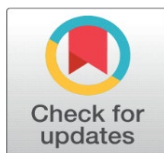
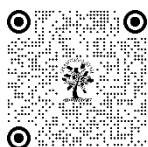


A STUDY ON BUYING AND REFERRING THE PRODUCT PATTERN OF RURAL CONSUMERS IN PUDUKKOTTAI CITY

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ABSTRACT

The digital technology and improved infrastructure, rural consumers are now exposed to a wide range of products and services. However, their buying behavior remains distinct from urban consumers due to cultural, economic, and social factors. Understanding these patterns can help businesses. Understanding rural consumer behavior is essential for businesses aiming to penetrate and sustain in rural markets. This study explores the purchasing patterns of rural consumers, their decision-making process, brand preferences, and the role of word-of-mouth referrals. The research highlights key factors influencing buying behavior, including socio-economic conditions, cultural influences, product availability, and digital penetration. The findings provide valuable insights for marketers to devise effective strategies for engaging rural consumers.

Keywords: Branded Product, Purchasing Pattern, Shopping and Pudukkottai City

1. INTRODUCTION

Consumer behavior has been an essential area of research in marketing, as it helps businesses understand how individuals make purchasing decisions. The rural consumer market in India has emerged as a crucial segment due to its vast population and increasing purchasing power. Pudukkottai, a city in Tamil Nadu, represents a significant rural-urban intersection where traditional consumer behavior blends with modern marketing influences. Studying the buying and referring patterns of rural consumers in Pudukkottai city will provide valuable insights into their decision-making process, brand preferences, and influential factors. Rural markets have emerged as significant contributors to economic growth, with a large consumer base exhibiting unique buying behaviors. Unlike urban consumers, rural consumers rely heavily on personal experiences, community influence, and word-of-mouth recommendations while purchasing

products. This study aims to analyze the factors shaping rural consumer behavior and their tendencies to refer products within their social networks.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

With the advent of digital technology and improved infrastructure, rural consumers are now exposed to a wide range of products and services. However, their buying behavior remains distinct from urban consumers due to cultural, economic, and social factors. Understanding these patterns can help businesses, policymakers, and marketers design strategies to cater to this demographic effectively. This study aims to explore the key factors influencing rural consumer behavior, the role of word-of-mouth referrals, and the impact of promotional activities on their purchasing decisions.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study focuses on analyzing the purchasing and referral patterns of rural consumers in Pudukkottai city. It examines various factors, including income levels, educational backgrounds, cultural influences, and brand awareness. Additionally, the research delves into the impact of digital platforms, traditional media, and peer recommendations on consumer choices. The findings will be instrumental in devising targeted marketing strategies and enhancing consumer satisfaction in rural markets.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have explored rural consumer behavior and the role of informal communication channels in influencing purchase decisions. Past research suggests that rural consumers exhibit higher brand loyalty when product satisfaction is high. The influence of opinion leaders and peer recommendations plays a crucial role in the acceptance and spread of new products in rural markets.

FACTORS INFLUENCING RURAL BUYING BEHAVIOUR

1) Socio-Economic Factors:

- Income levels significantly impact purchasing power.
- Education influences brand awareness and decision-making.
- Occupation plays a role in determining product needs and affordability.

2) Cultural and Psychological Influences:

- Traditional beliefs and values affect product preferences.
- Family members and peer influence guide purchasing decisions.
- Emotional attachment to familiar brands leads to repeat purchases.

3) Marketing and Promotional Factors:

- Pricing strategies impact affordability.
- Availability of products in local markets influences purchasing ease.
- Advertisements through television, radio, and mobile marketing shape consumer awareness.

4) Digital Influence and Online Buying Trends:

- Increased mobile internet penetration is changing consumer habits.
- Social media and e-commerce platforms play a role in product discovery.
- Digital payment methods are gaining acceptance in rural areas.

WORD-OF-MOUTH AND REFERRAL BEHAVIOUR

1) Role of Community Influence:

- Rural consumers rely on local influencers, shopkeepers, and community leaders for recommendations.

- Positive word-of-mouth builds trust and brand loyalty.

2) Referral-Based Purchasing:

- Consumers are more likely to buy a product if it is recommended by a trusted source.
- Referral programs and incentives can drive brand penetration in rural markets.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

- **Brand Loyalty:** Rural consumers show high loyalty to brands with consistent product quality and availability.
- **Retail Preferences:** Local kirana stores and weekly markets remain the primary purchasing channels.
- **Referral Impact:** Nearly 70% of respondents consider peer recommendations before buying a new product.
- **Digital Shift:** A growing percentage of rural consumers are exploring online shopping due to better access to smartphones and the internet.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To identify the factors influencing the buying decisions of rural consumers in Pudukottai city.
- 2) To examine the role of personal recommendations and word-of-mouth in shaping consumer preferences.
- 3) To analyze the impact of digital media and traditional marketing on rural consumers.
- 4) To understand the brand perception and loyalty patterns among rural consumers.
- 5) To suggest marketing strategies that align with the purchasing behavior of rural consumers in the region.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

- 1) There is no significant difference between male and female rural consumers in their perception of buying decisions.
- 2) There is no significant difference between unmarried and married rural consumers in their perception of buying decisions.
- 3) 3. There is no significant difference in the educational qualification of rural consumers in their perception of buying decisions.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

A mixed-methods approach is adopted, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

A stratified random sampling method is used, targeting rural consumers across different socio-economic backgrounds.

DATA COLLECTION

Primary data is collected through structured questionnaires, and secondary data is gathered from journals, market reports, and industry research.

SAMPLE SIZE

The study is conducted among 225 rural consumers across multiple districts.

SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION

TABLE 1
DISTRIBUTION OF THE SAMPLE IN TERMS OF SEX

Sex	Number of Sample	Percentage
Male	48	21.3
Female	177	78.7
Total	225	100.00

It is inferred from the above table that 21.3% of them are male and 78.7% of them are female school teachers in terms of distribution of the sample.

TABLE 2
DISTRIBUTION OF THE SAMPLE IN TERMS OF TYPE OF THE SCHOOL

Type of the School	Number of Sample	Percentage
Primary & Middle school	33	14.7
College Level	33	14.7
Higher secondary school	159	70.6
Total	225	100.00

It is inferred from the above table that 14.7% of them are from Primary & Middle school, 14.7% of them are from College level and 70.6% of them are from higher secondary school.

TABLE 3
DISTRIBUTION OF THE SAMPLE IN TERMS OF MARITAL STATUS

Marital Status	Number of Sample	Percentage
Unmarried	79	35.1
Married	146	64.9
Total	225	100.00

It is inferred from the above table that 35.1% of them are unmarried and 64.9% of them are married.

TOOLS USED FOR THE STUDY

The tools used for the study are:

- 1) Purchas pattern Tool for consumers developed by the investigator.

ESTABLISHING ITEM VALIDITY

The validity for each item was tested. The rough draft tool consisting of 80 items was administered to 50 consumers. The item validity was calculated by finding the correlation between the total score and item score. Items having 'r' value between 0.4-0.9 were taken as valid items. Thus the final scale consists of 65 items.

ESTABLISHING CONTENT VALIDITY

To establish content validity, the tool was submitted to the experts in the field of education. Some of the items were modified and some were deleted on the basis of the suggestions given by the experts. Thus validity of the tool was established.

ESTABLISHING RELIABILITY

The reliability of the tool was established by test-retest method. The tool was administered to 40 Consumers. After 15 days the tool was administered again to the same set of consumers. The responses were scored; and the coefficient of correlation between the two sets of scores was calculated. The reliability was found to be 0.65

5. NULL HYPOTHESES TESTING

NULL HYPOTHESIS - 1

There is no significant difference between male and female rural consumers in their perception of buying decisions.

TABLE 4
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE RURAL CONSUMERS IN THEIR PERCEPTION OF BUYING DECISIONS

S.No	Gender	Mean	S.D	Calculated 't' value	Remarks
1.	Male	7.94	1.27	1.35	NS
2.	Female	8.21	1.13		

(At 5% level of significance, the table value of 't' is 1.96)

It is inferred from the above table that no significant difference between male and female rural consumers in their perception of buying decisions.

NULL HYPOTHESIS - 2

There is no significant difference between unmarried and married rural consumers in their perception of buying decisions.

TABLE 5
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN UNMARRIED AND MARRIED RURAL CONSUMERS IN THEIR PERCEPTION OF BUYING DECISIONS

S.No	Gender	Mean	S.D	Calculated 't' value	Remarks
1.	Married	7.48	1.27	6.38	NS
2.	Unmarried	8.51	0.92		

(At 5% level of significance, the table value of 't' is 1.96)

It is inferred from the above table that no significant difference between unmarried and married rural consumers in their perception of buying decisions.

NULL HYPOTHESIS - 3

There is no significant difference in the educational qualification of rural consumers in their perception of buying decisions.

TABLE 6
DIFFERENCE IN THE EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION OF RURAL CONSUMERS IN THEIR PERCEPTION OF BUYING DECISIONS

Variable	Source of variation	df		Calculated 'F' value	Remarks
		Sum of squares	Mean square variance		

buying decisions	Between	12.74	6.37	4.84	S
	Within	292.12	1.32		

(At 5% level of significance, the table value of 'F' is 3.03)

It is inferred from the above table that significant difference in the educational qualification of rural consumers in their perception of buying decisions

6. CONCLUSION

Understanding rural consumer behavior is critical for businesses seeking growth in these markets. Companies should focus on affordability, accessibility, and trust-building through word-of-mouth marketing. Digital expansion offers new opportunities to influence and engage rural consumers more effectively.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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