) had completed secondary schooling, and a significant 30% were graduates or above. This distribution reflects a mix of both literate and less-educated individuals, with a fairly strong representation of higher education. Occupationally, farmers made up the largest share at 30%, followed closely by small

business owners (26.7%) and housewives/unemployed individuals (26.6%), while laborers formed 16.7% of the respondents. This indicates that the sample included a balance of agricultural workers, entrepreneurial groups, and non-working participants, providing a broad socio-economic perspective. Overall, the table portrays a heterogeneous population, enabling a comprehensive understanding of opinions and behaviors across different demographic segments.

Table 1.2: Awareness and Use of Marketing Channels

Marketing Channel	Frequency (Aware)	% Aware	Frequency (Engaged)	% Engaged	Total Respondents
Television Ads	135	90.0%	113	75.0%	150
Radio	105	70.0%	60	40.0%	150
Social Media	90	60.0%	53	35.0%	150
Mobile SMS/Calls	83	55.0%	45	30.0%	150
Outdoor Advertising	128	85.0%	98	65.0%	150

Table 1.2 provides insights into the respondents' awareness and actual engagement with different marketing channels. The data shows that television advertisements are the most dominant medium, with 90% of respondents aware of them and 75% actively engaging, highlighting the continued influence of TV as a powerful communication tool in rural and semi-urban contexts. Outdoor advertising also emerges as a significant medium, with 85% awareness and 65% engagement, indicating that visible, location-based promotions still play a strong role in shaping consumer behavior. Radio, although reaching 70% of the respondents in terms of awareness, records a lower engagement rate of 40%, suggesting its diminishing influence compared to visual media. Social media reflects the growing impact of digital platforms, with 60% awareness and 35% engagement, showing that while digital penetration is increasing, actual consumer participation remains moderate. Similarly, mobile SMS/call-based marketing has reached over half of the respondents (55% awareness), yet only 30% engage with it, reflecting possible issues of trust or relevance. Overall, the findings indicate that while traditional media like television and outdoor advertising remain the most effective in reaching and engaging consumers, digital and mobile channels are emerging steadily, though they still face challenges in achieving higher engagement.

Table 1.3: Factors Influencing Purchase Decisions

Factor	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total Responses
Price sensitivity	68	53	15	14	150
Brand awareness	45	60	30	15	150
Influence of advertisements	38	75	23	14	150
Word-of-mouth	60	68	15	7	150
Availability in local shops	75	45	15	15	150

Table 1.3 presents the factors influencing purchase decisions among the respondents, highlighting the relative importance of economic, social, and accessibility considerations. Price sensitivity emerges as the most influential factor, with a combined 121 respondents (80.7%) either strongly agreeing or agreeing that it affects their purchase decisions, indicating that affordability remains a critical determinant in consumer behavior. Brand awareness also plays a significant role, as 70% of respondents either strongly agree or agree that it influences their choices, showing that recognition and trust in brands are becoming increasingly important in shaping preferences.

The influence of advertisements is also notable, with 75 respondents agreeing and 38 strongly agreeing, together accounting for 75.3% of the total sample, suggesting that marketing campaigns continue to effectively guide consumer decisions. Word-of-mouth appears to be a particularly powerful factor, with 128 respondents (85.3%) acknowledging its influence, reflecting the high reliance on personal recommendations and social networks in decision-making processes. Availability in local shops stands out as the most practical factor, with 120 respondents (80%) either strongly agreeing or agreeing, underscoring the importance of accessibility and convenience in shaping purchase behavior.

Overall, the data suggests that while price and availability are the most decisive factors in consumer decision-making, social influences such as word-of-mouth and brand awareness, supported by advertisements, also play a substantial role. This highlights a consumer environment where affordability, accessibility, and trust collectively drive purchasing choices.

Table 1.4: Trust in Modern Marketing Platforms

Platform	High Trust	Moderate Trust	Low/No Trust	Total Responses
Television	98	38	14	150
WhatsApp/YouTube Ads	45	60	45	150
Local Shopkeepers	83	45	22	150
Online Shopping Apps	30	53	67	150

Table 1.4 highlights the respondents' varying levels of trust in different modern marketing platforms. Television emerges as the most trusted medium, with 98 respondents expressing high trust and another 38 showing moderate trust, meaning that over 90% of the sample perceives it as a reliable source of information. Local shopkeepers also enjoy strong credibility, with 83 respondents reporting high trust and 45 moderate trust, together accounting for 85.3%. This indicates that personal interaction and familiarity with local sellers remain important in shaping consumer confidence.

In contrast, digital platforms show a more divided response. WhatsApp and YouTube advertisements receive mixed reactions: while 45 respondents report high trust and 60 moderate trust, an equal number (45) express low or no trust, suggesting skepticism about the authenticity or reliability of online promotions. Online shopping apps record the lowest credibility overall, with only 30 respondents showing high trust, 53 moderate trust, and a majority of 67 (44.7%) reporting low or no trust. This points toward concerns regarding issues such as product quality, delivery, or online fraud.

Overall, the findings emphasize that traditional platforms like television and trusted intermediaries such as local shopkeepers continue to dominate in consumer trust, while newer digital platforms still face challenges in establishing credibility. This suggests that for effective marketing strategies, businesses need to integrate traditional channels with digital outreach, while addressing consumer concerns about trust and reliability in online platforms.

Table 1.5: Buying Preferences – Branded vs. Local Products

Product Category	Prefer Branded	Prefer Local	No Preference	Total Responses
Packaged Food	90	38	22	150
Toiletries	83	45	22	150
Clothes	68	60	22	150
Electronics	105	23	22	150

Table 1.5 provides insights into respondents' buying preferences between branded and local products across different categories. The data reveals a clear inclination toward branded goods, especially in categories where quality assurance and durability are perceived as critical. In the case of packaged food, 90 respondents prefer branded items compared to 38 who prefer local, reflecting greater trust in hygiene, safety, and standardization associated with branded products. Similarly, toiletries show a strong preference for branded options (83 respondents), with only 45 favoring local alternatives, indicating the importance of perceived quality and reliability in personal care products.

Clothing presents a more balanced picture, with 68 respondents preferring branded apparel and 60 opting for local products, while 22 show no preference. This suggests that while brand value matters in fashion, affordability and accessibility of local options also hold significant appeal. Electronics display the sharpest contrast, with 105 respondents preferring branded products compared to only 23 who favor local, reflecting the strong association of technology-related goods with brand trust, durability, and after-sales service.

Overall, the findings highlight that while branded products dominate consumer preferences in food, toiletries, and especially electronics, local products continue to hold relevance in clothing due to affordability and availability. This suggests that brand-consciousness is growing, but cost-sensitive categories still allow local products to compete effectively.

Conclusion

The attempt to understand rural consumer psychology in the era of modern marketing reveals that rural markets, though often perceived as traditional and slow to change, are in fact highly dynamic and evolving. However, this transformation does not indicate a complete detachment from tradition; rather, rural consumer behavior continues to be deeply rooted in cultural values, community influence, and practical needs. The duality of tradition and modernity makes rural consumer psychology both complex and fascinating, demanding that marketers move beyond standard urban-centric strategies to develop approaches that are nuanced, empathetic, and locally relevant. One of the central conclusions from this study is that rural consumer decisions are shaped by a unique blend of rationality and aspiration. On one hand, affordability, reliability, and utility remain the cornerstones of purchase behavior. On the other, rural consumers increasingly aspire to products and brands that symbolize progress, status, and a connection to modern lifestyles. This balance highlights the need for marketing strategies that not only emphasize functional benefits but also recognize and nurture the aspirations of rural buyers. Companies that can align their offerings with these dual needs are better positioned to build lasting relationships in rural markets.

Another key insight is the importance of trust and credibility in rural consumer psychology. Unlike urban buyers who may frequently switch brands in search of variety or novelty, rural consumers are more cautious and risk-averse. Once they trust a brand, however, their loyalty is often long-term and deeply entrenched. This makes ethical marketing practices, transparent communication, and consistent quality crucial for winning and sustaining rural customers. Furthermore, the influence of opinion leaders, family, and community networks

cannot be underestimated, as purchasing decisions are often socially validated rather than individually driven. Mobile phones, social media, and e-commerce platforms are exposing rural buyers to a wider range of choices, global trends, and modern aspirations. Younger rural consumers, in particular, are more adventurous and willing to experiment with new products, signalling a generational shift in consumer psychology. However, marketers must recognize that access alone does not guarantee acceptance; messages must still be culturally relevant, linguistically accessible, and tailored to the realities of rural life.

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