



COMMUNITY TOURISM AND ITS CHALLENGES IN RURAL AREAS

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Abstract: *Rural Markets are defined as those segments of overall market of any economy, which are distinct from the other types of markets like stock market, commodity markets or Labor economics. Rural Markets constitute an important segment of overall economy. In recent years, rural markets have acquired significance in countries like China and India, as the overall growth of the economy has resulted into substantial increase in the purchasing power of the rural communities. On account of the green revolution in India, the rural areas are consuming a large quantity of industrial and urban manufactured products. In this context, a special marketing strategy, namely, rural marketing has taken shape. Sometimes, rural marketing is confused with agricultural marketing – the later denotes marketing of produce of the rural areas to the urban consumers or industrial consumers, whereas rural marketing involves delivering manufactured or processed inputs or services to rural producers or consumers. Community tourism means considering the construction of tourist destinations from the angle of community, instructing the overall planning and arrangement of tourist districts with the mutuality theory of community, and improving the efficiency of tourist flow by optimizing the structure of tourist community in order to seek for the harmonious unification and optimization of the tourist destinations' economic, environmental and social benefits. Community tourism has offered a new way to realize the sustainable development of tourism. Compared with the traditional tourism and eco-tourism, community tourism presents a more advanced idea of tourism exploitation*

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Tourism is travel for recreational, leisure or business purposes. The World Tourism Organization defines tourists as people who "travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for more than twenty-four (24) hours and not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited." Tourism has become a popular global leisure activity.

THE MARVEL CALLED KERALA

Wedged between the Western Ghats on the East and the Arabian Sea on the West, the narrow strip of land known as Kerala is a destination of a lifetime. The timeless beauty of the palm fringed beaches of Kovalam and Varkala, the majesty of the undulating hills of Munnar and Vagamon, the serenity of the pristine backwaters of Kumarakom & Kuttanad and the enchanting woods and forests of Thekkady and Silent Valley will have you bowled over. That such a small terrain can hold diverse geographical features and cultures is a wonder in itself.

TYPES OF TOURISM

All types of tourism in India have registered phenomenal growth in the last decade ever since the Indian government decided to boost revenues from the tourism sector by projecting India as the ultimate tourist spot. The reason why India has been doing well in all types of tourism in India is that India has always been known for its hospitality, uniqueness, and charm – attributes that have been attracting foreign travelers to India in hordes. The Indian government, in order to boost tourism of various kinds in India, has set up the Ministry of Tourism and Culture. This ministry recently launched a campaign called 'Incredible India!' in order to encourage different types of tourism in India. The result was that in 2004, foreign tourists spent around US\$ 15.4 billion during their trips to India. Being a country with tremendous diversity, India has a lot to offer in terms of tourism and related activities. The diversity that India is famous for, ensures that there is something to do for all tourists in India, no matter what their interests. Some examples are.

Outdoor Tourism

The Indian subcontinent is a geographically varied land form that contains dense jungle, pristine coasts and the highest mountain range in the world, the Himalayas. These mountains are among the most popular destinations on Earth for hikers, mountaineers and climbers, and they offer nearly endless possibilities for trekking adventures. In the lowlands,



the forests of India are home to exotic wildlife, including the rare white tigers of Bandhavgarh National Park, and they are popular destinations for safaris and ecological tourism. The varied beaches of India are popular with surfers, divers, sailors and sun worshipers.

Spiritual Tourism

The birthplace of Buddhism and Hinduism and home to hundreds of monasteries and ancient temples, India may be the top destination in the world for spiritual tourism. The Tibetan Buddhist exile community in Dharamsala is home to the Dalai Lama and attracts soul seekers from across the globe. The holy city of Varanasi sits on the banks of the Ganges River and draws hordes of international tourists to its ghats and towering Hindu temples. Many modern international spiritual movements, such as Vipassana, are based in India and followers come to study and meditate with the masters in the home country.

Sightseeing Tourism

India is a popular country for historical sightseeing, and the country's thousands of years worth of monuments and architecture are some of the world's most spectacular. The Taj Mahal was built in the 17th century by a Mughal emperor in Agra and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The 10th century Hindu temples of Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh feature carved stone walls that depict the decadent life of those times, including sexual encounters.

Yoga Tourism

A health phenomenon that has taken the world by storm, yoga is based on ancient Indian scriptures and practices, and many modern practitioners consider a trip to India the must-do trip of their life. The southern city of Mysore is home to several schools that teach Ashtanga yoga, and yoga ashrams can be found all over the country. Tourists come to partake in week-long retreats, months-long certificate programs or even years of dedicated training.

Leisure Tourism

India is also a global hot spot for those who just want to party or relax. The seaside town of Goa hosts large parties and raves as well as a variety of festivals on its white sand beaches. Luxury resorts that offer all-inclusive holidays line the southern Goan coast and the idyllic Andaman islands.



Community Tourism

Tourism that benefits local people

Community tourism (sometimes called community-based tourism) is a form of tourism which aims to include and benefit local communities, particularly indigenous peoples and villagers in the rural South (ie 'developing world'). For instance, villagers might host tourists in their village, managing the scheme communally and sharing the profits. There are many types of community tourism project, including many in which the 'community' works with a commercial tour operator, but all community tourism projects should give local people a fair share of the benefits/profits and a say in deciding how incoming tourism is managed.

Tourism that benefits tourists

These tours open up a world of adventure and opportunity. Visit the Amazon... trek through the Andes or the Sinai... experience the magic of the central Australian desert Good community-based tours take you beyond mainstream tourism. You'll meet people from different countries and learn far more about them and their culture than on conventional tours. You'll feel better knowing that your visit is genuinely helping your hosts. And if you want to simply lie on a beach.... well, there are tours here that feature some of the best beaches on the planet.

Community tourism should.

1. Be run with the involvement and consent of local communities.
(Local people should participate in planning and managing the tour.)
2. Give a fair share of profits back to the local community.
(Ideally this will include community projects (health, schools, etc).)
3. Involve communities rather than individuals.
(Working with individuals can disrupt social structures.)
4. Be environmentally sustainable
(Local people must be involved if conservation projects are to succeed.)
5. Respect traditional culture and social structures.
6. Have mechanisms to help communities cope with the impact of western tourists.
7. Keep groups small to minimise cultural / environmental impact.
8. Brief tourists before the trip on appropriate behaviour.
9. Not make local people perform inappropriate ceremonies, etc.



10. Leave communities alone if they don't want tourism.

(People should have the right to say 'no' to tourism.)

RURAL MARKET AN OVER VIEW

Rural India has changed tremendously. The data published by the National Council of Applied Economic Research shows that in the last ten years, the income of rural India has grown several-fold. There is a definite shift from middle to upper middle class and from lower to middle class segments. Rural Customers are aware that branded goods are of better quality. However marketers must guard themselves against various fake and deceptive brands imitating the original brands. This can cause heavy damage to the brand image over and above the lost sales. A creative mix of the often-used communication tools and some novel ones may be more effective than using only the regular ones.

HOW WOULD YOU CATEGORISE DIFFERENT PARTS OF RURAL INDIA

In India, we have the developed rural India and undeveloped rural India. Punjab, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and parts of Maharashtra come under the developed rural India but the rest of the states are undeveloped where power, infrastructure, etc are big problems. The prosperity of Kerala has come from the NRI income and not from agriculture. Today, there is hardly any village in Kerala. Tamil Nadu is prosperous as power and good roads are available. All the villages with proper infrastructure have developed. In such villages, people also have better access to towns and cities.

MAJOR REASONS FOR THE CHANGE IN THE LIFESTYLE OF THE DEVELOPED RURAL INDIA

Television has done wonders to rural India. Today, especially in the south, the penetration of satellite television is very high, which is around 50 per cent unlike 25-30 per cent in the rest of the country. These people may not be literate in the true sense but they know what is happening around the world because of television. They know how the rest of the country live. Another influence is due to the growth of rural youth. The new forces of social change, politicization and media exposure have changed youth's values and social psychology throughout the country from villages to the town and to the metropolis. The globalization of the economy and the decentralization of the production of goods and services by the multinational corporations have totally altered for these youth the project of their future



and the perception of their Life-World.

THE CORPORATE WORLD CANNOT IGNORE RURAL INDIA

Yes, they cannot afford to ignore rural India. Unfortunately, they are only talking about it, they are not investing enough to get the maximum mileage out of it. For them, rural India is an unknown entity even today, and it calls for a lot of investment. Initially, the ratio between investment and returns will not be the same as you see in urban India. For urban India, one television spot is enough but it's not so in rural India. You have to slog it out there. But eventually, you will get the returns. In today's corporate world, all the managers, especially those working in the MNCs depend on their quarterly results. They only look at what gives them immediate success. Freebies have no meaning in rural India. You have to give value for money for the brand you are selling.

STRATEGIES

Dynamics of rural markets differ from other market types, and similarly rural marketing strategies are also significantly different from the marketing strategies aimed at an urban or industrial consumer. This, along with several other related issues, have been subject matter of intense discussions and debate in countries like India and China and focus of even international symposia organized in these countries

Rural markets and rural marketing involve a number of strategies, which include:

- Client and location specific promotion
- Joint or cooperative promotion..
- Bundling of inputs
- Management of demand
- Developmental marketing
- Unique selling proposition (USP)

Client and Location specific promotion--- involves a strategy designed to be suitable to the location and the client.

Joint or co-operative promotion ---strategy involves participation between the marketing agencies and the client.

'Bundling of inputs' ---denote a marketing strategy, in which several related items are sold to the target client, including arrangements of credit, after-sale service, and so on.

Management of demand involve continuous market research of buyer's needs and problems



at various levels so that continuous improvements and innovations can be undertaken for a sustainable market performance.

Developmental marketing--- refer to taking up marketing programmes keeping the development objective in mind and using various managerial and other inputs of marketing to achieve these objectives.

Media, ---both traditional as well as the modern media, is used as a marketing strategy.

Unique Selling Propositions (USP)--- involve presenting a theme with the product to attract the client to buy that particular product. For examples, some of famous Indian Farm equipment manufactures have coined catchy themes, which they display along with the products, to attract the target client, that is the farmers. English version of some of such themes would read like:

- The heartbeats of rural India
- With new technique for a life time of company
- For the sake of progress and prosperity

The Basics of Rural Marketing

Marketing in rural areas has a lot in common with warfare .Both are challenging in nature and one cannot win over unless he has a sound knowledge of the terrain weather conditions and above all the main target ,the mind of the consumer or the enemy as the case may be.

- Simplicity in product strategy and designing.
- Simple and well defined goals. What is your ultimate aim and correct idea of the aim?
- Theme Selection. A simple and deep penetration theme aimed at the mind of the rural consumer.
- Synergistic survey and research. Marketing research as we may term it .
- Direct relationship with mass. Rural marketing has to be a system that the mass beckons you whole-heartedly.
- An effective public relation. Can be linked to the above point as well.
- Feedback. Do it before you launch yourself they will give you the actual on ground requirement and not in thin air.

A Key To Rural Marketing

Rural marketing by and large is simple provided you have the aptitude for it without



utilising high-sounding tooth breaking termonologies. In Hindi there is a popular word called **TARIQA** meaning the way to execute¹.

T—Truth based **A**—Assurance **R**—Reliability **I**—Ingenuity **Q**—Quality

A—Acceptability.

RURAL –URBAN DISPARITIES

Of the total estimated gross income generated in the household sector, the share of rural income accounted for 55.6 percent with 74.6 percent of country's population which was 66.8 percent in 1975-76 with 79.1 percent of population. The rural share of income seems to have gone down during the last two decades resulting in wider disparities in income distributions between rural and urban India. On average one in every 25 households in rural areas has an income of more than Rs.72, 000 while every fourth household in urban India rose and in the highest income brackets more than two-thirds of the households reside in cities and towns.

Challenges in Rural Marketing

Though rural markets are a huge attraction to marketers, it is not easy to enter the market and take a sizeable share of the market, in the short time due to the following reasons

Population Spread—The spread of population is to a great extent and even at times a house of ten forms a hamlet leading to problems for the marketer to reach out.

Infrastructure—Most of the rural areas are devoid of proper roads and lack of connectivity.

Income—This is once again comparable and area specific.

Terrain Factors—Terrain plays an important role in rural marketing and poses substantial challenges to a marketer in execution of task. This attribute of terrain availability in India has to be clearly understood before venturing out to these areas.

Low Literacy

There are not enough opportunities for education in rural areas. The literacy level is as low (36%) when compared to all- India average of 52%.

Seasonal Demand

Demand for goods in rural markets depends upon agricultural situation, as agriculture is the main source of income. Agriculture to a large extent depends upon monsoon and, therefore, the demand or buying capacity is not stable or regular

Transportation



Many rural areas are not connected by rail transport. Kacha roads become unserviceable during the monsoon and interior villages get isolated

Distribution

An effective distribution system requires village-level shopkeeper, Mandal/ Taluka- level wholesaler or preferred dealer, distributor or stockiest at district level and company-owned depot or consignment distribution at state level. The presence of too many tiers in the distribution system increases the cost of distribution

Communication Problems

Facilities such as telephone, fax and telegram are rather poor in rural areas.

Traditional Life

Life in rural areas is still governed by customs and traditions and people do not easily adapt new practices. For example, even rich and educated class of farmers does not wear jeans or branded shoes.

Buying Decisions

Rural consumers are cautious in buying and decisions are slow and delayed. They like to give a trial and only after being personally satisfied, do they buy the product.

Media For Promotions

Television has made a great impact and large audience has been exposed to this medium. Radio reaches large population in rural areas at a relatively low cost. However, reach of formal media is low in rural households; therefore, the market has to undertake specific sales promotion activities in rural areas like participating in melas or fairs.

Cultural Factors

Culture is a system of shared values, beliefs and perceptions that influence the behavior of consumers. There are different groups based on religion, caste, occupation, income, age, education and politics and each group exerts influence on the behavior of people in villages there is a belief among rural people that experience is more important than formal education and they respect salespersons who can offer practical solutions to their problems. Therefore it is desirable that sales persons, especially those who have been brought up in cities are given a thorough training consisting of both theory and practical aspects of village life. The training will help these sales persons to align themselves with the market realities and settle down smoothly in their jobs. Rural market has a tremendous potential that is yet



to be tapped. A small increase in rural income, results in an exponential increase in buying power.

PREVAILING CONSTRAINTS FOR GROWTH

- Inherent Weakness
- Lack of latest Updated Technology
- Poor Infrastructure
- Labour Policy
- Access to foreign Markets
- Different approaches in tapping foreign goods
- Purchasing power of domestic market
- Political intervention in corporate decision

Diagnosis of the Failures

- **Low priority to agriculture**---Agriculture is the major sector of the economy and provides food and employment to rural people. But over time relative importance of agriculture in total economy has declined considerably from 56 to 29 percent.
- **Subsistence Orientation Of Agriculture** ---Agriculture is mainly subsistence – oriented. The productivity is quite low. There is not enough value addition leading to low cost benefit ratio. Increasing input costs especially purchased inputs have made agriculture less and less profitable.
- **Failure Of Land Reforms**---Land reform both in form of redistribution of land in favor of the poor and tenancy reforms are largely failures except in Kerala and West Bengal where some achievements have been made. Due to rise in population and splitting of families size of operational land holdings is shrinking. A large number of farmers operate marginal and smallholdings of less than 2 hectares. Landlessness is increasing and more and more people are joining labor market every year.
- **Inadequate Food Supplies**---Although India is self sufficient in food grains at the national level, it continues to be inadequate at the household level. The increase in food production was mainly due to a few crops namely wheat, and rice.
- **Slow Growth Of Infrastructure**---The growth of infrastructure has not been satisfactory. About 40 percent of India's villages are with out proper roads, 1.8 lakh villages do not have a primary school within 1 km; about 4.5 lakh villages have



drinking water problems and there is a shortage of 140 lakh rural dwelling units apart from large deficiencies in the rural health infrastructure.

- **Inadequate Inputs**---The research and extension systems are very weak and suffer from lack of adequate funds and organizational weakness. There is no direct link between scientists, extension personnel and farmers.
- **Slow Down Of Rural Industrialization**---The rural industrialization has slowed down. Mahatma Gandhi acknowledged the importance of cottage industry clearly by his policy priorities on village upliftment including Khadi and other village industries in his famous “constructive Programme “in 1992.

Transforming Rural India

In recent times no programme for rural areas has received as much attention as the Employment guarantee. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (NREGP) not only provides a stable economic base to households but is also directing capital investment to rural areas creating valuable assets that are changing the rural landscape. A refreshing feature of Employment Guarantee Scheme is that the maintenance of the assets, including care of plantations is provided for in the programme. Therefore no dependence on additional funds each year to ensure their continuing productivity. There is all round concern at the slow rate of growth in agriculture and the allied sectors at the widening gulf between rich and the poor. . The Employment Guarantee can make a vital Difference. But to recognize and act on this requires determination and the will.

CONCLUSION

The corporate do not put their best effort to tap the high potential rural consumers due to lack of concrete idea in terms of identifying the segmentation for properly targeting the market. The studies by social scientists in India about rural markets are very few. Most of the studies in rural marketing have been purely marketing studies attempting to develop strategies and for classifying the rural population into market segments. A comprehensive study on the needs and demands of rural scenario is absent in the approach towards rural marketing. Community Tourism presents a unique model of participatory development, which can very well, be emulated by other developing countries the possibility of linking the demands of the Tourism industry with local production and supply should be utilized. Community Tourism should focus on new methods to market their products- like an MNC



style they have to change their strategy.

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