

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND MODERN MARKETING PRACTICES IN RURAL AREAS OF MEERUT DIVISION

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Abstract

Rural marketing in India has undergone a significant transformation since independence, evolving from relationship-based traditional systems to technology-driven modern practices. This paper presents a comparative analysis of traditional and modern marketing practices in the rural areas of Meerut Division, Uttar Pradesh. Using primary data collected from 300 rural households and supported by secondary sources, the study evaluates differences in awareness creation, purchase influence, accessibility, trust, and repeat purchase behavior. Statistical analysis and graphical representation reveal that while modern marketing practices outperform traditional methods in accessibility and purchase influence, traditional marketing continues to dominate in trust and long-term relationships. The study concludes that rural marketing has not experienced replacement but convergence, leading to the emergence of a hybrid marketing model.

Keywords

Rural marketing, traditional marketing, digital marketing, Meerut Division, consumer behavior.

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1. Introduction

Since independence in 1947, rural India has been the backbone of the national economy. Marketing practices in rural areas were initially informal, localized, and trust-oriented. Over time, economic reforms, infrastructural development, mass media expansion, and digitalization have transformed rural consumption and marketing mechanisms.

Meerut Division, with its agrarian base and proximity to the National Capital Region (NCR), reflects this transition more visibly than many other regions. This study comparatively evaluates the effectiveness of traditional and modern marketing practices in rural Meerut from a consumer perspective.

2. Literature Review

Rural marketing in India has experienced significant transformation over the past decade, integrating traditional marketing methods with modern digital strategies. Historically, rural markets were described as fragmented, price-sensitive, and reliant on interpersonal communication networks due to limited access to mass media and technology (Kotler et al., 2017). Traditional marketing in rural areas—through village haats, fairs, personal selling, radio, and local opinion leaders—remained central to information dissemination and consumer engagement because these channels were culturally embedded and trust-oriented (Dogra & Ghuman, 2008; Ramkishan, 2009).

Despite this, the dynamics of rural markets have evolved with increased infrastructure development, rising incomes, and broader media exposure. Recent studies emphasize that while traditional marketing continues to be relevant, rural consumers today display higher aspirations and greater openness to new products, especially when marketing efforts resonate with local values and social norms (Pandita Hakhroo, 2020).

Modern marketing, driven largely by digital technologies, has gained prominence due to rapid mobile and internet penetration in rural India. Government initiatives like Digital India and increasing smartphone adoption have opened new avenues for digital engagement. Digital marketing tools—such as social media platforms, SMS campaigns, mobile apps, and e-commerce—are now significant for reaching rural consumers, offering advantages like broader geographic reach, cost efficiency, and real-time interaction (Goel, Veluri & Mishra, 2024).

Furthermore, literature focusing on rural digital marketing highlights that the adoption of digital tools affects consumer behaviour in rural contexts. Studies show that digital media use—including social networking and online information channels—has reshaped information search and purchase decision processes among

rural consumers (Ali & Akhtar, 2023). This shift indicates a growing influence of digital platforms on rural consumer awareness, suggesting that modern marketing practices are no longer confined to urban settings.

Nevertheless, the transition to digital marketing in rural markets is not without challenges. Recent research identifies key barriers such as inadequate internet connectivity, low levels of digital literacy, resistance to technological change, and difficulties in measuring return on investment in rural environments (Garg et al., 2024). These challenges underscore the continued relevance of traditional marketing, especially in regions with limited digital access, suggesting that marketers must consider infrastructural and socio-cultural constraints when designing campaigns for rural audiences.

A growing body of literature advocates for hybrid or integrated marketing strategies that combine traditional and modern marketing practices. Such strategies leverage the trust and cultural relevance of traditional methods while utilizing the scalability and data capabilities of digital channels. For example, while traditional methods remain effective for building personal trust, digital tools enable broader segmentation and engagement with younger demographic segments in rural communities (Yadav, 2023)

Moreover, recent academic work highlights specific forms of modern marketing such as influencer marketing and community-based digital engagement, which are increasingly relevant in rural areas for shaping consumer behaviour and brand perceptions. These modern tactics show promise for driving brand engagement and influencing purchase decisions, especially among digitally connected rural consumers (Gedam&Markale, 2024).

Despite increased attention to rural digital marketing, there remains a significant gap in localized comparative studies. Most existing research examines national trends or broad rural–urban comparisons, with limited empirical focus on specific regions like Meerut Division. This gap underscores the need for region-specific research to understand how traditional and modern marketing practices coexist, compete, or complement each other in rural settings. Thus, the present study seeks to contribute to this gap by providing empirical insights from rural areas of Meerut Division, offering granular evidence of how marketing strategies perform in a dynamic rural environment.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the evolution of rural marketing practices since independence.
2. To compare traditional and modern marketing practices in rural Meerut Division.

3. To examine consumer perceptions regarding trust, influence, and accessibility.
4. To suggest an integrated rural marketing framework.

4. Research Methodology

Research Design: Descriptive and comparative

Sample Size: 300 rural respondents rural areas of Meerut Division, Uttar Pradesh that includes 6 districts namely Meerut, Bulandshahr, Hapur, Baghpat, Ghaziabad, and Gautam Budh Nagar.

Sampling Technique: Multistage stratified random sampling

Data Sources

Primary: Structured questionnaire

Secondary: Journals, census reports, government publications

Statistical Tools: Percentage analysis, comparative analysis, graphical representation

5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

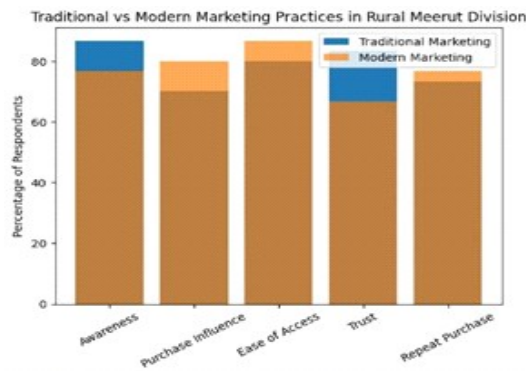


Figure 1

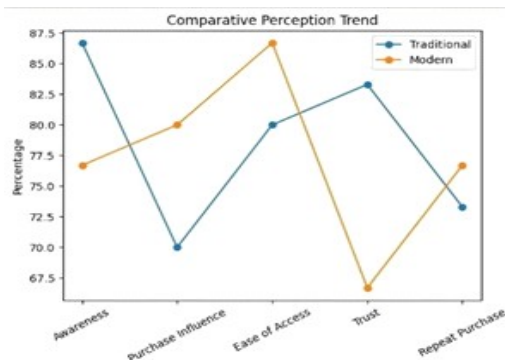


Figure 2

5.1 Awareness Creation

Traditional marketing practices such as village retailers, word-of-mouth, fairs, and radio account for 86.7% awareness, while modern marketing tools such as mobile advertisements, social media, and e-commerce platforms account for 76.7% awareness.

Interpretation:

Traditional marketing benefits from historical continuity and habitual exposure, whereas modern marketing demonstrates rapid diffusion driven by smartphone penetration.

(Refer to Figure 1)

5.2 Purchase Influence

The analysis shows that 80% of respondents acknowledge modern marketing as influential in purchase decisions, compared to 70% for traditional marketing.

Interpretation:

Modern marketing's visual appeal, price comparison, and peer reviews exert stronger cognitive influence, particularly among younger and educated rural consumers.

5.3 Ease of Access

Modern marketing practices score higher (86.7%) than traditional marketing (80%) in terms of accessibility.

Interpretation:

Digital platforms and improved logistics have reduced geographical and infrastructural constraints, enhancing rural access to diverse products.

5.4 Trust Level

Trust remains higher in traditional marketing (83.3%) than in modern marketing (66.7%).

Interpretation:

Trust in rural markets is deeply rooted in personal relationships, social familiarity, and credit-based interactions, which digital systems have not fully replaced.

(Refer to Figure 2)

5.5 Repeat Purchase Behavior

Repeat purchases are reported by 73.3% of respondents for traditional marketing and 76.7% for modern marketing.

Interpretation:

This marginal difference indicates growing acceptance of modern marketing platforms once trust barriers are overcome.

6. Graphical Representation and Discussion

Figure 1: Traditional vs Modern Marketing Practices in Rural Meerut Division

- Demonstrates comparative strengths across five parameters.
- Highlights dominance of traditional marketing in trust and awareness.
- Shows modern marketing superiority in purchase influence and accessibility.

Figure 2: Comparative Perception Trend

- Illustrates convergence of consumer perception.
- Reflects gradual transition rather than abrupt shift.
- Supports the hybrid marketing model hypothesis

7. Major Findings

- Traditional marketing remains dominant in trust and relational engagement.
- Modern marketing exerts stronger influence on purchase decisions.
- Rural consumers display dual behavior depending on product type.
- Marketing evolution reflects coexistence rather than displacement.

8. Implications

- Firms should adopt integrated marketing strategies.
- Local retailers should be digitally enabled.
- Vernacular digital content is essential.
- Strengthening rural digital literacy & Improving internet infrastructure is important.
- Supporting rural logistics networks will increase sales.

9. Conclusion

The study concludes that since independence, rural marketing in Meerut Division has evolved through a process of continuity and transformation. Traditional marketing systems have preserved trust and social capital, while modern marketing has enhanced efficiency and reach. A hybrid rural marketing framework that integrates both systems is essential for sustainable rural market development.

10. Scope for Future Research

- Econometric modeling of rural purchase behavior
- Comparative studies across divisions/states
- Impact of AI, social commerce, and fintech in rural markets

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