

## **A Study on the Emerging Trends in Rural Marketing Practices in Meerut Division**

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**Abstract**

*The study aims to explore the evolving marketing practices in the rural areas of the Meerut Division, Uttar Pradesh. Using a combination of primary and secondary data, the research focuses on understanding consumer behavior, preferences, and shopkeepers' perspectives. A sample of 300 respondents, including rural consumers and shopkeepers, was surveyed through structured questionnaires to obtain comprehensive insights. The findings reveal significant shifts in marketing strategies, product preferences, and purchase patterns in rural markets.*

**Keywords**

*Rural Marketing, Consumer Behavior, Marketing Practices, Meerut Division.*

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## **Introduction**

Rural markets in the Meerut Division of western Uttar Pradesh occupy a distinctive position in India's marketing landscape because they sit at the intersection of old agrarian economies and rapidly intensifying urban spill overs. The division's rural areas are characterized by a blend of tightly knit villages, relatively high population densities, irrigated agriculture, dairying, and an intricate network of weekly haats and small bazaars that have historically mediated exchange.

Since India's Independence, rural markets have moved through a long trajectory of marketing transformation. During the early post-independence period (1947–1965), rural marketing was primarily subsistence-based, dominated by **local exchange, weekly haats, village fairs, and informal credit**. The rural consumer had limited product choice, low brand awareness, and depended on local traders and moneylenders. Marketing communication was almost non-existent, and distribution systems were weak due to poor roads and limited connectivity.

From 1965 onwards, India entered the Green Revolution era. Meerut Division, being agriculturally productive with sugarcane, wheat, and dairy farming, experienced rising income and surplus production. This period saw growing influence of cooperatives, fertilizer/pesticide distributors, and rural dealer networks. The consumer became more exposed to mass produced FMCG products like soap, tea, edible oil, and packaged food. However, marketing practices remained largely dealer-driven and dependent on interpersonal influence.

The post-liberalization era (1991 onwards) altered the rural marketing landscape significantly. Growth of private brands, expansion of distribution networks, satellite television, and aggressive advertising campaigns expanded rural brand awareness. Retail formats expanded from kirana shops to semi-organized rural retail. Marketers introduced **sachetization, rural-specific products, affordable packs and festival-based promotions**.

A study of changing marketing practices in this setting must therefore weave together agrarian seasonality, caste and kinship-based trust networks, the economics of sachetization, vernacular media habits, and the rise of UPI-enabled small-ticket, high-frequency transactions.

Historically, marketing to rural consumers across this region rested on a triad: periodic markets (haats and melas), village kirana stores and input dealers, and itinerant traders who combined selling with informal credit. Awareness-building relied on wall paintings, temple and school wall signage, van campaigns, and sponsorships of local sports or festivals. Product portfolios emphasized value packs,

durability (footwear, farm tools, utensils), and habit formation (tobacco, tea, biscuits, hair oil). In agriculture-facing categories—seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, and equipment—the local dealer and progressive farmer acted as the core influencers. Service elements were personal and highly localized: credit tied to harvest cycles, trial packs doled out by dealers, and in-kind repayments. Even today, these structures remain influential because they embed within trust, reciprocity, and easy recourse for grievance redressal. However, they now sit inside a broadened marketing architecture that reduces information asymmetry and expands choice.

The arrival of affordable smartphones and near-ubiquitous data has recast the “information stage” of the rural purchase journey. Discovery now often begins on short-video platforms and vernacular social media groups, where product demonstrations, micro-influencer testimonials, and community referrals shape perceptions. For agri-inputs, WhatsApp groups of farmers and local extension officers circulate timely advice on seed varieties, pest outbreaks, and spray schedules, while YouTube agronomy channels drive demand for “evidence-based” products. In household consumption, women’s groups and youth-led peer clusters use mobile messaging to share deals, delivery experiences, and cautionary tales about counterfeits. Marketers have adapted by producing snackable, low-data creative assets in Hindi and regional dialects, deploying micro-targeted ad spends that spike around harvest and wedding seasons, and using hyperlocal influencers—progressive farmers, ASHA workers, schoolteachers, panchayat members—to bridge the credibility gap. This shift has not eliminated the role of the dealer; instead, it has reoriented the dealer from a gatekeeper of information to a validator and local service node for installation, returns, and after-sales support.

### **Review of Literature**

Sur, Samiran & Ahmed, Shafique. (2024) in their research look into the tricky world of country marketing in the unique Indian market. Since a big part of India’s population lives in rural places, it’s important to understand how they work and come up with ways to get them involved. The study looks at the complex economic, cultural, and physical features of country markets that make them different from their city peers. By looking at how people’s tastes, buying habits, and behavior change in rural India, the study explains the main factors that affect buyer decisions and market trends. In addition, the study talks about how the problems faced in marketing could be used to develop new marketing strategies. The study also looks at examples of brands that have done well in India’s rural areas. It looks at the strategies these businesses used to show how they dealt with the difficulties of marketing in rural areas and utilized the hidden potential of this group.

Melnyk, Andriy. (2024) - 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 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 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.

Gupta, Tarun. (2023) - Even though things change all the time, some changes seem strange and contradictory. Today, we see two kinds of changes in the Indian economy: one from a national to a world level, and another from an urban to a country level. It is important to remember that more than 70% of Indians live in rural places. In the end, either no success or failure in marketing. 'Rural Marketing' is very important because the main people in a country decide whether a product or service succeeds or fails.

Rosário, Albérico & Dias, Joana. (2023) - 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. So, it's clear that social media tactics offer a vague benefit that is related to business communication goals. There is a lot of different and scattered research on social media strategy in the field of marketing communication, which is holding it back from growing as a potential study area.

Qurtubi, Qurtubi et al., (2022) 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 Sai Kumar, Balanagalakshmi & Kumari, Sukhavasi. (2021) - “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) – The research sheds light on how 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 single t-test was used to compare the two groups. The way doctors in rural and urban institutions wrote prescriptions was affected by different tactics. All 17 factors were affected in the same way, except for emailing, which was affected more by doctors in cities ( $p=0.005$ ). The study shows that marketing tactics used by different drug companies do affect how doctors write prescriptions.

Jayaprakash, Shruthi. (2019)- The paper focuses on how Digital marketing is becoming more popular than traditional marketing, but traditional marketing is still around. Ads that are shown on websites, social media sites (like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, etc.), emails, and other digital tools are called “digital marketing.” There are a lot of great opportunities in digital marketing now that we live in a digital world. Some things that make up digital marketing are email marketing, affiliate marketing, social media marketing, on-demand video streaming, the website, SEO, SEM, and more. The study says that in rural India, 78 million people, or 48%, use the internet every day and 140 million people, or 83%, use it at least once a month. Over 60% of India’s GDP comes from rural areas, and as the number of people using the internet grows at an amazing rate, there will likely be a big rise in digital trade. The internet has made it possible for consumers to learn about their options. Digital marketing only targets potential customers by letting them know about the goods and services available on the market.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To understand the changing trends of rural marketing in Meerut Division.
2. To understand the demographic profile of rural markets in Meerut Division.
3. To understand the factors that influence consumers to make purchase decisions.
4. To study the impact of different marketing strategies on consumer behavior and their purchase decisions.
5. To comprehend the opportunities and challenges of rural marketing and markets in India.
6. To find out the relationship between consumers' technical awareness and level of purchase by consumers.

### **Research Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

Research design refers to the overall plan and structure of the study that guides the process of data collection, measurement, and analysis.

#### **Sources of Data**

The study is based on both primary and secondary data:

- Primary Data: Collected directly from rural consumers and shopkeepers using structured questionnaires.
- Secondary Data: Collected from books, journals, research articles, government reports, websites, and previous studies related to rural marketing.

#### **Sampling Design**

The population of the study comprises rural consumers and shopkeepers located in 6 Districts of the Meerut Division namely Meerut, Baghpat, Bulandshahr, Ghaziabad, Gautam Buddha Nagar (Noida), and Hapur

- Sample Size: 300 respondents
  - a) 250 rural consumers
  - b) 50 rural shopkeepers
- Sampling Technique: Convenience sampling method was used due to time and accessibility constraints.
- Sampling Area: Selected villages from districts under the Meerut Division.

#### **Tools of Data Collection**

A structured questionnaire is used as the primary research tool. Two separate questionnaires are prepared—one for village consumers and another for shopkeepers.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Demographic table of the respondents

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Rural Consumers (n = 250)

<b>Demographic Variable</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	150	60%
	Female	100	40%
<b>Age (years)</b>	18–25	50	20%
	26–35	88	35%
	36–45	62	25%
	46–60	37	15%
	60+	13	5%
<b>Education</b>	Illiterate	25	10%
	Primary	63	25%
	Secondary	100	40%
	Graduate	50	20%
	Postgraduate	12	5%
<b>Occupation</b>	Farmer	125	50%
	Labourer	50	20%
	Shopkeeper	25	10%
	Others	50	20%

The demographic profile of rural consumers (n = 250) shows a slightly higher proportion of males compared to females, indicating a male-dominated respondent group. In terms of age distribution, the majority of respondents belong to the 26–35 years age group, while only a small fraction are above 60 years. Regarding education, most respondents have completed secondary education and the study suggests that the rural population surveyed has a moderate level of literacy. With respect to occupation, half of the respondents are engaged in farming (50%), 20% work as laborers, 10% are shopkeepers, and the remaining 20% are involved in other occupations. Overall, the table reflects a rural consumer base that is primarily young to middle-aged, moderately educated, and largely dependent on agriculture for livelihood.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Shopkeepers (n = 50)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	45	90%
	Female	5	10%
<b>Age (years)</b>	18–25	5	10%
	26–35	15	30%
	36–45	20	40%
	46–60	10	20%
<b>Education</b>	Illiterate	5	10%
	Primary	10	20%
	Secondary	25	50%
	Graduate	10	20%
<b>Business Type</b>	Grocery	20	40%
	General Store	15	30%
	Others	15	30%

The demographic profile of shopkeepers indicates a clear gender disparity, with the majority being male (90%) and only a small proportion female (10%), reflecting the traditionally male-dominated nature of rural business ownership. In terms of age, most shopkeepers fall within the 36–45 years category (40%), followed by 26–35 years (30%), 46–60 years (20%), and a small segment in the 18–25 years range (10%), suggesting that middle-aged individuals are more actively involved in running shops. Regarding educational qualifications, half of the shopkeepers have completed secondary education (50%), while 20% are graduates, 20% have primary education, and 10% are illiterate, indicating a moderate level of formal education among rural entrepreneurs.

Concerning the type of business, 40% of shopkeepers operate grocery stores, 30% run general stores, and the remaining 30% are engaged in other types of shops. Overall, the table shows that rural shopkeepers are predominantly middle-aged males with moderate education, primarily operating essential retail outlets in the community.

Table 3: Independent Sample T-Test (Awareness Level)

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	df	p-value
Rural Consumers	250	3.2	0.8	7.54	298	0.000*
Shopkeepers	50	4.1	0.6			

The independent sample t-test was conducted to examine the difference in the level of awareness regarding modern marketing practices between rural consumers and shopkeepers. The results indicate that shopkeepers have a higher mean awareness score (Mean = 4.1, SD = 0.6) compared to rural consumers (Mean = 3.2, SD = 0.8). The calculated t-value of 5.23 at 148 degrees of freedom is statistically significant at the 5 percent level ( $p < 0.05$ ). This significant difference suggests that shopkeepers are more informed and aware of changing marketing strategies than rural consumers. The higher awareness among shopkeepers may be attributed to their direct interaction with suppliers, companies, and distributors, as well as their exposure to promotional schemes and product information. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups is rejected, indicating a meaningful variation in awareness levels between rural consumers and shopkeepers.

Table 4 : Technical Awareness vs Purchase Level (Consumers n = 250)

<b>Technical Awareness</b>	<b>Low Purchase</b>	<b>Medium Purchase</b>	<b>High Purchase</b>	<b>Total</b>
Low Awareness	45	25	5	75
Medium Awareness	25	45	18	88
High Awareness	7	30	50	87

**Chi-square:**  $\chi^2 = 78.93$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p<0.001$  → **Significant association**

To examine the relationship between consumers' technical awareness and their level of purchase, respondents (n = 250) were grouped into three technical awareness categories (low, medium, high) and three purchase level categories (low, medium, high). The distribution indicates that consumers with higher technical awareness report higher purchase levels, whereas low-awareness consumers are largely concentrated in the low-purchase category. A Chi-square test of association confirms that this relationship is statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 78.93$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Hence, technical awareness significantly influences purchase level among rural consumers in Meerut division.

**Findings**

- The responses of rural consumers and shopkeepers indicate a visible shift from purely traditional buying patterns to more informed and brand oriented behaviour. Increasing smartphone penetration, exposure to social media/online videos, and improved connectivity have resulted in higher awareness of brands,

schemes and product comparisons. Shopkeepers reported increased demand for packaged/ branded FMCG products & digital payment acceptance.

- The demographic tables reflect that rural markets are dominated by working-age consumers, with males forming a slightly higher share among consumers and a much higher share among shopkeepers. The presence of younger age groups suggests higher receptiveness to technology-led marketing. Education and occupation patterns highlight that purchase decisions in rural areas are influenced by income stability, family size, and exposure to urban markets.
- Major influencing factors identified in the questionnaires include: (i) price sensitivity and value-for-money, (ii) product quality and durability, (iii) trust in the shopkeeper/retailer recommendation, (iv) brand reputation, (v) availability/stock at the local shop, (vi) promotional schemes, and (vii) peer/family influence. For frequently bought items (FMCG), price and schemes were reported as strongest drivers, whereas for durable goods, quality, brand trust and after-sales service were more decisive.
- Marketing strategies such as discount offers, festival schemes, free samples, attractive packaging and point of sale displays were found to increase trial purchase and repeat buying. Local language communication, wall paintings/banners, demonstrations, and influencer-like village opinion leaders were reported as more effective than generic urban advertising. Digital promotions (WhatsApp messages, short videos, Facebook/Instagram exposure) are emerging as an important driver, particularly among younger consumers, and contribute to faster brand switching and greater product awareness.
- The independent sample t-test confirms that shopkeepers have significantly higher awareness of modern marketing practices than rural consumers (Consumers: Mean = 3.2, SD = 0.8; Shopkeepers: Mean = 4.1, SD = 0.6;  $t = 7.54$ ,  $df = 298$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The Chi-square test further establishes a significant relationship between consumers' technical awareness and purchase level ( $\chi^2 = 78.93$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), proving that higher technical awareness leads to higher purchase levels. Overall, rural markets offer strong opportunities but require customized strategies to overcome distribution, infrastructure, and seasonality challenges.
- Opportunities include a growing consumer base, increasing disposable income, higher aspiration levels, better rural infrastructure, expansion of rural retail and e commerce delivery, and wider adoption of UPI/digital payments. Key challenges reported include scattered villages and transportation issues, seasonal income fluctuations, limited product

availability, lower literacy levels, high dependence on retailer advice, difficulty in creating brand loyalty, and limited reach of mass media in some pockets.

The study concludes that rural marketing practices in the Meerut Division are undergoing significant changes due to increased awareness, education, and exposure to modern marketing strategies. The findings reveal noticeable differences between rural consumers and shopkeepers, with shopkeepers showing higher awareness of marketing practices. Marketing practices have changed rural consumption patterns. Earlier buying decisions were shaped by necessity, informal credit and interpersonal trust. Today purchase behaviour is shaped by **promotion, branding, digital awareness, and aspiration**. Consumers have increased access to information, better product variety, but also face issues such as deceptive advertising, counterfeit products, and over-consumption due to aggressive schemes. The results show that technical awareness boosts purchase level, implying that digital literacy is becoming a key driver of rural market demand. Marketers must adopt ethical, localized and digitally inclusive strategies to strengthen rural development and consumer welfare.

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