
AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON RURAL BUYERS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS SELECTED BRANDS OF CONTRACEPTIVES (WITH REFERENCE TO RURAL AREAS OF UJJAIN DISTRICT)

MEHTA Rajesh Kumar
Faculty-RIT, Indore (MP)

MEHTA Dharmendra
FMS Pt. JNIBM, Vikram University, Ujjain (MP)

MEHTA Naveen
Faculty- MIT, Ujjain (MP)

Abstract:

The biggest problem in the fast growth Indian economy is country's growing population. With a population of over a billion, India needs an inclusive family planning program and awareness campaign towards the use of contraceptives. The use of appropriate contraceptive product reduces the probability of a pregnancy occurring due to sexual intercourse. Marketing of contraceptives to rural buyers is not only a challenge to the marketers but to the manufacturers, communicators, national planners, NGOs, health and family planning institutions and economists as well. Hence, it is very imperative to understand the various aspects of selected rural areas and consumption pattern for such a fast growing market i.e. Contraceptives and rural buyers' perception towards such products.

Keywords: rural, buyers, population contraceptives, marketing.

1. Introduction

In India, the time has come to make people aware of the various contraceptive methods. There still exist some myths and wrong concepts regarding the attitude towards contraceptive products, such as: pills provoke hormone distortion, cancer and "hair grow"; contraceptive ring cause infection etc. All these have an influence upon some rural folks who do not allow their life partner to use contraceptive pills or IUD on the grounds that they generate serious body alteration. The young people appear to be

having lack of confidentiality regarding the means of obtaining and acquiring contraceptives, considering this a barrier against contraceptive use.

Contraceptive behaviour of rural buyers is generally characterized by four factors as: knowledge of contraception, current contraceptive use, future intention to use contraception and desire for additional children. Information technology, government policies, corporate strategies, media/satellite communication are the key factors responsible for fast development of rural markets. The constraints in rural products marketing are becoming increasingly complex. There has been a paradigm shift in rural buyers' orientation and thinking. There has been a long standing 'bias' towards rural buyers. If the market for contraceptive products and services is to develop and increase, marketing techniques to attract the rural buyers must be sophisticated, memorable, and well-targeted.

2. Literature Review

Sunil et al (1999) highlighted that provision of free contraception and monetary incentives for their use had limited success in India. Streatfield (2001) explores beliefs of women regarding reversible contraception in a context where women are able to achieve their fertility goals using sterilization and periodic abstinence with abortion as a back-up method. Perianayagam (2002) found that the coverage of the village by the health workers was inconsistent. Most villagers did not own a radio or a television, and access to media was limited for all but the wealthiest families; media access has positively correlated with contraceptive use in India, as has education of women. Jejeebhoy and Sebastian (2003) show that 15–30 per cent of adolescent boys and up to 10 per cent of girls in India were sexually active before marriage. Demographic Health Survey data for India (2005-06) discloses that 52 per cent of illiterate women do not use any contraceptive method, while about a third of illiterate fecund women not wanting a child do not use any contraceptive method. Singh et al (2009) in their study estimate that round 215 million women in the developing world as a whole have an unmet need for modern contraceptives. Husain et al (2011) emphasis that women should be encouraged to develop contacts outside her household as this can reduce her dependence of partner for family planning related knowledge.

3. Growing Indian population: Causes and Concerns

Today, multinational corporations view emerging markets such as India as prime opportunities for growth. Rural markets are growing twice as fast as the urban markets. Currently, India's annual population growth rate is 1.74%. India is the second most populous country in the world, contributing about 20% of births worldwide. It is very imperative to curb the growing population. Without which no planning can be implemented successfully. The accessibility of condoms at the door-steps of the villagers would certainly help control the population, which is projected to be 1.19 billion in 2011.

The Indian population is ever growing and so its related problems. There are multifarious reasons that attribute to the growth of population and among them the major one is illiteracy and due to this children and adults in countries like India are never taught about the dangers of not using contraceptives. People not using contraceptives can almost double the birth rate in India.

A recent study reveals that the contraceptive prevalence rate for modern methods of contraception in India is 42.8% (48% for all methods), with female sterilization' accounting for 34.2%, pill use for 2.1%, IUD use for 1.6% and condom use for 3.1%. Male sterilization accounts for 1.9%. Therefore, the contraceptives industry especially preventive pregnancy products for example condoms (males and females), pills (for females) in India is a rapidly growing industry.

4. Indian Rural Market: Issues and Challenges

At the backdrop of this, it is very relevant to pursue a study on rural buyers' perception towards the use of contraceptives. The buying patterns of rural buyers, problems of classifying rural buyers on their income patterns, uses patterns and language patterns offers great challenges to market researchers. There are multidimensional peculiarities of the rural buyers which must be acknowledged before planning marketing strategies to grab the rural market.

Now a day's rural marketing and rural buyers are gaining momentum. Not only native contraceptive brands like Masti are concentrating their marketing activities in rural markets but also international brands like Trojan, Crow are penetrating in the remote rural Indian villages. Due to fast socio-economic changes and huge market, rural buyer has become very important.

The Indian market is undergoing significant changes especially after economic reforms. Undoubtedly, Indian rural market remained backward till recently and regarded as slow but now the wind of change is blowing. Transforming the rural market incomes are increasing, literacy level is going up; transport and communication facilities are improving, credit facilities are significantly escalating. These all indicators show that the rural buyers are becoming more selective in choosing their favourite brands. Even in the selection of contraceptives, the rural buyers are more aware and particular. This point is clearly reflected that just a year after emergency contraceptive pills (ECP) were approved for sale in the open market, they have caught on in a big way. Indian made contraceptives has done reasonably well and is considered as a blessing for rural buyers.

Table 1. Contraceptives Market in India - Key Players

Firm	Annual Capacity (In Million Pieces)
1. Hindustan Latex Ltd.	600.00
2. TTK LIG	321.28
3. Polar Latex Ltd.	178.50
4. J.K. Ansell	84.10
5. Suretex Prophylactics (India) Ltd.	60.00
6. Indus Medicare	34.50

Source: Department of Family Welfare

As per the information given by Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, India to increase the awareness and accessibility of condoms in rural areas and among target group, NACO Targeted Condom Social Marketing programme has been launched in year 2008. The first two phases of NACO targeted Condom. Social Marketing Programme was successfully implemented. Further during Phase-III 2010-11), Targeted Condom Social Marketing Programme will be expanded. The sales coverage in rural areas will be 50% and outlet coverage will be 56% of the total target.

5. Types of contraceptives that are commonly used

The types of contraception available in Indian rural market have grown in number over the years are mainly like as oral contraceptives, The hormone patch, shots and rings, barrier method, condoms, the diaphragm and cervical cap, intrauterine device (IUD) By understanding the contraception effectiveness, benefits and risks of each method, and weighing the importance of factors, like convenience, spontaneity and comfort, buyers choose the method that is best for them.

6. Research Methodology

6.1 Research Design

The research is descriptive in nature since it is probably for the first time that any survey has been conducted in selected rural areas of Ujjain district to study rural buyers' perception towards contraceptives product

6.2 Data Collection Method

The researchers have used a structured questionnaire keeping in mind the objectives of the study as well as the background of the respondents. Secondary data has been collected from the newspapers, economic and business journals and various journals related to contraceptives product industries.

6.3 Research Framework

6.3.1 Sampling Method

The sampling method in the undertaken study is combination of convenience & judgmental sampling through which researcher has selected most accessible rural population members which were considered appropriate prospects for accurate information.

6.3.2 Sampling Unit

Drawn from 05 rural areas of Ujjain district belonging to middle class & lower class i.e. small farmers, petty traders, unskilled workers and other sections of selected rural areas.

6.3.3 Sample Size

100 respondents from 05 rural areas.

6.3.4 Field Work

The researcher visited house to house with convenient & judgmental basis in rural localities in order to administer the questionnaire. The researcher also visited nearby schools, small shops of petty traders and personally interviewed the targeted rural respondents.

6.3.5 Methodology

During the survey initially 150 questionnaires were distributed and 121 were returned. Remaining 29 questionnaires were not returned by the targeted rural buyers. Out of 121 returned questionnaires, 103 were filled up completely and properly. Hence to have uniformity in sample only 100 questionnaires were retrieved for final analysis - selecting 20 each from five rural

7. Data Analysis and interpretation

After collecting the data from the respondents an analysis of the data was carried out.

Table 2. Monthly Expenditure on contraceptive products of Buyers

Rural Area	Monthly Expenditure on contraceptives product			
	Upto ` 50	`51-75	`76-100	Above `100
Tajpur	04	03	05	08
Lakoda	05	07	06	02
Lalpur	06	04	07	03
Datana	03	08	08	01

Narwar	07	05	04	04
Total	25	27	30	18

Source: Calculated and compiled on the basis of questionnaires filled up by the respondents

The above table clearly reveals that 08% buyers from Tajpur are spending more than 100 per month contraceptive products while 25% buyers of total sample spend upto 50 per month contraceptive products. In totality 30% of buyers spend ranging from ` 76 to 100 per month followed by 27% of rural buyers spending ` 51 to 75 per month.

Table 3. Preferred Category of contraceptive products

S.No.	Type	Respondents (%)
1.	Pills	27
2.	Condoms Male	53
3.	Condoms Female	08
4.	Diaphragm and Cervical Cap	02
5.	Other Alternative Contraceptives	10

Source: Calculated and compiled on the basis of questionnaires filled up by the respondents

This table shows that 27% of rural women buyers prefer using pills. The most popular category of contraceptive products being used is the male condoms, 53% of buyers were using it, followed by 08% using condoms female, 10% using other contraceptive alternatives, 02% using diaphragms.

Table IV: Brand Preference

S.No.	Brand	Respondents (%)
1.	Super Deluxe Nirodh	28
2.	Kamsutra	10
3.	Kohinoor Extra Time	12
4.	Masti	16
5.	Mala D	21
6.	Unwanted 72	13

Source: Calculated and compiled on the basis of questionnaires filled up by the respondents

The above table shows that most of the respondents 28% prefer Super Deluxe Nirodh. In measurement of brand preference effect, the Super Deluxe Nirodh condoms brand had first position as 28% of rural buyers recalled it, followed by Mala D as 21% buyers could recall it. Masti Condom had a 16% recalling effect. Unwanted 72 recalled by 13% rural buyers. The above table & chart very clearly reflects that most of rural buyers 28 % are able to recall Super Deluxe Nirodh condoms.

Table 5. Reasons for using Specific Contraceptives

S. No	Reasons	Pills	Condom Male	Condom Female	Diaphragm and Cervical Cap	Other Alternative Contraceptives
1.	Low Price	33	55	02	03	07
2.	Sensual Pleasure	41	50	05	02	02
3.	Prevention from Pregnancy	32	48	-	-	20
4.	Colour and flavour	-	45	10	-	-
5.	Prevention from sexually transmitted diseases	-	53	17	-	-
6.	Quality/Durability	15	56	12	13	04

Source: Calculated and compiled on the basis of questionnaires filled up by the respondents

According to above table rural buyers prefer "Low Price" for condoms which are followed by Prevention from sexually transmitted diseases by the use of condoms. Pills users also find the Prevention from sexually transmitted diseases as a major reason. Condoms users also have a weightage of 56 against the 15 score of Pills.

Table 6. Factor Influencing Purchase Decision of Contraceptives

S.No.	Factor	Respondents (%)
1.	Price	08
2.	Advertisement	05
3.	Effectiveness	11
4.	Quality/Durability	13
5.	Sensual Pleasure/Satisfaction	26
6.	Prevention from Pregnancy	14
7.	Colour and flavour	05
8.	Prevention from sexually transmitted diseases	12
9.	Advice from Friends/Shopkeeper	06

Source: Calculated and compiled on the basis of questionnaires filled up by the respondents

The table no VI indicates that colour and flavour, advertisements and price have not been proven major factors in purchase decision of Contraceptive products. Advice

from friend or shop-keeper is not a major factor in rural buyer's decision as it has the least 6%. 26% rural buyers find Sensual Pleasure/Satisfaction as the most important factor for their purchase decision of contraceptive products. On the other prevention from pregnancy is also influencing maximum number of rural buyers who account as much as 14 % of total source. Data also reveals that quality/durability of contraceptives is affecting 13% buyers decision.

Table 7. Change in Type of Contraceptive Products

S.No.	Change	Respondents (%)
1.	No Change	55
2.	Mala D to Unwanted 72	24
3.	Super Deluxe Nirodh to Kamsutra	15
4.	Masti Condom to Kohinoor Extra Time	06

Source: Calculated and compiled on the basis of questionnaires filled up by the respondents

The above table shows that 55% rural buyers have not changed their contraceptive products while remaining 45% have changed at least once. It is clearly evincing that 24% buyers have switched over from Mala D to Unwanted 72; followed 15% from Super Deluxe Nirodh to Kamsutra and 06% rural buyers have shifted from Masti Condom to Kohinoor Extra Time.

Table 8. Reasons for Change of Contraceptives

S.No.	Reasons	Respondents (%)
(i)	Mala D to Unwanted 72	
	(a) Effectiveness	42
	(b) Less Side Effects	10
	(c) Intensive Advertisement Campaign	48
(ii)	Super Deluxe Nirodh to Kamsutra	
	(a) More Lubricated	41
	(b) More Durable	59
(iii)	Masti Condom to Kohinoor Extra Time	
	(a) More Sensual Satisfaction	45
	(b) Flavour/Colour	20
	(c) User's Friendly	35

Source: Calculated and compiled on the basis of questionnaires filled up by the respondents

This table highlights that Masti Condom is not considered a good option as against the Kohinoor Extra Time i.e. it has less sensual satisfaction according to 45% buyers. 42% of rural female buyers claim that preference for Unwanted 72 is due to intensive advertisement campaign. On the other hand 59% male rural buyers claim Kamsutra is more lubricated and durable than Super Deluxe Nirodh as it lasts long.

Table 9. Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction towards Contraceptives

S.No.	Level	Respondents (%)
1.	Satisfied	66
2.	Dissatisfied	34

Source: Calculated and compiled on the basis of questionnaires filled up by the respondents

This table clearly indicates that even rural buyers are able to express their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Among 100 rural respondents 66% are satisfied with the Contraceptives while 34% are not satisfied with their Contraceptives. Further we have investigated the reasons of dissatisfaction.

Table 10. Expectations of Rural Buyers from a Good Contraceptive Brand

S.No.	Expectations	Respondents (%)
1.	Reasonable Price	53
2.	Effectiveness/Durability	24
3.	User's friendly	22
4.	Sensual Pleasure/Satisfaction	72
5.	Prevention from Pregnancy	42
6.	Prevention from sexually transmitted diseases	23

Source: Calculated and compiled on the basis of questionnaires filled up by the respondents

This table shows that rural buyers have expressed their expectations in descriptive form i.e. providing more than one expectation. Sensual Pleasure/Satisfaction is the leading expectation of rural buyers followed by reasonable price of the Contraceptives. Prevention from pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases made contraceptives have been expected by rural buyers. Rural buyers also want to user's friendly contraceptives brand as it is evident i.e. 22% buyers looking for such products. Effectiveness/durability towards the selection of contraceptive products is also developing in rural buyer which is evincible in form of 24% buyers reflecting their expectations.

8. Conclusions

- The contraceptives and condoms market in rural areas is not so much affected or influenced by the economic factors like the present economic downturn and is believed to hold up well in such tough times.
- Our findings confirm that rural buyers prefer condoms (male and female) as these are economical and cover their monthly expenditure budgets. Every class of rural society (be it farmers, unskilled workers, rural traders) can use it.

- Rural buyers claim that condoms are more effective and last long. Condoms are different from other contraceptives used by females in one aspect and that is their use for safety against the STDs. No other contraceptive method is effective in these areas and so in this area condoms have an added advantage over other contraceptives.
- Our findings confirm that rural buyers find 'condoms' free from side effect and particularly brand has a good for safety. Condoms have one more advantage - no need to change frequently.
- The oral contraceptives market consists of branded products and the generic versions of those brands.
- New technology made condoms is not becoming as popular in rural areas as in the urban markets due to lack of awareness or buying capacity. This fact is evident from the fact that 28% respondents still prefer Super Deluxe Nirodh as their favourite brand.
- In a country where an estimated 50 per cent of all pregnancies are unplanned and certainly most of the unplanned ones being most unwanted, it is high time there is a change in the mindset on contraceptive usage. It is clearly evident from the fact that Women buyers are confined to 37% in decision making of these products.
- One of the myths that deter women from using oral pills is that they cause cancer. In reality it is quite the opposite. Women on pills have less risk of cancer of ovaries, uterus and possibly less risk of cancer in the bowel. The other myth surrounding pills is that it causes infertility when intake is stopped.
- Even if a person wants to use contraception, her or his partner may be opposed to the idea, making it more difficult. Fear of a partner's reaction is the most common reason women do not use contraception.
- Many rural buyers are afraid of the side effects of contraceptives. While some perceptions are real, there are many myths and misconceptions that are widespread.
- Many rural buyers, especially young buyers and buyers living in poverty are unaware of where to obtain contraception.
- Rural buyers (especially men) are often reluctant to use barrier methods, such as condoms, because of the perception that they decrease sexual pleasure.
- Social norms about sex can also make it embarrassing for people to talk about contraception with their sexual partner.
- High levels of illiteracy, poor access to information, poverty, and gender-based disparities serve as significant barriers to family planning.

9. Suggestions

- It is suggested that pills & condoms manufacturers should be encouraged to market their pills & condoms as easy to use and money saver products.

- Manufacturers of contraceptives should highlight precautions/ instructions regarding the usage of these products particularly for rural buyers.
- Rural buyers have been searching reasonably priced contraceptives so while designing pricing strategy due care should be taken in offering more schemes/freebies to rural buyers.
- On the basis of findings, it is suggested that the distribution channel be made more effective and efficient in given rural areas so that none of them is deficient of necessary goods.
- Buyers' awareness must be created by way of imparting consumer education. It was observed that comparatively less number of respondents had brand loyalty.
- Majority of respondents stated that brand does not matter to them. What they want is to fulfill their sensual satisfaction/needs.
- Since some respondents had been using only specific brands of contraceptives and did not shift to other brands, in this regard it is suggested that marketers should concentrate on rural brand value.
- NGO/Govt. bodies' role must be redefined in creating awareness about contraceptives and prevention of related disease.
- Hoardings can also create a big niche in the rural buyers' mindsets. Concerned marketers should try to use hoardings in rural public places.
- Marketing firms should try to unravel the rural buyers' consumer psyche which can prove a gauntlet.
- Develop a strong advertising campaign that will educate consumers about the convenience, safety and effectiveness of contraceptive products.
- Develop well focused method-specific advertising campaign that addresses the most common concerns about contraceptives.
- Lower price through negotiations with manufacturers and providers and elimination of excise taxes on packaging on contraceptive products.
- Contraception is effective when one has the knowledge of various forms of contraceptives and their usages. Lack of knowledge and the belief in the myths around contraception result in unwanted pregnancies and sometimes unsafe abortions. It is important to educate rural buyers and remove any doubts on contraception to lead a healthy and balanced family life.

10. References

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