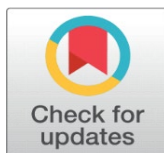


# EXPLORING PRODUCT AWARENESS AND PURCHASE INFLUENCES AMONG RURAL CONSUMERS IN WEST BENGAL

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## ABSTRACT

The marketing of FMCG products is heavily dependent on customer behavior. A number of things influence this behavior. The demands and requirements of customers in this age of globalization are ever-evolving. Increases in India's gross domestic product (GDP) is mostly attributable to the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry. So, it's important to track how people are changing their purchasing habits in relation to fast-moving consumer goods. The purpose of this exploratory research project is to examine the purchasing habits of rural residents of Bankura District, West Bengal, with respect to FMCG. Two hundred and twenty rural customers were chosen using a purposive sample technique. Additionally, the survey shows that among the factors driving customer purchases, quality ranks highest with 26.82% of respondents, followed by price with 20.45% and taste with 17.27%. These results show that when it comes to fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), quality and price are the two most important factors influencing rural customers' buying decisions.

**Keywords:** Awareness, Price, Product, Advertisement, Quality



## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the evolving realm of consumer behavior, comprehending the intricacies of product knowledge and purchasing impacts among rural customers has become critically significant. Rural markets, defined by their own socio-economic and cultural environments, pose unique problems and possibilities for marketers and academics. With the advancement of globalization and the infiltration of technology into different societal levels, rural customers are increasingly encountering a variety of products and brands. This transition requires a thorough analysis of the elements that influence their awareness and buying choices. The rural consumer sector is sometimes considered a dormant powerhouse because of its significant potential, although it is inadequately represented in conventional marketing methods that predominantly emphasize metropolitan demographics.

Product awareness, which refers to the degree of customer familiarity with a certain product and its attributes, is an essential prelude to purchase behavior. In rural regions, where access to information and resources may be constrained relative to metropolitan centers, the avenues for product awareness are markedly distinct. Conventional media, like television and radio, remain essential; but, the emergence of digital technology is progressively altering these domains. Mobile phones have emerged as a potent instrument for information distribution, enabling rural customers to investigate items, compare prices, and exchange experiences. This transition not only increases awareness but also modifies the conventional buying decision-making process. Additionally, the socio-cultural structure of rural areas significantly

impacts consumer behavior. Elements such as familial customs, communal endorsements, and peer pressure frequently govern purchase decisions, rendering the rural consumer demographic distinctive in its decision-making approach. Rural customers may emphasize items that correspond with their cultural values, social conventions, and pragmatic requirements. This alignment signifies that awareness arises not just from brand advertising but is profoundly connected to cultural relevance and societal acceptability. Therefore, marketers seeking to enter rural markets must customize their methods to align with local norms, habits, and tastes, ensuring that their products are both acknowledged and accepted by the community.

Besides cultural impacts, economic variables also impact product awareness and purchase behavior in rural regions. The economic condition of customers directly influences their purchasing power, resulting in an emphasis on value for money and the perceived utility of items. Rural consumers often choose to invest in items that guarantee longevity and reliability, particularly in high-stakes areas such as agriculture. Marketers must stress not just the qualities of their goods but also their long-term advantages and cost-effectiveness to secure the confidence and loyalty of rural consumers.

Moreover, the effect of external factors, like governmental initiatives and the existence of NGOs, must not be disregarded. Diverse initiatives focused on rural development, including talent enhancement, microfinance, and infrastructural advancement, have indirectly influenced product awareness and consumer behaviors. These activities improve overall quality of life, cultivating a more knowledgeable customer base that is eager to discover and embrace new goods. Awareness programs conducted by government agencies or NGOs frequently address the information deficit, informing rural customers about product advantages, application, and accessibility. These initiatives foster a climate favorable to purchasing decisions, as customers gain more confidence in their selections. As rural markets evolve, comprehending the interaction of these elements becomes essential for enterprises seeking to establish a presence in these regions. Investigating product awareness and purchasing impacts among rural customers enhances academic literature and offers practical insights for marketers. By examining the motives underlying customer behavior in rural areas, organizations may formulate more successful marketing strategies that address the distinct requirements and preferences of this demographic.

### **Rural consumers**

Rural customers are an important and distinct market niche due to their distinctive socioeconomic characteristics, interests, and buying habits compared to their metropolitan counterparts. The rural consumer base has recently attracted the attention of scholars, politicians, and marketers in the context of developing economies, particularly in nations like India. This increasing fascination is a direct result of the fact that rural markets are huge, varied, and ripe with opportunity for expansion and profit. Numerous variables impact the purchasing choices of rural customers, necessitating a sophisticated approach to understanding their purchasing behavior. Consider factors such as income levels, family dynamics, social standing, cultural standards, and product availability in local marketplaces. Furthermore, traditional customs and beliefs also have a significant role. For example, those living in rural areas are more likely to trust personal recommendations than advertisements, and they are more likely to be loyal to brands that reflect their beliefs and way of life.

Consumer behavior in rural areas is greatly influenced by economic issues. A more price-conscious customer base is a result of the lower income levels seen in rural regions compared to metropolitan ones. Value for money is a common consideration for rural customers, who tend to choose items that provide good quality at a reasonable price. Limited disposable money may also cause a decrease in purchasing frequency, leading to a preference for bulk buying or seasonal expenditures. Marketers targeting rural areas should take these economic realities into account and adjust their methods to cater to the specific tastes and demands of this audience.

Organized retail models, including supermarkets and online shopping platforms, are attracting more and more rural customers. As people in remote areas look for ways to enhance their shopping experiences and have access to a greater variety of items, this shift reflects a larger trend toward modernity and convenience. In instance, online shopping has grown into a potent instrument for reaching customers in remote areas, enabling them to peruse and buy goods regardless of their physical location. The enormous untapped potential of rural markets may be accessed by brands who embrace this trend by creating an online presence and providing delivery services.

## **2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Joshi, Dinesh. (2020) Marketers in rural India have access to a massive consumer base and a wealth of untapped potential. Rural regions are home to almost 60% of India's customers. The following aims motivated this study, despite

the fact that rural markets have enormous potential and large development prospects, as well as certain challenges: In order to assess the function of education in rural marketing, as well as to learn what kinds of products people in rural areas buy and why, we need to investigate what factors influence people in rural areas to buy non-durable goods. The researcher used a straightforward random sampling procedure to gather data from one thousand respondents, following the guidelines of an empirical study design. Tables display the findings of the data analysis, which included percentage, mean, standard deviation, and ranking analysis. Based on the conclusions, branded consumables much outweigh their unbranded or regional counterparts. The opinion of the retailer, together with the product's price, quality, and quantity, is the most critical factor in determining the sale of fast-moving consumer goods. Due to their higher levels of knowledge, rural consumers are increasingly making a difference. Companies producing fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) should cater to the wants and requirements of people living in rural areas.

Khan, Naseer et al., (2013) Villages are the homes of the emerging globe. It is often believed that emerging nations rely heavily on agriculture and outdated technologies. The rural markets of developing nations are ripe for a variety of products and services because to increasing disposable income and media penetration. As once rural areas become massive consumer marketplaces, the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry is among the pioneers. This article focuses on fast-moving consumer goods consumption in rural areas of Sri Lanka and India, two South Asian nations. An analysis was conducted based on the 1849 totally filled surveys that were received. When it comes to promoting and distributing fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) effectively in rural areas, two factors stand out: availability and awareness. Customers in rural areas are willing to pay a premium for high-quality fast-moving consumer goods. While product advertising had a stronger impact on female purchasers, shopkeeper recommendations have a much stronger impact on consumers with lower levels of education, according to the findings. An intriguing discovery was that the impact of affordable prices is strongly linked to the impact of appealing packaging, rather than quality. Additionally, appealing packaging does not substantially affect rural consumers who buy FMCG only when necessary. The present research is significant because rural markets in South Asia are quickly becoming enormous consumer marketplaces for a wide range of products and services.

Pathan, Firozkhan. (2021) Customers in rural areas tend to share more ideas and perspectives with their urban counterparts, and the term "rural" is generally used to refer to a specific geographic location rather than a way of life. Pakka roads, power, and decent housing are available in the majority of communities. What matters most for marketers, however, is that rural customers shift their perspective. The rural sector in India has much lower consumption, penetration, and frequency compared to the urban segment, which contributes to the country's lower per capita consumption compared to other growing markets. The capacity and desire to spend are dynamic concepts, but it's vital to go beyond surface-level considerations and realize that a large portion of rural income is discretionary. For that reason, rural India offers a tremendous chance.

Patil, Pramod (2017) One of the most important parts of India's economy, the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry affects people's daily lives in some way. Everyone from the most rural to the most metropolitan areas regularly consumes fast-moving consumer goods. In almost every category, customers in rural areas are increasingly opting for branded items these days. The disparity between rural and urban customers is narrowing as a result of the evolving marketing landscape. There is a noticeable disparity in consumer behavior between rural and urban areas, which may be attributed to variances in socio-cultural environments. Customers in urban areas may have different brand preferences than those in rural areas due to these considerations. The brand preference of certain fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) among rural and urban consumers is the subject of this article.

Pradhan, Jyoti & Misra, Dr. (2014) Even though the rural market for fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) has been expanding at a faster rate than the urban market, there is a large consumption pattern differential among the Indian states. Rural Odisha is one of the poorest states in India, with a per capita spending of only Rs. 904.781, even though the state's economy is growing because to sectoral changes from agriculture to industry and services. One of the first steps in comprehending customer behavior is learning about consumers' brand preferences. Marketers may improve the design of their marketing programs and establish lasting relationships with customers by delving deeper into the preferences of their target audience. Marketers may improve their efforts in rural markets by conducting an empirical research for these particular rural pockets. This study will assist them understand the dynamics of segmentation and the marketing mix components. The primary goal of this article was to investigate the purchasing habits of rural consumers by way of brand recognition and the impact of demographic variables on brand choice. Primary and secondary sources of information were used to compile this study. One of the rural districts of Odisha, Keonjhar, was one of the sample areas. Brand choice was shown to be statistically related to age, gender, family type, and education level. There was no

correlation between brand choice and yearly income or employment, however. Therefore, the only demographic variables statistically related to rural customers' brand selection in Odisha's Keonjhar district were age, gender, family type, and level of education.

Siddiqui, et al., (2022) the purpose of this research is to analyze several elements that have an effect, and among all of those aspects, which one has the most important impact on the decision-making process of rural residents about their purchases. Additionally, the purpose of the research is to assess the impact that advertisements have on the manner in which customers make purchases and to determine which kind of marketing has the most influence on the preferences of rural consumers. Observational data from consumers living outside of metropolitan areas was gathered via the use of inventories utilized for information. During the analysis of the influence of variables, the utilization of factor inquiry and Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) was used. The findings indicated that advertising is the most significant influence with regard to all of the factors. It has been observed that marketers make use of social media and other sources of advertisements; however, television is the most effective intermediary of advertisement when it comes to swaying the purchasing preferences of rural consumers. As a result of the fact that the scope of this research paper is restricted to the rural population of thirty-two villages in Uttar Pradesh, the results cannot be generalized to other regions. This is one of the challenges that this research study is facing. Given that the majority of the people who responded to the survey in rural areas are male, it is imperative that efforts be made to collect answers from females as well. A new perspective is offered to the marketers by means of this study article. The marketers are able to evaluate the extent to which they would be able to achieve gradually increasing levels of success with their advertising by using proper techniques. It was suggested that marketers should use the proper techniques in order to make their goods and brands more relevant and significant among customers in rural areas. This study is an innovative effort to uncover the elements that influence the purchasing behavior of rural customers via the use of factor analysis. To the best of the authors' knowledge, this is something that has not been undertaken by any other researchers in this region.

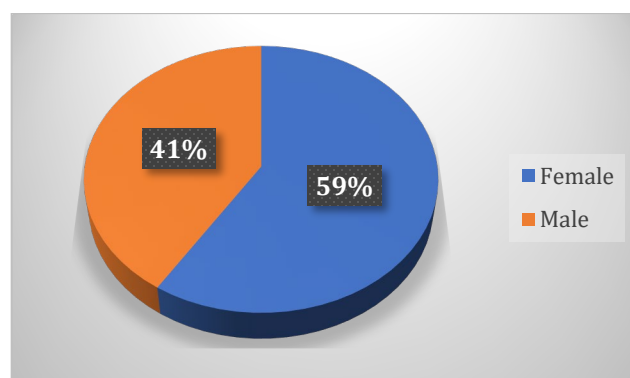
### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to learn how people use fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), this study used an exploratory research strategy to find out what people liked and didn't like about collecting data. Bankura District, West Bengal is the site of the research. For the sake of ease, 220 rural clients were intentionally chosen. An interview schedule and observation sheet were used to collect data, which included respondent demographics as well as detailed information on their buying habits and the factors that influenced them. As part of the statistical analysis, rankings were calculated using weighted mean scores.

### 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

**Table 1: Gender of the respondents**

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Female	130	59.09
Male	90	40.91
Total	220	100.0

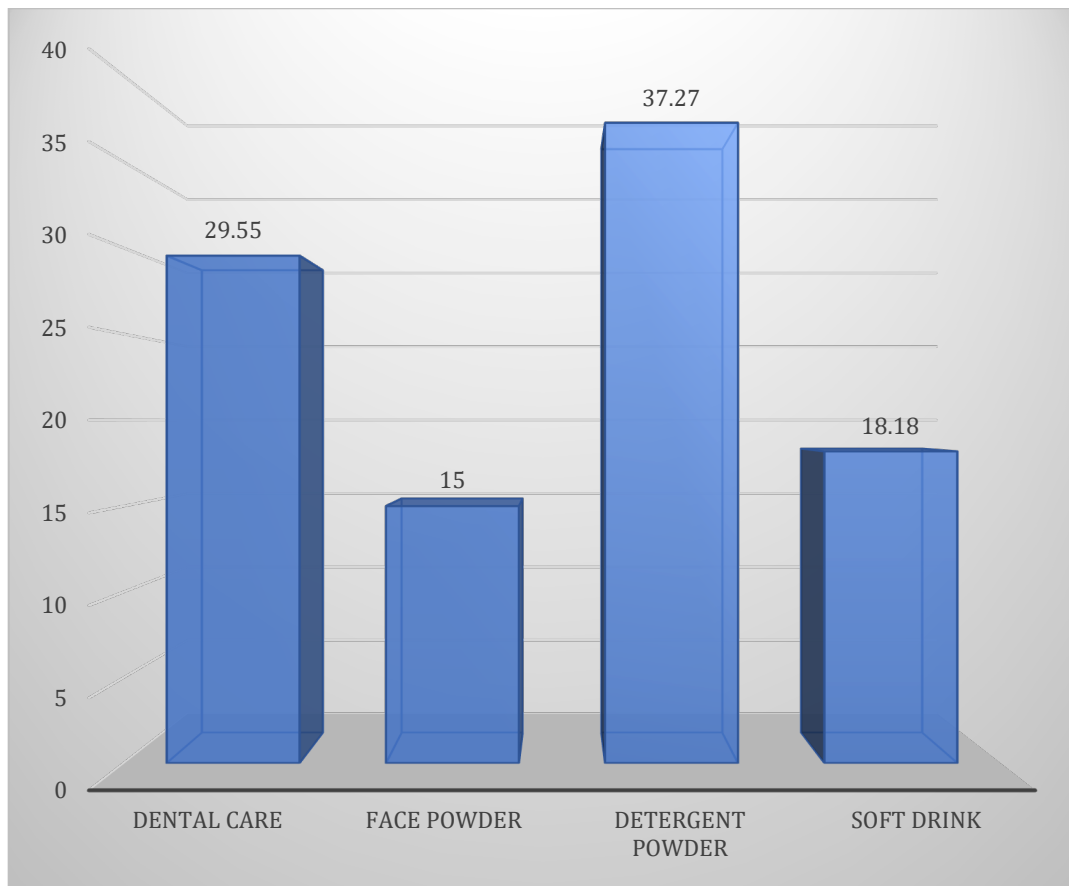


**Figure 1: Gender of the respondents**

Of the 220 participants, 130 are female (or 59.09% of the total), while 90 are male (or 40.91% of the total), as shown in Table 1.

**Table 2: Product awareness among rural consumers**

Product	Frequency	Percentage
Dental care	65	29.55
Face powder	33	15.0
Detergent powder	82	37.27
Soft drink	40	18.18
Total	220	100.0

**Figure 2: Product awareness among rural consumers**

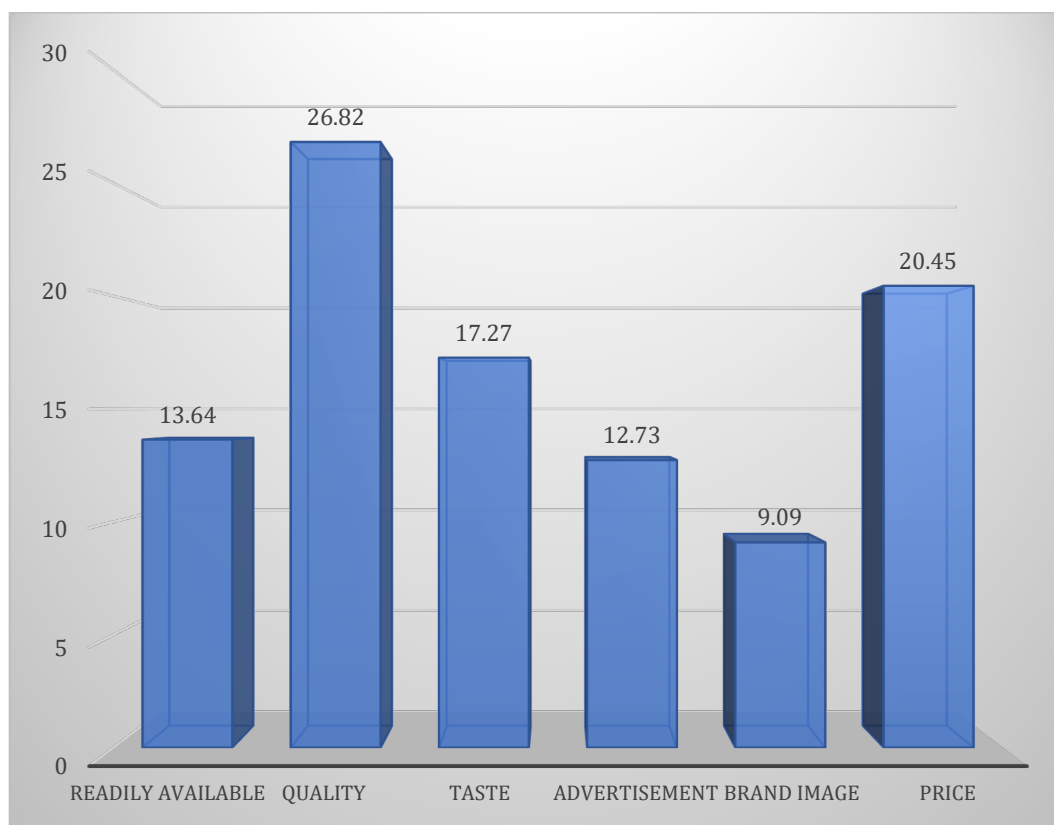
As seen in Table 2, of the 220 people who took part, 82 (37.27% of the total) were aware of detergent powder, whereas 65 (29.55% of the total) were aware of dental care. With 40 respondents (18.18%) for soft drinks and 33 respondents (15.00%) for face powder, the levels of awareness are lower, respectively.

**Table 3: Factors influencing while purchasing FMCG products**

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Readily available	30	13.64	4
Quality	59	26.82	1
Taste	38	17.27	3



Advertisement	28	12.73	5
Brand image	20	9.09	6
Price	45	20.45	2



**Figure 3: Factors influencing while purchasing FMCG products**

As seen in Table 3, Among the factors that were considered, quality stood out with 59 respondents (26.82%), while price was ranked second with 45 respondents (20.45%) deeming it vital. Third place goes to taste, with 38 respondents (17.27%), while fourth place goes to availability, with 30 respondents (13.64%). With 28 respondents (12.73%) and 20 (9.09%), respectively, brand image and advertisements had less of an impact.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Rural residents of Bankura District, West Bengal, and their shopping habits for FMCG are the subject of this illuminating research. It uses an exploratory research strategy to show how price and quality are the two most important aspects for rural customers when making a purchase choice. Detergent powder is the most well-known fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) product, according to the statistics. There is a greater presence of female customers, according to the demographic data, thus marketing efforts should focus on meeting their requirements and preferences. In order to improve product accessibility and encourage educated purchase choices in rural marketplaces, it is crucial to understand local consumer characteristics, which may guide marketing strategies and regulations. Further research is needed to examine the variables and trends that impact rural consumption habits, but this study adds to the existing literature on consumer behavior in disadvantaged regions.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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